The Life and Legacy of William “Billy” Walker Sr.

Unforgotten African American Jockey of the Kentucky Derby

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for

The Chronicle of African Americans in the Horse Industry

www.AfricanAmericanHorseStories.org



William Walker

Image Source: Churchill Downs/Kinetic Corporation

### **Summary**

This module is to help young learners grasp and understand the importance and impact that African Americans had on horseracing and the impact it holds today.

### **Grade Levels**

4th and 5th Grade

### **Subjects**

Social Studies, Reading, Language Arts

### **Standards**

**Kentucky State Common Core /Social Studies Standards**

4th Grade Social Studies

H.CH2- Describe the impact innovation and human ingenuity had on the development of the United States.

5th Grade Social Studies

H. CH2- Analyze the impact innovation and human ingenuity had on the development of the United States from colonization to Constitution.

**Kentucky State Common Core ELA/ Reading Standards**

4th Grade Reading:

RL.4.1- Refer to details and examples in a text explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

5th Grade Reading:

RL.5.5- Analyze and explain the overall structure of poems, stories, and dramas in two or more texts, including but not limited to linear, nonlinear, and circular structures.

4th Grade Writing:

L.4.2- When writing,

A. Demonstrates appropriate use of capitalization.

B. Use commas and quotation marks to indicate direct speech and quotations for a text.

C. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

D. Consult reference materials as needed to check and correct spellings.

5th Grade Writing

L.5.2-

A. Use punctuation to separate items in a series.

B. Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence.

C. Use a comma to set off the words *yes* and *no*, to set off a tag question from the rest of the sentence, and to indicate direct address.

D. Use underlining, quotation marks or italics to indicate titles of work.

E. Use strategies and resources (print and electronic) to identify and correct spelling errors.

### **Time Requirements**

1-2 weeks, 40-50 minutes per class period

### **Chronicle Resources**

William Walker person profile and related research, Kentucky Derby event

### **Chronicle Theme**

Legacy Lives On

### **Goals**

1. Students will be able to understand the different roles that African Americans played in the shape of this country.
2. Students will be able to understand how horseracing became the staple of Kentucky because of the African American jockeys.
3. Students will be able to identify other prominent African Americans that changed and contributed to the state of Kentucky and the world.

### **Guiding Question**

In what way did William Walker contribute to the history of the Kentucky Derby and what impacts did he make on the horseracing industry?

### **Career Connections**

Jockey, Researcher, Horse Trainer

### **Vocabulary**

**Retired** - withdrawn from or no longer occupied with one’s business or profession.

**Mare** - a fully mature female horse or another equine animal.

**Bloodline** - (usually of animals) the line of descent; pedigree; strain.

**Span** - the period between two dates or events during which something exists, functions, or happens.

**Advisor -** one who gives an opinion or recommendation offered as a guide to action, conduct, etc..

**Trainer -** a person that makes proficient by instruction and practice, as in some art, profession, or work.

**Breeder -** an animal, plant, or person that produces offspring or reproduces.

**Consultant** - a person who gives professional or expert advice.

**Thoroughbred** - of pure or unmixed breed, stock, or lineage, as a horse or other animal; bred from the purest and best blood.

**Jockey** - a person who rides horses professionally in races.

**Legacy** - anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.

**Lineage** - the line of descendants of a particular ancestor; family

**Wages** - money that is paid or received for the work or services, as by the hour, day, or week.

### **Additional Resources for Teachers**

“Baden-Baden’s Big Year: Incidents of a Race in Which Some Great Colts Were Beaten.” *Daily Racing Form*. March 18, 1917. The Daily Racing Form Archive. University of Kentucky Libraries.[https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1910s/drf1916031301/drf1916031301\_1\_2#q=baden-baden+AND+walker#fq=](https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1910s/drf1916031301/drf1916031301_1_2#fq=).

“The Lives and Legacy of the Great African American Jockeys.” Produced by Brisk Dark Productions. November 1, 2013. Video, 12:16. <https://youtu.be/sPRAnmeYiig>

Talbott, Tim. “William ‘Billy’ Walker, African American Jockey.” *Random Thoughts on History* (blog)*.* October 28, 2013. <http://randomthoughtsonhistory.blogspot.com/2013/10/william-billy-walker-african-american.html>

Schlisse, Lillian. *Black Frontiers: A History of African American Heroes in the Old West.* New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1995.

Buy online at: <https://www.amazon.com/Black-Frontiers-History-African-American/dp/0689833156>

“Walker, William, Sr. ‘Billy.’” In *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*. Accessed April 3, 2020.<https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/1906>.

### **William Walker Background Information**

William “Billy” Walker, Sr. was born as an enslaved person on the Bosque Bonita farm in Woodford county, Kentucky in 1860. Walker began his horse racing career at the age of eleven, when he rode in his first race at Jerome Park. At the age of thirteen Walker won his first race riding the horse Astral during the 1873 Lexington fall meet. From the period of 1875 to 1878, he became one of the leading riders at Churchill Downs. In the 1877 Kentucky Derby, he rode Baden-Baden to victory.  His winnings at that time were $3,300 dollars, whereas today the winnings total $2 million dollars.

On July 4th of 1878 Walker was the winning rider in the famous Ten Broeck match in Louisville, KY against the great Mollie McCarthy at the Louisville Jockey Club, later known as Churchill Downs. As a rider, Walker received a $15 per month salary from his employer Mr. Swigert. In 1896 was Walker’s 4th and final appearance in the Kentucky Derby where he finished seventh.  Other stakes that Walker won were the Tobacco Stakes, Galt House Stakes and the St. Leger Stakes.

