



Artists pay tribute to heroes by creating *memorials*. A memorial keeps the memory of a person or event alive. At the National Gallery of Art, you can visit the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts 54th Regiment*, located in the West Building in gallery 66. The Shaw Memorial is a relief sculpture that honors a group of brave soldiers who fought in the American Civil War.



1 Who were these men?

They were members of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, one of the first African American units of the Civil War. One thousand African American men volunteered to join this regiment and fight for the Union. The American Civil War, which took place between 1861 and 1865, was a conflict between the northern (Union) and southern (Confederacy) parts of the United States. The central issue they fought over was slavery.

Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the leader of the 54th Regiment, is on horseback. He was a young white man from a Boston family strongly opposed to slavery.

2 Where were they headed?

This sculpture shows Colonel Shaw and his regiment as they marched off on May 28, 1863, to fight in the Civil War. The largest crowd in Boston's history gathered downtown to send them off. If this sculpture came to life and the soldiers were to march in front of you, what sounds might you hear?

Which details in the sculpture tell you that the men are going off to fight in a war?



Colonel Robert Gould Shaw
Whipple, Boston Athenaeum

3 What happened to the men?

The 54th Regiment led an attack against one of the forts protecting Charleston, South Carolina, the heart of the Confederacy. Almost half of those who stormed the fort were killed, captured, or later died of their wounds, including Colonel Shaw.

The bravery and determination of the 54th Regiment earned great respect for black soldiers and inspired widespread enlistment of black men into the Union forces. By the end of the Civil War, nearly 180,000 African Americans had fought for the Union. It was their contribution, President Abraham Lincoln said, that gave the Union the advantage to win. In 1865 the South surrendered and America became united again.

4

How is the story told? With life-size figures!

The sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens used a photograph of Colonel Shaw in order to show his facial features and uniform accurately. He wanted the monument to be as realistic as possible and even brought a horse into his studio so he could work from a live model.

Each soldier is unique. Some of the soldiers in the 54th Regiment were as young as sixteen. Some were fathers enlisting with their sons. To capture the individuality of each one of the men, Saint-Gaudens hired African Americans to pose for him.

How do you think these men felt about fighting in the Civil War? Study their faces and circle the words you think describe the way they look.



expressive faces
Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts 54th Regiment* (details), 1900, patinated plaster. On loan from U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, New Hampshire

serious

determined

dedicated

scared

proud

hopeful

To learn more about the Shaw Memorial, visit the online tour on our Web site:
www.nga.gov/onlinetours/shawwel.htm

book nook

These books can be found in the Children's Shop located on the Gallery's concourse level or at your local library or bookstore.

The Colors of Us

Written and illustrated by
Karen Katz
Ages 4 and up

This book celebrates the differences and similarities that connect all people. See what seven-year-old Lena discovers when she paints a picture of herself.

The Secret to Freedom

By Marcia Vaughan,
illustrated by Larry Johnson
Ages 5 and up

Set during the years before the Civil War, this is the story of a young slave named Lucy and her journey to freedom. Learn about the important quilt patterns of the Underground Railroad code.

Historic Monuments: The Civil War's 54th Massachusetts Regiment—The Shaw Memorial

By Julia Hargrove,
illustrated by Gary Mohrman
Ages 9 and up

Find out more about the story of Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment from original documents and challenging activities.

try this!

activity 1

Relief

A *relief* is a type of sculpture that has images raised from a flat surface. The Shaw Memorial is an example of *high relief* because the images project far from the surface. When you are in the Gallery, you can almost see all the way around Colonel Shaw and his horse.

Coins and medals are examples of *low relief* because the images on them are raised only slightly off the surface. Compare the high relief of the Shaw Memorial to the low relief of the medals on display in the West Building, Ground Floor gallery 16, such as the one pictured below.



low relief
Costanzo da Ferrara, *The Sultan Riding*, c. 1481, bronze. National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection



1 Pick up a penny or a quarter and feel the raised relief image on it. Because the image on a coin is done in low relief, you can make a rubbing of the relief.



3 Take a colored pencil or crayon and gently color the paper on top of the coin. The image made in relief will appear.

2 Place several coins on a table and cover them with a sheet of plain paper.

activity 2

Home, Sweet Home

In Winslow Homer's painting of a Union army camp, two soldiers listen as a regimental band in the distance plays "Home, Sweet Home." The standing soldier keeps watch over the food cooking on the fire. The seated soldier writes a letter home. What do you think daily life was like for these men while fighting in the Civil War? Imagine that you are inside this picture.



1 Write your own letter home describing what life is like there. Where do you sleep and eat? How do you pass the time in camp? What do you miss about home?



Winslow Homer, *Home, Sweet Home*, c. 1863, oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Patrons' Permanent Fund