

THE DAY THE NEWS FINALLY ARRIVED: UNDERSTANDING JUNETEENTH

Bloom's Level: Understand

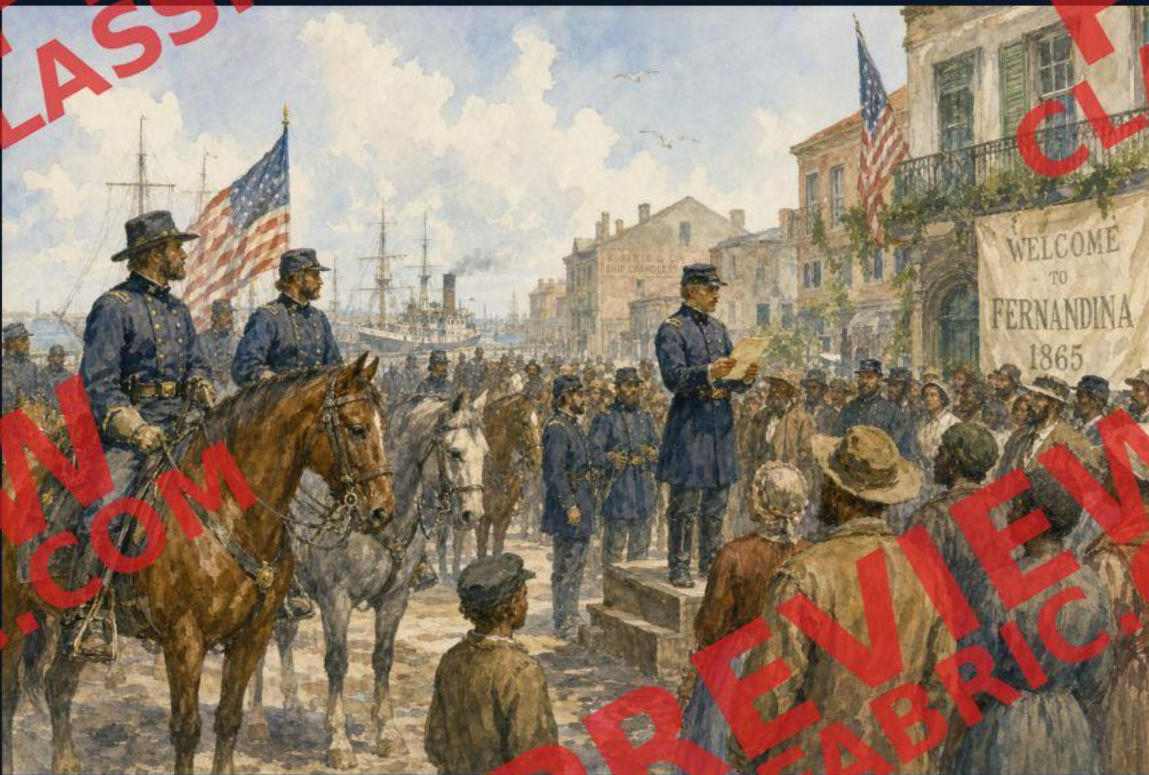
Standard:

NCSS.D2.HIS.9.6-8 — Historical Perspectives on Events

C3.D2.His.3.6-8 — Historical Events and Their Impact

TEKS §113.20(b)(5)(A) — Impact of Abolition and Emancipation

STUDENT EDITION

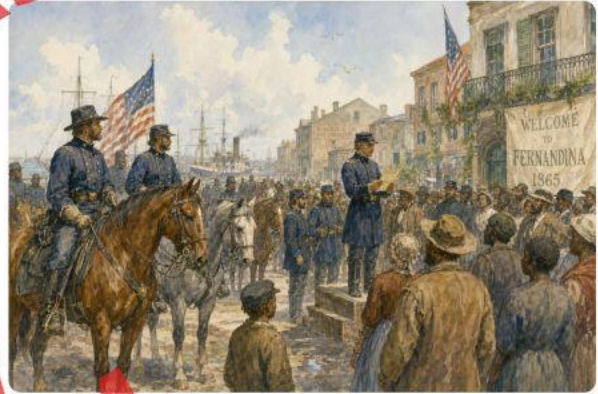


On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and read aloud the order declaring all enslaved people free.

