

Roslyn Cemetery

Lesson Four – Grade Seven

Black Miners and Mt. Olivet Cemetery

Summary

The historic Roslyn Cemetery includes the Mt. Olivet Cemetery, an African American cemetery, which reminds us of the important role this ethnic group played in the early years of Roslyn and the coal mines.



Danger was a way of life for Roslyn miners, who dealt with methane gas, cave-ins, explosions and other accidents. Roslyn's first coal miners, who were typically first- or second-generation immigrants, went on strike in 1888, demanding better working conditions. The

Northern Pacific Coal Company countered with a common strikebreaking tactic: they recruited out-of-town miners to work in place of the strikers. In this case, the strikebreakers were African American men, some of who traveled to Roslyn with their families. In addition to creating animosity between miners and strikebreakers, the Company fueled racial prejudice against the Black workers to prevent strikers and strikebreakers joining forces against the Company.



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A note on language: In this lesson, we encourage you and the students to use inclusive language that honors human agency and dignity. For example, use “enslaved people” vs “slaves”; “enslavers” vs “slave masters”; and active language to describe African American miners’ immigration to Roslyn as opposed to passive language such as “imported”, “brought,” or “shipped” to Roslyn. Additionally, remind students that we sometimes encounter words in historical texts that we do not use today, such as “Negro” or “colored men.” We encourage classroom conversations about linguistic justice.

The African American miners and their families encountered resentment and anger from the strikers, sometimes to the point of making them fear for their lives. Initially, Roslyn's Black families lived separately, worked separately, socialized separately, and buried their dead separately (Mt Olivet Cemetery). But eventually, the Company agreed to improve working conditions and strikers returned to work. Former strikers then worked side by side with men who had served as strike-breakers. Over time the animosity between original residents and the African American community lessened, and Roslyn became a relatively peaceful community.

In this lesson, students will learn about the strike of 1888 that precipitated the recruitment of African American men for the Roslyn mines. They will explore the challenges generally faced by these miners and see them through the eyes of miners' family members. Students will learn about the life of an individual, researching and reflecting on how his/her culture and experiences contributed to the development of Roslyn. A biography research project culminates in the publication of a class newspaper.

State Standards:

H1.6-8.4 Analyze a major historical event and how it is represented on timelines from different cultural perspectives.

H2.6-8.2 Explain and analyze how individuals and movements have shaped Washington state history since statehood.

H2.6-8.3 Explain and analyze how cultures and ethnic groups contributed to Washington state history since statehood.

Essential Questions

- Why was the strike of 1888 a turning point in the history of Roslyn?
- How was Roslyn's development influenced by the African American miners and their families who moved there beginning in 1888?
- What unique hardships did the African American miners, and their families face in Roslyn?

Essential Understandings

- The strike of 1888 resulted in the arrival of African American families to Roslyn and their eventual integration into the community.
- The historical immigration of African American miners and their families to Roslyn influenced the history and culture of the area.
- The Roslyn community suffered from the instigation of prejudice and discrimination against the African American miners.

Primary Sources

Oral [Interview](#) with Ethel Craven (multiple segments, each 30-45 minutes in length)
https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/roslyn_history/23/

Secondary Sources

Mt. Olivet Plot [List](#)
<https://www.interment.net/data/us/wa/kittitas/mt-olivet-cemetery/index.htm>
Washington State Archives: Mt Olivet Cemetery [Index](#)
<https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Collections/TitleInfo/1097>
Newspaper Articles

Teacher Prep

Review the lesson plan, locate and print needed materials.
Read: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/roslyn-washington/>
Read: <https://www.historylink.org/File/9240>
Read: <https://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/the-vocabulary-of-freedom/>

Student Prep

The day before the lesson, prepare students to talk about the experiences of African American families in Roslyn by engaging students in a vocabulary activity:

WORD	DEFINITION
Strike	
Strikebreaker	
Recruit	
Racism	
Discrimination	
Prejudice	
Integration	
Animosity	
(other words?)	

Lesson Plan

Opening: Remind students that today they will learn about the experiences of African American families in Roslyn. State the lesson objectives and and/or write them on the board.

Ask students to recall the immigrant groups that were in/around Roslyn in the late 1800s/early 1900s. Tell them about the first group of African Americans that arrived in Roslyn in 1888. Provide students with the background of the strike of 1888, which precipitated the recruitment of the Black miners, with the short [article about Roslyn](http://www.BlackPast.org) (www.BlackPast.org).

Pose questions to students:

- *How do you think the Roslyn community was influenced by the arrival of African American miners and their families?*
- *What unique hardships did the Black miners experience, compared to the hardships of earlier immigrants?*
- *How do you think these individuals, their cultures and histories contributed to the development of Roslyn and the community's future?*

If needed, write the questions on the board. Give students time to think, pair up and share their thoughts with a partner or small group. Encourage students to share ideas while summarizing and/or recording them on the board.

Once students have shared, transition to main activities by taking students back to the year 1888.

Main Activities:

Option 1

Timeline activity: To situate the immigration of African American miners in historical context, the class will complete a brief timeline activity which includes the events/dates below. Depending on time, the class can complete this together or in pairs/small groups. Information in parentheses is offered as additional context to share with students.

- 1. 1619: Arrival of the first slave ship in the U.S.** (forcibly bringing and selling African people into the formal system of enslavement)
- 2. 1861: The Civil War began** (one of the three main reasons for the war was enslavement of African American people)
- 3. 1863: Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation** (which freed some but not all enslaved people)
- 4. 1865: The Civil War ended** (with 750,000 dead)
- 5. 1866: Passage of the Civil Rights Act** (defined all persons born in the U.S. as citizens and asserted that all citizens are equally protected by the law, including formerly enslaved people)
- 6. 1870: Work on the Northern Pacific Railway began** (to connect the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean, the mines in Roslyn produced the coal that fueled trains)
- 7. 1886: Roslyn began to be settled** (officially incorporated in 1890)
- 8. 1888: First group of African American miners immigrated to Roslyn**
- 9. 1889: Washington granted statehood**

Option 2

Roslyn African American Miner/Anccestor Biography: To better understand the unique experiences and important contributions of the black community in Roslyn, and how these community members influenced Roslyn history, introduce and explain that students will work in small groups to complete a biography project. Instruct students to research the life of one person and connect that person's experiences to the events in Roslyn in 1888.

Biography Assignment Details: Display/share [Black Miners/Ancestors Biography List](#). Put students into small groups or group students according to interest. Tell students that they are now reporters and will be submitting their biography article to a class newspaper titled, *The Contribution Times: Influential Black Americans in Roslyn*. Pass out the [biography template](#) to guide students in their research. Depending on time, students can fill out the template only or once the template is complete, each student

works individually to turn it into short written pieces that the teacher can collect and publish as a class newspaper. Ideally, students would also perform an internet search for an image of their person so that it can be included in the final product.

Option 3

Article Review: Students read the newspaper article: “Roslyn Historians Recall Black Settlers' Contributions” and write a short reflection/response on how this article deepens their understanding of the person they researched.

Closing and Self-Assessment:

In closing, direct students to return to the opening questions:

- *How do you think the Roslyn community was influenced by the arrival of African American miners and their families?*
- *What unique hardships did the Black miners experience, compared to the hardships of earlier immigrants?*
- *How do you think these individuals, their cultures and histories contributed to the development of Roslyn and the community's future?*

Lead a discussion about any changes to their earlier answers, given the research that they just completed. You may want to pass out exit slips for students to write down their answers now, informed by the day's lesson. Collect these slips as students leave for the day to evaluate their understanding.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.facinghistory.org/educator-resources>