

STAMP SERVICES



January 2006



Fellow Educator,

The United States Postal Service and Dr. Jacqueline Hansen proudly present the most recent in a series of education materials! This education kit celebrates Hattie McDaniel, an extraordinary entertainer. She is featured on the 29<sup>th</sup> stamp in the US Postal Service's Black Heritage series. Hattie McDaniel was the first black actor to be nominated for and to win an Academy Award for her portrayal of Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*. She was also the first black performer to sing on network radio and to star in a radio series.

Dr. Hansen is a former elementary teacher and current Assistant Professor of Education at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. She integrates best teaching practices into lessons designed to invite and excite students to learn more about black Americans. Students will participate in grand conversations, literature circles, research teams, and cooperative groups as they explore the life of Hattie McDaniel and the role of the Underground Railroad and black soldiers during the Civil War.

Instructional activities support these national standards:

- International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English Standards for the English Language Arts: 1,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,12
- National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum: NSS-C.5-8.5 Roles of the Citizen, NSS-USH.5-12.5 ERA 5: Civil War and Reconstruction
- National Standards for Arts Education: MNA-T.5-8.1 Script Writing; NA-t.5-8.2 Acting
- ISTE National Education Technology Standards: basic operations and concepts; social, ethical, and human issues; technology productivity tools; technology communication tools; technology research tools

Celebrate Black History Month by studying this extraordinary entertainer. Discover the ways that Hattie McDaniel set the stage for future black performers. Live the life of a black Civil War soldier. Take a ride on the Underground Railroad. This will be a journey your students will never forget!

Educationally yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Failor".

David Failor, Executive Director  
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## THE EARLY YEARS

Hattie McDaniel was born in Wichita, Kansas, on June 10, 1895. She was the thirteenth child of Henry McDaniel, a Baptist minister, and Susan Holbert, a spiritual singer. Hattie's father was a former slave and a Union soldier in the Civil War. After the war, the family moved to Wichita, Kansas, where people accepted blacks as part of their community.

Hattie's family moved to Denver, Colorado, in 1913. Her brother, Otis, wrote a play called *Champion of the Freedman*. Hattie enjoyed acting in the play so much that she dropped out of East Denver High School and moved to Kansas City, Missouri, with her brothers, Otis and Sam. There they created a performing troupe, the McDaniel Brothers Stock Company.

Hattie developed her singing and acting skills by performing with her brothers and touring black theaters with tent shows and vaudeville acts. She won a gold medal from the Woman's Christian Temperance Union for her performance of *Convict Joe*. Hattie became the first black performer to sing on network radio when she performed with George Morrison's orchestra in 1915. She toured the Pantages and Orpheum vaudeville circuits with the orchestra. When she couldn't find a job in show business, Hattie worked as a maid, cook, or washerwoman. When working as a maid in the women's washroom at Sam Pick's Suburban Inn in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the 1920's, Hattie auditioned for the inn's floor show and starred in the show for two years! Hattie cut a record in 1926 but never became a famous recording artist.

Hattie began appearing in theatrical productions in the late 1920's. One of her first big parts was singing a duet, *I Still Suits Me*, with Paul Robeson in the traveling production of *Show Boat*. Hattie decided to move to Hollywood to act in movies in 1931. She debuted in *Golden West* in 1932. Hattie appeared in comedies, dramas, westerns, and musicals. Some of her most famous roles were in *Song of the South*, *Since You Went Away*, *Nothing Sacred*, and *Alice Adams*. She sang duets with Will Rogers in *Judge Priest* and Clark Gable in *Saratoga*. Hattie usually played the role of a maid, nanny, or servant because those were the only roles that were available for blacks in Hollywood films at that time.

## EXTRAORDINARY ENTERTAINER

Margaret Mitchell's classic novel about the Civil War, *Gone with the Wind*, was published in 1936. In 1939 David O. Selznick turned the book into a movie. One of the major characters in the movie was a maid named Mammy. Louise Beavers, Hattie Noel, and Eleanor Roosevelt's maid all tried out for the part, but Hattie won the role because she believed she could create a unique Mammy character.

Hattie's association with *Gone with the Wind* was very controversial. Many of the film's stars were present at the premier in Atlanta, Georgia, in December 1939. But because



the city of Atlanta didn't allow blacks to attend film premieres, Hattie wrote a letter to Mr. Selznick saying she would be unable to attend. The original movie program had Hattie's picture on the back. However, due to racial intolerance in Atlanta, her picture was replaced with a picture of Alicia Rhett, a lesser character in the movie.