The Day the News Finally Arrived: Understanding Juneteenth

When Freedom Was Delayed

Imagine being told that you had been free for two and a half years — but no one had told you. That is exactly what happened to thousands of enslaved people in Galveston, Texas. On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston and announced that all enslaved people were free. For many, it was the first time they had heard the news. But the Emancipation Proclamation — the order that declared enslaved people in Confederate states free — had been issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. That gap of more than two years tells one of the most important stories in American history.



On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and read aloud the order declaring all enslaved people free.

What Was the Emancipation Proclamation?

The Emancipation Proclamation was an executive order issued by President Lincoln during the Civil War. It declared that all enslaved people living in Confederate states — states that had left the Union — were to be considered free. It is worth noting that the proclamation did not apply to border states that remained in the Union or to rebel areas already under Union control. Still, it was a powerful and historic moment. However, a proclamation is only as effective as its enforcement. In states where the Union Army had little or no presence, slaveholders simply continued as if nothing had changed. The law existed on paper, but it had not yet reached everyone it was meant to protect.

Texas was one of those places. It was the westernmost Confederate state, far from most of the major battles of the Civil War. Union troops had not yet arrived in large numbers to enforce the new order. Vast distances and limited infrastructure made it even harder for news and authority to travel. As a result, enslaved people in Texas

continued to be held in bondage — even though, legally, they had been free for over two years.

June 19, 1865: The Day the News Arrived

On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with approximately 2,000 soldiers. He read aloud General Order No. 3, which announced that all enslaved people were free and that their former enslavers no longer had authority over them. For the people who heard those words, it was a life-changing moment — one that had been unjustly withheld for far too long.

Reactions varied widely. Some people celebrated immediately, weeping with joy and embracing one another. Others were cautious, unsure of what freedom would actually mean for their daily lives. Many had no money, no land, and no legal protections waiting for them. Freedom had arrived, but the road ahead was still uncertain and difficult.

Why Did It Take So Long?

The delay happened for several reasons. First, communication in the 1860s was slow. There were no phones, no internet, and no radio. News traveled by messenger, newspaper, or word of mouth. Second, and more importantly, many slaveholders in Texas deliberately withheld the information. Telling enslaved people they were free meant losing the unpaid labor that their entire economy depended on. Some historians describe this as an intentional suppression of information — a choice made to maintain power at the expense of human freedom. Together, these factors created conditions in which an entire population could be kept in bondage long after the law said otherwise.

From Memory to Federal Holiday

The formerly enslaved people of Texas did not forget June 19th. They began celebrating it the very next year, in 1866. Gatherings often included church services, communal meals, and barbecues — traditions that helped build community and preserve the memory of that day. They called the occasion "Juneteenth" — a combination of "June" and "nineteenth." Over the decades, the celebration spread across the country as Black Americans moved to other states and carried the

tradition with them. What began as a local commemoration gradually grew into a nationwide expression of resilience and remembrance.

For more than 150 years, Juneteenth was celebrated in communities across America, though it was not widely recognized by the federal government. That changed on June 17, 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, making it an official federal holiday.

Why This Story Still Matters

The story of Juneteenth teaches us something important: there is often a gap between when a law is passed and when it actually changes people's lives. Laws require enforcement, communication, and political will to become reality. This gap shows up throughout American history — and understanding it helps us think more carefully about justice, freedom, and whose experiences get included in the history we learn.

Juneteenth is not just a celebration. It is a reminder that freedom delayed is still freedom denied — and that the full story of American history includes voices and experiences that took far too long to be heard.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, you will explore why enslaved people in Texas did not learn about their freedom until more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. You will examine how different groups — including enslaved people, slaveholders, and Union soldiers — experienced and understood the events surrounding Juneteenth in different ways. By the end, you will be able to explain how the gap between a law being passed and a law being enforced shaped the lives of real people in history.



Juneteenth celebrations have brought communities together since 1866, featuring traditions like communal meals, music, and remembrance.

Standard: NCSS.D2.HIS.9.6-8 — Historical Perspectives on Events; C3.D2.His.3.6-8 — Historical Events and Their Impact; TEKS §113.20(b)(5)(A) — Impact of Abolition and Emancipation

Bloom's Level: Understand

Bloom's Goal: Students will demonstrate understanding by explaining how the delayed enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation affected different groups of people and why multiple perspectives are essential to telling the full story of Juneteenth.