Walker’s career had a span of nearly 25 years before he retired and then became the advisor and trainer for horse breeder John Madden and other horse owners. By 1910, he was one of Kentucky’s wealthiest African Americans.

The 1930 census listed Walker as 70 year of age living with his wife Hannah and son John.  On September 20, 1933 Walker died at the age of 73 and was buried in the Louisville Cemetery. In 1996 Churchill Downs placed a headstone on his grave to honor him and his legacy. In 2015 Churchill Downs honored him again by creating a new race to replace the Derby Trial, with the title $100,000 William Walker Stakes. This race is the kick-off to Derby week.

### **Sources**

“Baden-Baden’s Big Year: Incidents of a Race in Which Some Great Colts Were Beaten.” *Daily Racing Form*. March 18, 1917. The Daily Racing Form Archive. University of Kentucky Libraries. [https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1910s/drf1916031301/drf1916031301\_1\_2#q=baden-baden+AND+walker#fq=](https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1910s/drf1916031301/drf1916031301_1_2#q=baden-baden+AND+walker).

Bowen, Ed, Yvonne Giles, and Bill Cooke. “Exhibit Text: African-American Jockeys of the Kentucky Derby.” 1877: William Walker. Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government plaques, 2020.

“Early Days of The Kentucky Derby: Eventful Happenings in History-Making Years of America’s Outstanding Horse Race.” *Daily Racing Form*. May 8, 1937. The Daily Racing Form Archive. University of Kentucky Libraries. [https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1930s/drf1937050802/drf1937050802\_36\_1#q=baden-baden+AND+walker#fq=](https://drf.uky.edu/catalog/1930s/drf1937050802/drf1937050802_36_1#q=baden-baden+AND+walker).

Talbott, Tim. “William ‘Billy’ Walker, African American Jockey.” *Random Thoughts on History* (blog)*.* October 28, 2013. <http://randomthoughtsonhistory.blogspot.com/2013/10/william-billy-walker-african-american.html>

### **Overview of Module**

1. Introduce the Chronicle website and discuss William Walker and his contributions to the horse racing industry.
2. Draw and create a day at the races with African American Jockeys.
3. Optional, 2nd week: Students can collaborate to make a documentary on Mr. Walker.

**Daily Learning Targets**

Day 1- Learning Target

Students will be introduced to the African American Jockeys.

1. Introduce the module/unit: “During our unit, students will learn how communities in Kentucky were impacted (changed) because of African Americans in horse racing.”
2. Introduce the vocabulary.
3. Organize students into learning groups for the module.
4. Students will give examples of their communities.
5. Show the Video: The Lives and Legacy of the Great African American Jockeys. <https://youtu.be/sPRAnmeYiig>
6. Have students write down key information that they learned from the video.

Day 2- Learning Target

1. Review the contents in the video. Discuss key points that they understood on that documentary of the Jockeys.
2. Discuss what components go into a documentary (still and video images, narration, music).
3. Students will work together on their outline of what they will showcase in their documentary.

Day 3- Learning Target

1. Students will continue to work on their documentary outlines and format the order to how the documentary will flow.
2. Students will then review and read printed material on William Walker so that they can gain more information by using the Chronicle website and adding other African American Jockeys to the documentary.
3. Within the documentary, the students will reference the $100,000 William Walker Stakes and its winners, and how well it has done since it was introduced in 2015.
4. Students will then be able to form the content in the order of their outlines.
5. Students will then contact videographers such as the school librarian or local video producers for video help and production. This may require additional time as an extension of the activity.

Day 4 & 5- Learning Target

1. Students will complete and finish documentary
2. Students will then present their work to the school.

### **ECE/ELL**

ECE: All activities should be modified for students with an IEP or 504 plans according to his/her modifications. Provide copies of graphic

organizers, use small group instruction, extended time, technology, etc.

ELL: All activities should be modified according to his/her language plans. Provide copies of graphic organizers, notes, and text material.

Concentrate on key vocabulary words. Google translate and other language apps should be useful as well in completing tasks.

### **Assessment**

1. Students will create a visual informative of the African American Jockey.
2. Students will present information in a creative form of the life and legacy of William Walker and how he would have changed their community in today's time.
3. Students will use credible sources to collect information.
4. Optional: Students will collaborate and create a digital story, children’s book, or documentary of Mr. William Walker's life.

### **Extensions to Module**

**Reading Extension**

Students will read and review the book *Black Frontiers: A History of African American Heroes in the Old West.*

<https://www.amazon.com/Black-Frontiers-History-African-American/dp/0689833156>

The students will be able to understand where it all started with African Americans and horses in the frontier of the West.

**Field Trips:**

1. To Churchill Downs and the Derby Museum, Louisville, KY
2. The International Museum of the Horse, Lexington, KY
3. The African American Heritage Museum, Louisville, KY
4. The National Museum of African American History and Culture, Indianapolis, IN

**Guest Speakers:**

1. Contact an African American who is still or was in the horse industry as a guest speaker for Career Day.
2. Contact Churchill Downs.
3. Ask the students if they have any living relatives that have worked or still work in the horse industry.

**Technology:**

1. Create a digital story about William Walker.
2. Create a digital children’s book about William Walker or the African American Jockeys.
3. Create a documentary of Mr. Walker’s life.