Hattie also faced fierce opposition to the film from the black community. Picketers demonstrated against *Gone with the Wind* in Chicago and New York, saying that the character of Mammy was a reminder of slavery. The NAACP protested the characters Hattie played, but the parts of maids and servants were the only roles available for black actors at that time! Throughout the controversy, Hattie played her characters with dignity and a sense of humor. Joseph T. Skerrett wrote "like other great black performers before her, she realized and accepted the limitations of the roles in which she was cast—but within those limits she reached for power, asserting the strength and humanity of the characters she interpreted." Hattie said that her role as Mammy was an opportunity to "glorify Negro womanhood."

Hattie did such an exceptional job acting as Mammy that she won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress! She was the very first black actor to ever be nominated for or to win an Academy Award! On February 29, 1940, Hattie attended the Twelfth Annual Academy Awards program. She accepted the award, saying:

*Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, fellow members of the motion picture industry and honored guests: This is one of the happiest moments of my life, and I want to thank each one of you who had a part in selecting me for one of the awards, for your kindness. It has made me feel very, very humble; and I shall always hold it as a beacon for anything that I may be able to do in the future. I sincerely hope I shall always be a credit to my race and the motion picture industry. My heart is too full to tell you just how I feel, and may I say thank you and God bless you.*

Even after winning an Oscar, Hattie continued to play maids in future films. When criticized for that choice, she said, "I'd rather make \$700 a week playing a maid than earn \$7 a day being a maid." Many of her mammy-maid characters were sassy, independent-minded characters who were cleverer than their employers. Even though the roles she played were controversial, Hattie was a pioneer in the movie industry because her work opened doors of opportunity for future black actors. Her adoring fans called her "Hi-Hat Hattie" and "The Colored Sophie Tucker."

## BEYOND TARA

Hattie was a leader in the black community. During World War II, she led the black section of the Hollywood Victory committee and organized entertainment for the black troops. She promoted fund-raising benefits for black children's education. When a group of white neighbors in her Los Angeles neighborhood tried to keep blacks from moving into their neighborhood, Hattie filed and won an anti-discrimination lawsuit.

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Even though she was the most celebrated black movie actress of her time, Hattie also enjoyed working on the radio in shows such as: *The Optimistic Donuts*, *Show Boat*, *Amos and Andy*, and *Eddie Cantor*. She earned two stars on the Matt Justice Black Hollywood Walk of Fame; one for radio at 6933 Hollywood Boulevard and one for motion pictures at 1719 Vine Street.

Walter White, head of the NAACP in the 1940s, lobbied Hollywood to end stereotyped roles for black actors. So, Hattie decided to focus more upon her radio career. In 1947 she starred in *The Beulah Show*, the first radio program in which a black person played a starring role. This time, she earned praise from black political groups! *The Beulah Show* became a television program in 1951. Hattie starred in the first three episodes before she became too sick to continue.

Hattie died of breast cancer at the Motion Picture Home and Hospital in Los Angeles on October 26, 1952. After her death, Hattie's Oscar was willed to Howard University in Washington, DC. The Award disappeared during the race riots in the 1960s and hasn't been seen since. In 2004, Academy president, Frank R. Pierson, wrote an official letter recognizing her achievements and dedication to the art of filmmaking.

Hattie's last request, that she be buried at Hollywood Memorial Park, was denied because it was a whites-only cemetery. Her family buried her instead at Rosedale Cemetery, where she was the first African American interred there. In 1998, after Tyler Cassity bought the Hollywood Memorial Park, he offered to have Hattie's remains buried in his cemetery to honor her last request. Her family decided to leave Hattie in the Rosedale Cemetery. Therefore, Mr. Cassity erected a four-foot tall gray and pink granite memorial and held a dedication ceremony in her honor. Hattie's grand-nephew, Edgar Goff, wrote this inscription:

*To honor her last wish*

Hattie McDaniel

1895-1952

Renowned Performer

Academy Award

1939

*Gone with the Wind*

"Aunt Hattie, you are a credit to your craft, your race, and to your family."

Hattie McDaniel's life has been honored by many artists. Larry Parr wrote an award-winning musical biography of her life, *Hi-Hat Hattie*, which has been produced in regional theaters across the United States. Several books have been written about her life. Whoopi Goldberg narrated a recent documentary, *Beyond Tara: The Extraordinary Life of Hattie McDaniel*. Hattie was also honored in her hometown of Wichita, Kansas, at the 2004 Tallgrass Festival. Wichita Mayor Carlos Mayans, proclaimed October 10, 2004 as Hattie McDaniel Day. During the festivities, Kasi Lemmons said, "Hattie McDaniel was a trailblazer. Looking back from where we are now, it's hard to imagine the strength it must have taken to show up on those sets and play those characters—caricatures that did not reflect her life or the people she knew." Trailblazer. Extraordinary Entertainer. Hattie McDaniel.