Explanation: The 'understand' level of Bloom's Taxonomy asks students to make meaning from information — not just recall facts, but explain ideas in their own words and connect them to broader concepts. This lesson asks students to interpret why the same historical event (emancipation) was experienced so differently depending on who you were, where you lived, and what power you held.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Read each question carefully, think about what you learned in the article, and write a complete response using evidence from the text.

1. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863, but enslaved people in Texas did not learn they were free until June 19, 1865. Explain two reasons why this delay happened.

Think about: Think about the challenges of communication in the 1860s and the choices that slaveholders made. What does each reason tell you about why the law did not reach everyone it was meant to protect?

2. When Union soldiers arrived in Galveston on June 19, 1865, people reacted in different ways. Describe at least two different reactions and explain why people might have responded differently to the same announcement.

Think about: Think about what freedom meant in that moment and what challenges people still faced even after hearing the news. Why might the same event feel different to different people?

3. The article states that 'freedom delayed is still freedom denied.' Using what you read about Juneteenth, explain what this phrase means and why it is still an important idea today.

Think about: Think about the gap between when the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and when it was actually enforced. What does this gap tell us about the difference between a law existing on paper and a law actually changing people's lives?

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PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS (DBQ)

Read the primary source excerpt below carefully. Then answer the four questions that follow. For each question, use evidence from the source and what you know about this period in history to support your response.

General Order No. 3, Issued at Galveston, Texas [Military Order]

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. By order of Major General Granger.

— General Gordon Granger, Union Army, Galveston, Texas, June 19, 1865

1. Who wrote or issued this document, and what was their role? How might General Granger's position as a Union military officer affect what he chose to include — or not include — in this order? [Sourcing]

2. What was happening in the United States in June 1865 that made this order necessary? Use what you know about the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War to explain why this announcement was being made more than two years after Lincoln's proclamation. [Context]

3. The order tells freedmen to "remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages." What does this instruction suggest about how Union officials viewed the newly freed people? Do you think this language was fully respectful of their new freedom? Explain your thinking. [Close Reading]

4. The article states that formerly enslaved people reacted to the news in different ways — some celebrated joyfully while others were cautious and uncertain. Does General Order No. 3 help explain why some people may have felt uncertain about what freedom would actually mean for them? Use details from both the source and the article to support your answer. [Corroboration]

TIMELINE CONSTRUCTION

Place the five events below in the correct chronological order by numbering them 1 through 5. Then, for each event, answer the significance prompt in one or two sentences using what you have learned.

A. President Joe Biden signs the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, making Juneteenth an official federal holiday.

Date / Period:

Significance:

Why was it important for the United States government to officially recognize Juneteenth as a federal holiday more than 150 years after the event it commemorates?

B. Formerly enslaved people in Texas hold the first Juneteenth celebration, gathering for church services, communal meals, and barbecues.

Date / Period:

Significance:

Why did formerly enslaved people choose to celebrate and commemorate June 19th, and what did those early gatherings help preserve?

C. President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring enslaved people in Confederate states to be free.

Date / Period:

Significance:

Why was the Emancipation Proclamation a historic moment, and why was it not enough on its own to end slavery everywhere it applied?

D. Union General Gordon Granger arrives in Galveston, Texas, with approximately 2,000 soldiers and reads General Order No. 3, announcing freedom for all enslaved people in Texas.

Date / Period:

Significance:

Why did the arrival of Union soldiers in Galveston matter so much, and how did people react when they heard the announcement?

E. Southern states, including Texas, secede from the Union, triggering the Civil War.

Date / Period:

Significance:

Why is understanding the secession of Confederate states important for making sense of why the Emancipation Proclamation applied only to certain states?

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CIVIC ACTION SCENARIO

Read the scenario below carefully. Identify the stakeholders listed and consider how each group is affected by the situation. Then answer all three questions using what you have learned about Juneteenth, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the responsibilities of government to its citizens.

Scenario: It is the summer of 1865 in Galveston, Texas. Union soldiers have just read General Order No. 3, officially informing enslaved people that they are free. A local city council is now meeting to decide how to help formerly enslaved people transition into their new lives as free citizens. Some council members want to provide land, education, and legal protections right away. Others argue that the government has no responsibility to provide additional support beyond the announcement of freedom. Meanwhile, formerly enslaved people are asking for help finding family members who were separated from them, access to schools, and protection from former slaveholders who refuse to accept the new order. The council must decide what actions, if any, the local government should take to make freedom a reality — not just a legal declaration.

