



Juneteenth: Celebrate Freedom

Materials:

- PowerPoint: **Juneteenth: Celebrate Freedom**
- **What is Juneteenth?** at <https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/what-is-juneteenth/>
- **On the Road to Freedom Day** at <https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/on-the-road-to-freedom-day/>
- **Owning Emancipation** at <https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/owning-emancipation/>
- **Juneteenth the End of Slavery** at <https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/juneteenth-the-end-of-slavery/>
- **Celebrating the Juneteenth Legacy** at <https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/celebrating-juneteenth-legacy/>

Plan of Instruction:

1. **Introduction:** Juneteenth is the portmanteau for the words June and nineteenth. The date that the last slaves in Texas were told that they were free on June 19, 1865. There are many myths about how the slaves got the news so late. It was in the newspapers; the news was not late, but Texans had no intention of obeying the law. How did this happen?

The history of Texas is distinctively different from other states, first because of its revolt from Mexico and gaining its independence in 1836, then becoming an independent republic, and finally, its surrender to statehood on December 29, 1845, as a slave state. Texas had only been a state for twenty years when the Civil War ended.

So, even though Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, the Texas Confederate soldiers continued to fight. The Civil War's last battle on Texas soil on May 13, 1865, was a resounding Confederate win at Palmito Ranch near Brownsville, Texas. Texans were not eager to lose their autonomy and way of life as a slave state.

2. **Lecture:**

- a. **Slide 1: Title: *Juneteenth: Celebrate Freedom***

- b. **Slide 2: What is Juneteenth?** (Read Slide) Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration for the end of slavery and was first observed one year after the announcement of the end of slavery on June 19, 1865.



- c. **Slide 3: General Butler's Contrabands of War:** Union General Benjamin Butler refused to comply with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. He sought to protect escaped slaves by classifying those who fled to Union lines as contrabands of war.

The Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, embraced keeping slaves as war contraband because Butler, a lawyer before the Civil War, presented a well-reasoned argument. However, since the confiscated slaves had not been emancipated officially, they remained in legal limbo. General Butler's decision to "confiscate" those forced into labor for the Confederacy was a significant blow to the Confederate war effort.

The actions by Butler and Cameron to protect fugitive slaves influenced the passage of the Civil War Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862, which were designed to liberate slaves in the seceded states. Both the Department of War and the Department of the Navy authorized the employment of confiscated slaves as wage laborers.

- d. **Slide 4: The Great Negro Emancipation!** This political cartoon was published in Harper's Weekly on December 20, 1862, and reads, *"Sensation among 'our colored brethren' on ascertaining the Grand Performance to which they had invited on New Year's Day was unavoidably postponed to the year 1900!"*

The cartoon criticizes President Lincoln's emancipation policies by poking fun at his previous advocacy of gradual emancipation. In the cartoon, the figure with his back to the viewer and reading the poster is Horace Greeley. Note the letters on the bag in Greeley's hand: "HG N York."

President Lincoln had been cautious about emancipation. Before becoming president, he insisted that there be no federal authority to abolish slavery in states where it already existed. His goal was to stop the spread of slavery into the Western territories.

- e. **Slide 5: Emancipation Celebration Crowd:** Many black families left the South following the Emancipation Proclamation on the road to freedom. They preferred being together under the Union Army's protection than staying on farms and plantations as slaves.
- f. **Slide 6: On the Road to Freedom:** Escaped slaves followed the Union Army for protection. Even the defeat of the Union Army could not stop these slaves from emancipating themselves. Photographer Timothy O'Sullivan took a series of photographs of Union General John Pope's Army of Virginia in complete retreat. Slaves felt this was their last chance for freedom and followed the Union Army behind the Rappahannock River.
- g. **Slide 7: Battle of Palmito Ranch in Texas:** As mentioned in the introduction, the history of Texas is distinctively different from other states. Their autonomy as an independent republic before becoming a state and their refusal to surrender after Confederate General Lee did to Union General Grant caused the war to continue in Texas. The last Battle of Palmito Ranch near Brownsville, Texas, on May 13, 1865, was a resounding win for the Confederate Army.



However, it became clear that the Confederate troops were collapsing, and soldiers were deserting in large numbers.

On June 2, 1865, Confederate General Kirby Smith surrendered in Galveston to the Army of the United States.

- h. Slide 8: General Orders, #3:** Union General Gordon Granger announced on June 19, 1865: *"The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere."*

Finally, the Civil War was over, but the turmoil was just beginning in Texas.

