

## SESSION 1.3: READ

### Close Read from Samuel Cabbie Letter to His Wife

**Background:** During the Civil War, African Americans, then called Colored or Negroes, had an opportunity to fight against the people who enslaved them, earn wages, and eventually earn equal pay to white service members. Samuel Cabbie, for example, a private in the 55th Massachusetts Infantry was a slave before he joined the army. He was twenty-one years old. This letter was found in Cabbie's file with an application for compensation signed by his former owner. It was used as proof that his owner had offered Samuel for enlistment. Think about the poster you viewed and what you have learned. Use inference skills and evidence and explain why Mr. Cabbie saw opportunity in the Civil War?

**Read** Mr. Cabbie's letter to his wife. Does he infer that he was happy about enlisting? Does he see an opportunity rather than a horrific experience? What supporting evidence do you have? Use the Primary Source Questions to look deeply at this primary source from the Civil War.

**Follow up:** Following the Civil War Samuel Cabbie went to Missouri where he was reunited with his wife. Together they moved to Denver, Colorado. By the end of the Civil War, roughly 179,000 black men (10% of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and another 19,000 served in the Navy. Nearly 40,000 black soldiers died over the course of the war—30,000 of infection or disease. Black soldiers served in artillery and infantry and performed all noncombat support functions that sustain an army, as well.

Dear Wife i have enlisted in the army i am now in the state of Massachusetts but before this letter reaches you i will be in North Carolina and though great is the present national difficulties yet i look forward to a brighter day When i shall have the opportunity of seeing you in the full enjoyment of freedom i would like to no if you are still in slavery if you are it will not be long before we shall have crushed the system that now oppresses you for in the course of three months you shall have your liberty. great is the outpouring of the African American people that is now rallying with the hearts of lions against that very curse that has separated you and me yet we shall meet again and oh what a happy time that will be when this ungodly rebellion shall be put down and the curses of our land is trampled under our feet i am a soldier now and i shall use my utmost endeavor to strike at the rebellion and the heart of this system that so long has kept us in chains . . . remain your own affectionate husband until death-Samuel Cabbie

Source: <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war/article.html>

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