Stakeholders: Formerly enslaved people in Galveston seeking rights and resources | Union soldiers responsible for enforcing the new order | Former slaveholders resisting the change in law | Local city council members deciding government policy

1. Why is there a difference between a law being passed and that law actually changing people's lives? Use the story of the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth to explain your answer.

2. Consider the perspectives of two different stakeholders in this scenario. How might a formerly enslaved person and a former slaveholder each understand the government's announcement of freedom differently?

3. What responsibilities do you think a government has when it passes a law that affects people's basic rights? What actions should the city council take to make sure freedom is more than just words on paper?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Answer each question in complete sentences, using evidence from the article to support your thinking.

1. Why did enslaved people in Texas not learn about the Emancipation Proclamation until more than two years after it was issued? Explain at least two reasons.

Think about: Think about the two main causes the article describes — one related to technology and one related to human choices.

2. The article says that reactions to the news of freedom 'varied widely.' Why might different people have responded differently to hearing General Order No. 3 read aloud in Galveston?

Think about: Consider what freedom meant in that moment and what challenges people still faced even after the announcement.

3. What does the phrase 'freedom delayed is still freedom denied' mean, and how does the story of Juneteenth help explain it?

Think about: Think about the difference between a law existing on paper and that law actually changing people's lives.

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CLOSE READING PASSAGE

Read the passage carefully. Then answer the five questions that follow. Use evidence from the passage to support your answers.

June 19, 1865: The Day the News Arrived

On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with approximately 2,000 soldiers. He read aloud General Order No. 3, which announced that all enslaved people were free and that their former enslavers no longer had authority over them. For the people who heard those words, it was a life-changing moment — one that had been unjustly withheld for far too long. Reactions varied widely. Some people celebrated immediately, weeping with joy and embracing one another. Others were cautious, unsure of what freedom would actually mean for their daily lives. Many had no money, no land, and no legal protections waiting for them. Freedom had arrived, but the road ahead was still uncertain and difficult. The delay happened for several reasons. Communication in the 1860s was slow. News traveled by messenger, newspaper, or word of mouth. More importantly, many slaveholders in Texas deliberately withheld the information. Telling enslaved people they were free meant losing the unpaid labor that their entire economy depended on.

1. According to the passage, what did General Gordon Granger do when he arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865? **[Comprehension]**

2. The passage states that many formerly enslaved people faced difficult circumstances even after freedom was announced. What specific challenges does the passage mention?

[Comprehension]

3. The passage describes two very different reactions among people who heard the announcement of freedom. What can you infer about why some people were cautious rather than immediately joyful? [Inference]

4. Based on the passage, why did many slaveholders in Texas choose to withhold news of the Emancipation Proclamation from enslaved people? What does this suggest about their priorities? [Inference]

5. The author ends the passage with the phrase "freedom delayed is still freedom denied." Why might the author have chosen to end with this statement, and how does it connect to the events described in the passage? [Craft]

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Read each question carefully and choose the best answer from the four choices provided.

1. What was the Emancipation Proclamation?
 - A. A law passed by Congress that ended slavery in all states
 - B. An executive order by President Lincoln declaring enslaved people in Confederate states free
 - C. A treaty signed between the Union and Confederate states to end the Civil War
 - D. A speech given by General Gordon Granger in Galveston, Texas
2. Why did enslaved people in Texas not learn about their freedom until June 19, 1865?
 - A. The Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to Texas
 - B. Texas had already surrendered before the proclamation was issued
 - C. Slow communication and slaveholders deliberately withholding the information delayed the news
 - D. President Lincoln chose to announce freedom in Texas last
3. How did formerly enslaved people in Texas first react when they heard the news of their freedom on June 19, 1865?
 - A. Everyone immediately left Texas to move to northern states
 - B. Reactions varied — some celebrated joyfully while others were cautious about what freedom would mean
 - C. Most people refused to believe the announcement was real
 - D. All formerly enslaved people received land and money from the Union Army

4. Which of the following best explains why the Emancipation Proclamation was not immediately effective in Texas?

- A. Texas had signed a separate peace agreement with the Union
- B. The proclamation only applied to states east of the Mississippi River
- C. Union troops had little presence in Texas to enforce the order
- D. Texas slaveholders had already agreed to free enslaved people voluntarily

