

GRADES
9-12

JUNETEENTH

READING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES



INFORMATIONAL
READING PASSAGE



VOCABULARY
PRACTICE



COMPREHENSION
QUESTIONS



WRITING
REFLECTION



ANSWER KEY
INCLUDED

*Celebrate Freedom.
Honor History.
Inspire the Future.*



Freedom
Unity
Hope

<p>Vocabulary</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>1. freedom</td><td>The power to live without unfair control.</td></tr><tr><td>2. enslaved</td><td>Forced to work without pay or freedom.</td></tr><tr><td>3. proclamation</td><td>An important public announcement.</td></tr><tr><td>4. federal holiday</td><td>A holiday recognized by the United States government.</td></tr><tr><td>5. equality</td><td>When people are treated fairly and equally.</td></tr></table>	1. freedom	The power to live without unfair control.	2. enslaved	Forced to work without pay or freedom.	3. proclamation	An important public announcement.	4. federal holiday	A holiday recognized by the United States government.	5. equality	When people are treated fairly and equally.	<p>What Is Juneteenth?</p> <p>Juneteenth is a holiday that celebrates freedom in the United States. It is celebrated every year on June 19. The holiday remembers the day when enslaved African Americans in Texas learned they were free.</p> <p>During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This order declared that enslaved people in Confederate states were free. However, many enslaved people did not learn the news right away.</p>	<p>Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">When is Juneteenth celebrated? A. July 4 B. June 19 C. January 1 D. February 14What did the Emancipation Proclamation declare? A. Schools would close B. Texas became a state C. Enslaved people were free D. A new president was electedIn which state did people learn they were free on June 19, 1865? A. Georgia B. Florida C. Texas D. Virginia
1. freedom	The power to live without unfair control.											
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Informational Reading Passage

The Historical Significance of Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a national holiday observed on June 19 that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. The holiday specifically marks the day in 1865 when enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas, were informed of their freedom, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War. The proclamation declared that enslaved people living in Confederate states “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” Although the proclamation was a major turning point in American history, it did not immediately end slavery throughout the country. Enforcement depended on the presence of Union troops, and many Confederate states continued to resist federal authority.

Texas became one of the final areas where slavery remained largely intact during the war. Because of its distance from major battle zones, many enslavers relocated to Texas with enslaved people in an attempt to avoid Union control. As a result, thousands of African Americans in Texas continued living in bondage long after the Emancipation Proclamation was announced.

On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston with federal troops and issued General Order No. 3. The order informed enslaved African Americans that they were free and emphasized the new relationship between former enslavers and formerly enslaved people. For many African Americans in Texas, this announcement represented the first official confirmation of freedom. Following emancipation, African American communities began holding annual Juneteenth celebrations that included prayer services, music, storytelling, educational events, and communal meals. These gatherings honored the resilience, culture, and achievements of Black Americans while preserving the memory of emancipation for future generations.

Informational Reading Passage

Over time, Juneteenth celebrations spread throughout the United States as African American families migrated to different regions. Despite its historical importance, Juneteenth was not officially recognized as a federal holiday until 2021. Today, the holiday serves as both a celebration and a time of reflection. Many people use Juneteenth to examine the lasting effects of slavery, segregation, discrimination, and racial inequality in American society.

Juneteenth also highlights the importance of historical awareness and civic responsibility. The holiday encourages Americans to confront difficult aspects of the nation's history while recognizing the ongoing efforts toward equality, justice, and civil rights. By learning about Juneteenth, individuals can better understand how the past continues to shape modern society and why protecting freedom and equal opportunity remains essential.



Vocabulary

1. Commemorates

To honor or remember an important event.

2. Emancipation

The act of being freed from slavery or oppression.

3. Enforcement

The act of making sure laws or rules are followed.

4. Resilience

The ability to recover from hardship or challenges.

5. Segregation

The separation of groups of people based on race or other characteristics.

6. Discrimination

Unfair treatment of individuals or groups.

