

Books by the Stack



The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny & The Fight for Civil Rights by Steve Sheinkin

This is a fascinating story of the prejudice that faced black men and women in America's armed forces during World War II, and a nuanced look at those who gave their lives in service of a country where they lacked the most basic rights.

Why you'll like it: Historical. Civil Rights. Deep. Navy. Educational.

About the Author: Steve Sheinkin is the award-winning author of several fascinating books on American history, including *The Notorious Benedict Arnold*, which won the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults and the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award for nonfiction. His recent book *Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—The World's Most Dangerous Weapon* was a Newbery Honor Book, National Book Award finalist, and winner of the Sibert Award as well as the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults. He lives in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to be a hero? Generate some common qualities heroes share. Who are some of the heroes in your lives?
2. Why did Sheinkin decide to open up the book with the story about Dorie Miller? How does this story compare with the common heroic qualities discussed?
3. What inferences can you make about Sheinkin's definition of a hero?
4. Briefly discuss the background information of World War II: <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii>
5. Read Henry's Wadsworth Longfellow's poem entitled, *My Lost Youth* <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/my-lost-youth>. Talk about the loss of innocence and war and how it relates to the story.
6. Why isn't this historical story more popular? Name some popular civil rights story.
7. Pick a few of these words and discuss their meanings: ammunition (1), shrapnel (2), mess attendant (4), segregated (9), patriotic (12), mutiny (15), incendiary (24), cadence (30), crane (34), winch (34), the hold (34), Thurgood Marshall (40), NAACP (42), 14th Amendment (44), discrimination (50), foreboding (53), cargo ship (53), boxcars (57), barracks (61), tourniquet (63), stern (66), compensate (73), petition (76), court-martial (82), traitor (86), desegregation (88), solitary confinement (92), conspiracy (106), testimony (110), motives (118), mockery (129), usurp (138), subvert (138), verdict (139), dishonorable discharge (140), active sea duty (143), penitentiary

(143), hampering (145), appeal (147), inadmissible (147), uphold (148), Executive Order 9981 (153), insubordination (156),integrated (157), branded (160), pardons (164)

8. Explore the History of Labor Movement: <http://www.history.com/topics/labor>. Discuss how this movement might have influenced the Port Chicago's 50 decision after the explosion.
9. Read Audre Lorde's essay *The Fourth of July* highlights the irony of experiencing racism on Independence Day. Discuss related ironies in *Port Chicago 50*.
10. Does this story use songs for protest? Talk about musicians and songs that highlights human and civil rights violations.

(Questions issued by publisher)