5. What does the word "Juneteenth" refer to?

- A. A combination of the words "June" and "nineteenth," marking the date freedom was announced in Texas
- B. The name of the Union general who arrived in Galveston
- C. A term meaning "freedom" in an African language
- D. The title of the law that made the holiday official in 2021

6. When did formerly enslaved people in Texas first begin celebrating Juneteenth?

- A. 1863, the same year the Emancipation Proclamation was issued
- B. 1865, on the same day General Granger read the order
- C. 1866, the year after the announcement of freedom
- D. 2021, when it became a federal holiday

7. According to the article, why did some slaveholders in Texas deliberately withhold news of the Emancipation Proclamation?

- A. They had not yet received official documents from the federal government
- B. They wanted to maintain their unpaid labor force as long as possible
- C. They were waiting for the Confederate government to confirm the order
- D. They believed the proclamation was unconstitutional and planned to challenge it

- 8.** What important lesson does the story of Juneteenth teach about laws and freedom?
- A.** Laws are always enforced immediately once they are written
 - B.** Freedom is only meaningful when it is celebrated publicly
 - C.** There is often a gap between when a law is passed and when it actually changes people's lives
 - D.** The federal government always ensures that new laws reach every citizen quickly
-

- 9.** How did Juneteenth eventually spread beyond Texas to become a nationwide celebration?
- A.** The federal government required all states to observe it starting in 1866
 - B.** Black Americans carried the tradition with them as they moved to other states
 - C.** Newspapers across the country began publishing stories about it every year
 - D.** President Lincoln declared it a national holiday before his death
-

- 10.** When did Juneteenth become an official federal holiday in the United States?
- A.** 1865, the year freedom was announced in Galveston
 - B.** 1966, one hundred years after the first Juneteenth celebration
 - C.** 2000, at the start of the new millennium
 - D.** 2021, when President Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act

TRUE / FALSE

Read each statement carefully. Write T if the statement is true or F if the statement is false based on what you have learned about Juneteenth and the Emancipation Proclamation.

1. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863.

True False

2. Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, to announce that all enslaved people were free.

True False

3. The Emancipation Proclamation applied to all enslaved people in every state, including border states that remained in the Union.

True False

4. Enslaved people in Texas were informed about the Emancipation Proclamation shortly after it was issued in 1863.

True False

5. One reason the news of freedom was delayed in Texas was that some slaveholders deliberately withheld the information from enslaved people.

True False

6. General Gordon Granger read General Order No. 3 aloud in Galveston, Texas, to announce the freedom of enslaved people.

True False

7. All formerly enslaved people in Galveston reacted to the news of freedom in exactly the same way, celebrating immediately with joy.

True False

8. The word "Juneteenth" is a combination of the words "June" and "nineteenth."

True False

9. Formerly enslaved people in Texas began celebrating Juneteenth as early as 1866, just one year after the news of freedom arrived.

True False

10. Juneteenth became an official federal holiday in the United States when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act in 2021.

True False

VOCABULARY

Study each vocabulary term and its definition below. These words will help you understand the history of Juneteenth and the events surrounding emancipation in the United States. As you read, look for these terms in the lesson article.

Emancipation Proclamation

An executive order issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, that declared all enslaved people in Confederate states to be free.

Explain in your own words:

Confederate

Relating to the Confederate States of America, the group of Southern states that left the Union before and during the Civil War.

Explain in your own words:

Union

The name for the United States government and the Northern states that remained loyal to it during the Civil War.

Explain in your own words:

enforcement

The act of making sure a law or order is actually carried out and followed by people.
Explain in your own words:

bondage

The condition of being enslaved and forced to work without freedom or pay.
Explain in your own words:

General Order No. 3

The official announcement read by Union General Gordon Granger in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, that declared all enslaved people in Texas were free.
Explain in your own words:

suppression

The deliberate act of preventing information or news from being shared or known by others.
Explain in your own words:

commemoration

A ceremony or celebration held to honor and remember an important event from the past.

Explain in your own words:

resilience

The ability to recover from hardship and keep going despite difficult or unfair circumstances.

Explain in your own words:

federal holiday

An official day of observance recognized by the United States government, on which many government offices and businesses are closed.