# LESSON ONE

## Hi-Hat Hattie

**Materials Needed:** multiple copies of the Hattie McDaniel biography, large chart paper and markers, miscellaneous art supplies, computer with Internet access, video camera

**Setting the Stage:** Who is your very favorite actor? What movies has this actor starred in? Why is this person your favorite actor? *Give students time to think before sharing with a partner. Volunteers share with the class.* Today we're starting a series of lessons celebrating one of America's most exceptional black actresses, Hattie McDaniel.

**Activity:** Duplicate and distribute copies of Hattie McDaniel's biography. Before reading each section, please introduce the specialized vocabulary. Students should respond to the journal prompts before participating in the class activities.

### The Early Years

**Vocabulary:** spiritual, freedman, troupe, comedienne, vaudeville, dramatization, washerwoman, duets

**Journal Prompts:** When was Hattie born? Describe Hattie's family. How did Hattie develop her singing and acting talents?

**Class Activities:** Students share their journal responses in a grand conversation. Access [www.classicmoviemusicals.com/mcdaniel.htm](http://www.classicmoviemusicals.com/mcdaniel.htm) to learn more about the movies Hattie appeared in: Work together as a class to write a summary of Hattie's early years. Display the summary in the classroom.

### Extraordinary Entertainer

**Vocabulary:** novel, controversial, premieres, racial intolerance, opposition, demonstrated, controversy, nominated, asserting, humanity, interpreted, glorify

**Journal Prompts:** What were some problems Hattie encountered when she played the part of Mammy? What award did Hattie win? What were her nicknames? Who are some other famous black actors you know?

**Class Activities:** Students share their journal responses in a grand conversation. Have student pairs conduct research on other famous black Oscar winners: Sidney Poitier, Louis Gossett Jr., Denzel Washington, Whoopi Goldberg, Cuba Gooding Jr., Halle Berry, Jamie Foxx, and Morgan Freeman. They may also conduct research on famous black actresses on these sites: <http://www.africanamericans.com/Actors.htm>, <http://mahoganycafe.com/>, and <http://www.factmonster.com/spot/bhmbios1.htm>. Be sure to screen the sites before student use because of pop-ups. Work together as a class to write a summary of this section. Display the summary in the classroom.

### Beyond Tara

**Vocabulary:** promoted, anti-discrimination, celebrated, lobbied, stereotyped, episodes, riots, achievements, dedication, granite, memorial, regional, documentary, honored, trailblazer, caricatures

**Journal Prompts:** In what ways was Hattie a black leader? How has she been honored? When did she die? Where is she buried?



**Class Activities:** Students share their journal responses in a grand conversation. Access [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4946312](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4946312) to hear Hattie speak during an NPR show. Visit [www.woodsontheweb.com/Scenes\\_of\\_the\\_Crimes/hattie\\_mcdaniel\\_star.htm](http://www.woodsontheweb.com/Scenes_of_the_Crimes/hattie_mcdaniel_star.htm) to view one of Hattie's stars. Access [www.cemeteryguide.com/mcdaniel.html](http://www.cemeteryguide.com/mcdaniel.html) to see Hattie's memorial marker. Work together as a class to write a summary of this section. Display the summary in the classroom.

**Extension/Enrichment Activities:**

- ◆ Students create and share a poster, hat, or hatbox full of items depicting Hattie's life.
- ◆ Students create true and false statements about Hattie McDaniel's life to use in the Hollywood Squares activity.
- ◆ Create a special newscast, documentary, or radio talk show about Hattie's life. In addition to writing and telling a narrative about her life, students may conduct mock interviews of black celebrities talking about the impact Hattie made on the American entertainment industry. Share with other classes.

## LESSON TWO

### Freedom Fighters

**Materials Needed:** quilt (if available), featured books, computer with Internet access, miscellaneous art supplies, US map with markers and yarn, large chart paper and markers, red and green construction paper, student-created true-false statements

**Setting the Stage:** What is a freedom that Americans enjoy? *Invite students' input.* When Hattie's father, Henry McDaniel was born, he was not free. He was a slave owned by John McDaniel, a farmer in Lincoln County, Tennessee. Slaves were black people who were forced to work on Southern plantations. They did not have the right to get married, have an education, or own property. They had to do whatever their masters told them to do. Many times they were sold to other masters and they never saw their families again. *How do you think they felt about their lives?* Many slaves decided they wanted to run away to Canada so that they could be free. Runaway slaves who were caught were hurt or killed. Although it was very dangerous, many slaves decided it was worth the risk. Hattie's father believed in fighting for his freedom, too. After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Henry McDaniel became a free man, or freedman. He joined Company C, the 12th United States Colored Infantry Regiment at the Elk River, because he wanted to fight for the freedom of all black Americans. Fighting for freedom had its risks, too. During the war, Henry got frostbite in both legs. A mortar shell exploded near his head, shattering his jaw and causing him to lose hearing in his right ear. During the next few days you're going to learn how black and white people fought for slaves' freedom.

