

Teacher's Introduction: Charles Richard Drew



Charles R. Drew, MD. ca. 1949

Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

a. What are your observations on the portrait?

Students may note that Dr. Drew looks formal in the photo, and that the photo was taken around 1949. Some may name the “Courtesy” line and identify where this photo is held/archived.

(Optional) Teachers may inform students that many places, such as the national and state archives, universities, libraries, museums, and other organizations, collect and preserve historical documents and records. There may be other primary sources that provide firsthand accounts of the past, such as photographs, letters, memos, reports, notes, emails, text messages, audios, videos, and art works.

Read-aloud text: “African American surgeon Charles Richard Drew (1904-1950) has been called “the father of the blood bank,” for his outstanding role in conceiving, organizing, and directing America’s first large-scale blood banking program during the early years of World War II. While best known for the blood bank work, Drew devoted much of his career to raising the standards of African American medical education at Howard University, where he trained a generation of outstanding surgeons, and worked to break through the barriers that segregation imposed on black physicians. His premature death in a car accident generated enduring stories that he was a victim of medical segregation, though this was repeatedly proved false.”

b. What information can you gather about Dr. Drew from the text?

- Was an African American and a surgeon, and was born in 1904 and died in 1950.
- Became known as “the father of the blood bank”
- Trained/mentored other African American surgeons and fought to end the discrimination against black physicians

c. What do you already know about historical events and setting during which Dr. Drew lived?

- During his life time (1904-1950), there were two World Wars. At that time, people in the U.S. lived through the Great Depression in 1930s and in a racially segregated society.

d. What one thing would you like to learn about Dr. Drew based on this introduction?

- Students may have questions about his family, becoming a doctor, blood bank work, etc.