



Tuskegee Airmen Reading Comprehension

Name _____

The Tuskegee Airmen were a group of American fighter and bomber pilots that fought in World War II. These men were extraordinary not only because they were deployed overseas to fight in North Africa and parts of Italy in a very dangerous war, but also because they were the first all African American squadron of airmen in history. Before that time, no African American had been allowed to be a pilot in the military. Through great adversity, these men proved to America that heroes are worthy of great respect, no matter their skin color.

The group of 922 men were taught to fly and fight at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. These men were still subject to Jim Crow Laws and the military was still mostly segregated, meaning that black and white soldiers could not fight together for the same cause. Even while serving their country, people of color were treated with discrimination.

Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States during World War II, was a great supporter of the Tuskegee Airmen. She visited the airfield in Alabama to inspect the aircraft, watch training demonstrations, and even take a short flight with a few of the pilots. She was a believer in equal rights for all, and worked hard to take a stance on civil rights in support of African Americans that worked in the armed forces.

A myth that circulated throughout the news during World War II was that there had never been a loss of a Tuskegee Airman while fighting overseas. However, years later, it was discovered that at least 25 bombers were lost in battle. Though this was sad news to discover, it answered many questions for families that wondered what had happened to their loved ones when the men did not return home from the war.

Once the war ended, the impressive aviators had collected more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, a military award given to those that show exceptional bravery during flight on a combat mission. Many other Tuskegee Airmen spent the rest of their lives working to end segregation in the United States Armed Forces, and eventually succeeded.

1.) 7. What made the Tuskegee Airmen unlike any other pilots in WWII?

- a. The Tuskegee Airmen had all been in college until the war.
- b. The Tuskegee Airmen were all from Alabama.
- c. The Tuskegee Airmen were all African American.
- d. Eleanor Roosevelt had flown in a plane with all of the Tuskegee Airmen.

2.) What is the best definition of the word *segregation*?

- a. To stay together.
- b. To keep apart.
- c. To fly in a plane
- d. To be a member of the armed forces.

3.) Who was Eleanor Roosevelt?

- a. One of the 922 Tuskegee Airmen
- b. A war hero from WWII that fought in North Africa.
- c. The First Lady of the United States during WWII.
- d. The wife of a Tuskegee Airmen that made uniforms for them.

4.) Why would someone be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross?

- a. For bravery during a combat mission
- b. For working together as a team
- c. For becoming a pilot during World War II
- d. For flying with the First Lady of the United States

5.) What is another word for *aviator*?

- a. Mechanic
- b. Pilot
- c. Military
- d. President

6.) What is the best explanation of a *myth*?

- a. A story that is factual.
- b. An article in a newspaper.
- c. A story that is not based in fact, but circulates widely among people.
- d. An informational text.

7. Which of the following points serves to emphasize the poor treatment of the Tuskegee Airmen?

- a. A myth that circulated throughout the news during World War II was that there had never been a loss of a Tuskegee Airman while fighting overseas.
- b. Through great adversity, these men proved to America that heroes are worthy of great respect, no matter their skin color.
- c. The group of 922 men were taught to fly and fight at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.
- d. Even while serving their country, people of color were treated with discrimination.

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. D