

Name: _____

Juneteenth Fact Sheet for Teachers

- On June 19th, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas with 1,800 Union troops. Among other orders, he issued General Order No. 3, which reads as follows:

“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.”

- Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, in effect ending the Civil War. However, the formal surrender of the Confederacy did not occur until June 2, 1865. Texas was the final Confederate state to surrender to Union control.
- President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation freeing enslaved people held in Confederate territories went into effect on January 1, 1863. In practice, however, emancipation was only enforced in Union-controlled territory in Confederate states. In the aftermath of the Union capture of New Orleans in 1862, many slaveholders in Louisiana, Mississippi, and other eastern Confederate states moved west to Texas, taking their enslaved people with them in order to escape Union control.
- Granger’s General Order No. 3 did not immediately free all of the enslaved people in Texas. Many slaveholders suppressed the news until government agents or the Union army arrived on their plantations to enforce it. Some enslaved people successfully freed themselves, but others were met with violence by white slaveholders attempting to retain control.
- Juneteenth is often referred to as the “Black 4th of July” or “African American 4th of July.” One of the most famous declarations of why the 4th of July was not viewed as a holiday for black Americans came from Frederick Douglass’s “What to the Slave is the 4th of July?” speech from 1852, excerpted in part below:

“This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. I am not included within the pale of glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me.”

- The first Juneteenth celebrations occurred in Texas in 1866 or 1867. The celebration was brought to other parts of the country largely through African American migration to the North and West in the early twentieth century. The first state to recognize Emancipation Day (Juneteenth) as an official holiday was Texas in 1980. By 2020, forty-seven states had recognized Juneteenth as a state holiday. Many have called for recognition of Juneteenth as an official national holiday.