- i. Slide 9: Emancipation of the Negroes- the Past and Future:** Thomas Nast was a famous illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*. The teenaged Nast was first successful as a political cartoonist at the first pictorial magazine, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, in 1855. The most excellent venue for Nast's work was while working for *Harper's Weekly*, starting in 1857.

Nast was the most powerful and influential political cartoonist that America has ever known. Harper's Weekly initially assigned him to illustrate the Civil War battlefield scenes, but he presented allegorical pieces with intense passion about the Civil War and later about Reconstruction.

Thomas Nast was born in Germany and brought to America in 1846; he had intense feelings of nationalism and was an anti-slavery advocate. During his peak productive years of the 1860s and 1870s, his illustrations profoundly affected American political life. His *The Emancipation of the Negroes – the Past and the Future* was an opportunity to illustrate his feelings on what he envisioned, inclusion, toleration, and unity. His political cartoon illustrated the violence and horrors of slavery and presented what the future might bring. The left side of the large drawing possesses scenes of the slave auction, beatings of slaves, vicious dogs hunting down slaves who are trying to escape, separation of families, and branding of slaves. The middle illustration is what freed blacks might have, a typical setting. They are gathered around a stove that has the Union brand. Their home is well-appointed, and the multi-generational family looks prosperous.

The right side is hopeful with black children attending school, people getting paid for their work, and a multicultural group is shown with new opportunities. Finally, Father Time holds a baby who breaks the shackles of slavery.



- j. **Slide 10: Official Juneteenth Committee, Austin Texas:** The first celebration for Juneteenth was established in Galveston in 1866 by reading the Emancipation Proclamation, prayers, singing, and parades. The celebrations spread to several cities throughout Texas.

This Juneteenth Emancipation Committee proudly stands in Austin, Texas, East Woods Park on June 19, 1900, to have this photographic documentation of this event to celebrate freedom and emancipation.

- k. **Slide 11: Juneteenth Celebration with Musicians, 1900:** The photographic documentation of events that celebrate Juneteenth is invaluable to the history of Juneteenth.

- l. **Slide 12: Emancipation Day, April 3, Richmond, Virginia:** (Read Slide)

- m. **Slide 13: Slave Reunion in Washington D.C.:** Three elderly former slaves, all 100 years old or older, enjoy the celebration of the fifty-fourth convention of former slaves, Washington, D.C. in 1916. The photo exemplifies the commitment to the promise of the future and the triumph of the human spirit.

- n. **Slide 14: Absolute Equality:** In Galveston, the Juneteenth Legacy Project worked with artist Reginald Adams to create a 5,000-square-foot mural, "Absolute Equality." The mural location is at the former site of the Union Army Headquarters, where General Gordon Granger issued General Order #3.

The portals in the design depict the slave Esteban arriving on the shores of Texas; another portal's theme is the Underground Railroad, President Abraham Lincoln, General Gordon Granger, and people marching. Other colorful illustrations include portrayals of black Union soldiers, the slave trade, and space exploration.

Galveston is hoping to gain more recognition of the Juneteenth holiday's significance.

- o. **Slide 15: Juneteenth Today:** There had been a revival in celebrating Juneteenth across the nation. Today's festivals feature music, food, and parades.

- p. **Slide 16: Juneteenth's Legacy:** (Read Slide) This is a portion of the Special Orders, #3

- q. **Slide 17: The End**

3. Guiding Questions:

- What is Juneteenth? Why is it important?
- What were Union General Butler's contrabands of war? What federal act did the South think was broken by General Butler?
- What were the Confiscation Acts of 1861 and 1862? Explain. How did these acts affect the South's war efforts?



- What person is criticized in the political cartoon, *The Great Negro Emancipation*?
- Why was President Lincoln cautious about the emancipation of the slaves? What did he say about his goals for the country?
- After the Emancipation Proclamation was presented, what did enslaved people do? Why?
- Why was the Battle of Palmito Ranch important? What happened after this battle?
- What were the reasons for Texas to keep fighting after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865?
- Read General Orders, #3. How did the enslaved Texans react to it? How did the slave owners and Confederate soldiers react to it?
- Study Thomas Nast's political cartoon, *Emancipation of the Negroes- the Past and Future*. What is an allegorical sense? Explain the allegorical significance of the illustration by Thomas Nast.
- Why is photographic documentation of events so necessary?
- *Absolute Equality* is a 5,000-foot mural in Galveston that celebrates the city's history from its founding to the present. Explain the significance of each of the portals in the brightly illustrated mural.
- Why is it essential to celebrate Juneteenth today?