7. Civic Responsibility

The duties and actions expected of citizens in society.

8. Equality

The state of having equal rights, opportunities, and treatment.

Comprehension Questions

1. What does Juneteenth primarily commemorate?
 - a. The beginning of the Civil War
 - b. The signing of the Constitution
 - c. The end of slavery for enslaved African Americans in Texas
 - d. The passage of the Civil Rights Act
2. Why did the Emancipation Proclamation not immediately free all enslaved people?
 - a. It only applied in areas controlled by Union troops
 - b. It was rejected by Congress
 - c. It only applied to northern states
 - d. It was kept secret from the public
3. Why did many enslavers move to Texas during the Civil War?
 - a. Texas had stronger Union control
 - b. Texas was far from major battle zones
 - c. Slavery was illegal in Texas
 - d. Texas had already ended slavery
4. What was General Order No. 3?
 - a. A military plan to end the Civil War
 - b. A document announcing freedom for enslaved African Americans in Texas
 - c. A law creating Juneteenth celebrations
 - d. A speech by Abraham Lincoln
5. Which statement best expresses the central idea of the passage?
 - a. Juneteenth is only a historical celebration
 - b. Juneteenth recognizes freedom while encouraging reflection on equality and justice
 - c. Juneteenth ended discrimination in the United States
 - d. Juneteenth is celebrated mainly in Texas

Comprehension Questions

6. Explain why Juneteenth is considered both a celebration and a reflection.

7. How did African American communities preserve the meaning and importance of Juneteenth over time?

8. Why is historical awareness important when discussing Juneteenth and civil rights?

Comprehension Questions

9. Describe how the effects of slavery and segregation can still influence society today.

10. What lessons can modern society learn from Juneteenth?

Writing Prompt

Analytical Writing Response

Juneteenth represents both freedom and the continuing struggle for equality in the United States.

Write a well-developed response explaining:

- the historical significance of Juneteenth,
- why the holiday remains important today,
- and how understanding history can influence modern society.

Requirements:

- 2–3 paragraphs
- use evidence from the passage
- include analysis and personal reflection
- use formal academic language

Projects

Objective - Choose One

Students will examine the historical impact of Juneteenth and connect it to themes of freedom, civil rights, and social change.

Option 1: Historical Research Presentation

Create a presentation about:

- the Emancipation Proclamation,
- Juneteenth,
- Reconstruction,
- or the evolution of civil rights in America.

Requirements:

- 6–10 slides
- historical facts and analysis
- visuals and citations
- concluding reflection

Option 2: Historical Timeline

Create a detailed timeline including:

- slavery in America
- the Civil War
- the Emancipation Proclamation
- June 19, 1865
- Reconstruction
- the Civil Rights Movement
- Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday in 2021

Include explanations for each event.

Option 3: Reflective Essay

Write a 1–2 page essay discussing:

- why Juneteenth matters today,
- how history affects modern society,
- and the importance of equality and civic responsibility.

Use evidence and examples to support your ideas.

Project Rubric

4 – Excellent

Includes accurate historical information
Shows strong effort and creativity
Explains the importance of Juneteenth clearly
Organized and easy to understand

3 – Proficient

Includes most required information
Shows good understanding of the topic
Mostly organized and clear

2 – Developing

Missing some required information
Limited details or explanations
Organization may be confusing

1 – Beginning

Incomplete project
Very limited understanding shown
Difficult to understand or missing major parts

Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. b
5. b

Sample Short Answer Responses

6. Juneteenth is both a celebration of freedom and a reflection on the struggles African Americans faced during slavery and discrimination.
7. African American communities preserved Juneteenth through annual celebrations, storytelling, educational events, music, and community gatherings.
8. Historical awareness helps people understand how past events continue to affect society and why equality and civil rights remain important today.
9. The effects of slavery and segregation can still influence education, economic opportunities, and social equality in modern society.
10. Modern society can learn the importance of equality, justice, resilience, and the need to protect civil rights for all people.