### Literature Circles

Students explore quality children's literature to learn about the Underground Railroad and black Civil War soldiers.

- ◆ Find multiple copies of these books: *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* by Deborah Hopkinson, *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* by Faith Ringgold, *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter, and *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco. If multiple copies are not available, read the books aloud as a whole-class experience or create a text set for a reading center. Briefly introduce each book to the entire class.



## LESSON THREE

### Hollywood Squares

- 1** Collect the true-false statements that students generated about Hattie McDaniel's life, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Fighters. Check for accuracy. Write each statement on a separate piece of paper. Place the statements in a bowl or envelope.
- 2** Divide the class into a red team and a green team.
- 3** Arrange the classroom furniture into a tic-tac-toe formation:  
3 squares per row; 3 rows.
- 4** Give a piece of red paper and a piece of green paper to the participants in each square.
- 5** Divide the class in half. Group A occupies the squares first. Multiple students can occupy each "square". Group B is further divided into two sets of contestants: green team and red team. Seat the teams on either side of the emcee (you), facing the squares.
- 6** The team who has a member whose birthday is closest to Hattie McDaniel's birthday (June 10, 1895) goes first. For this description, let's say the green team gets to go first.
- 7** The green team selects a square. The emcee reads a statement. The people occupying the square say whether they think the statement is true or false. They may purposely mislead the green team if they wish. The green team decides (as a group) whether they agree or disagree with the square's response.
- 8** If the green team is correct, they win the square and the occupants of the square hold up a green sheet of paper. If the green team is wrong, the red team wins the square by default and the occupants hold up a red sheet of paper. Then it's the red team's turn to play.
- 9** The game continues until one team has "won" 3 squares horizontally, diagonally, or vertically. They cannot win the last square by default; they have to actually answer that question. After a team wins, Group B occupies the squares and Group A divides into red and green teams to play another round.



- ◆ Students select which book interests them the most. Form literature circles of no more than 5 students per group.
- ◆ Identify roles for each student: leader (facilitates group activities), passage master (selects important passages), word wizard (explains key words), connector (helps team make personal connections), and artist (selects/draws key pictures).
- ◆ Students set a schedule for reading the book. They can read the books independently or with a partner.
- ◆ Students respond to these prompts in their reading journals: Why did the slaves want to run away? Who helped them? How did they get where they needed to go? What was life like for a Civil War soldier?
- ◆ Students share their responses. Then they discuss the book from the perspectives of the roles to which they've been assigned (see step 3).

Each group creates a flowchart, concept map, or storyboard depicting the information they learned from their book. They should prepare to share this information with the entire class.

### Extension Activities

- ◆ Learn what the words of the *Follow the Drinking Gourd* song mean by accessing this website: <http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/gourd2.html>. Sing the song as it appears in the back of Winter's book. Plot the Underground Railroad route on a U.S. map using yarn and tacks.
- ◆ Students work with their literature circle teammates to conduct additional research about the Underground Railroad and Freedom Fighters (black Civil War soldiers, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, William Still, Thomas Garrett, and John Brown). Post large charts in the room with these headings: *Underground Railroad Facts* and *Freedom Fighters' Feats*. Students record the facts they've learned about their selected topics on the class charts. Use traditional reference materials and the Internet.

<http://www2.lhric.org/pocantico/tubman/tubman.html>

[http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/02/0205\\_040205\\_slavequilts.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/02/0205_040205_slavequilts.html)

<http://www.beavton.k12.or.us/greenway/leahy/ugrr/>

[http://www.bjmjr.com/civwar/org\\_usct.htm](http://www.bjmjr.com/civwar/org_usct.htm)

[http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/history/aa\\_cw\\_history.htm](http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/history/aa_cw_history.htm)

<http://www.washingtonch.k12.oh.us/mapsite/usctcw>

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/boysinwar.htm>

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/emancipation.htm>

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/freedmen.htm>

- ◆ Students write simulated journal entries about the flight to freedom or fight for freedom from a participant's perspective. Share these journal entries using an author's chair.
- ◆ As a class, create multiple true and false statements of key information students learned about the Underground Railroad and Freedom Fighters. These facts will be used in the *Hollywood Squares* culminating activity.
- ◆ Students create and share individual or team projects (i.e. freedom quilts, songs, dioramas, books, poems, dramatizations) demonstrating what they learned about the Underground Railroad and the Freedom Fighters through their literature circle and research activities.