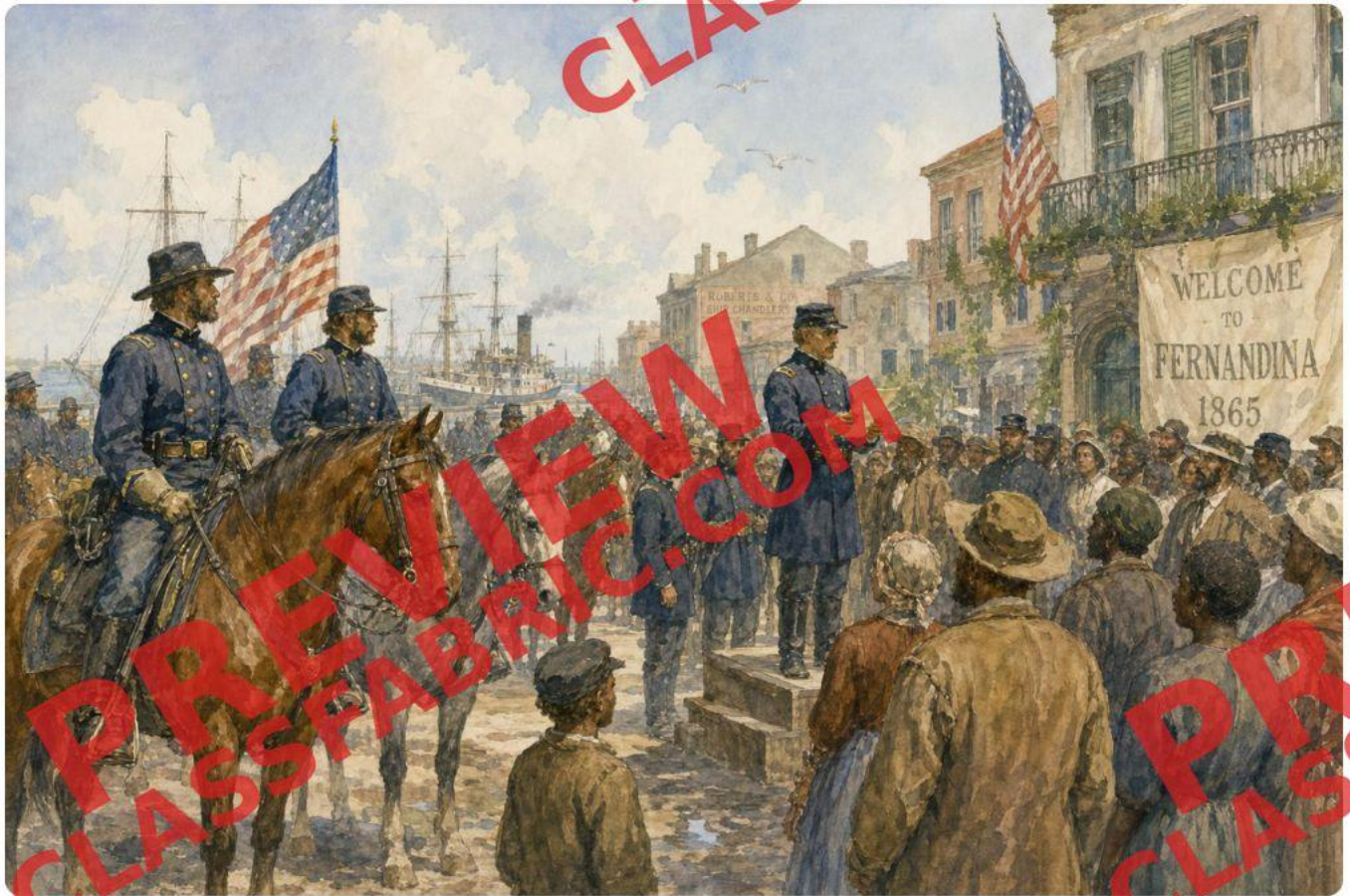
Explain in your own words:

EXIT TICKET

Answer both questions in 1-2 sentences each using what you learned from today's lesson.

1. Why did enslaved people in Texas not learn about their freedom until June 19, 1865, even though the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in January 1863?

2. How did formerly enslaved people in Texas respond to the news of their freedom, and why did reactions vary from person to person?



On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and read aloud the order declaring all enslaved people free.

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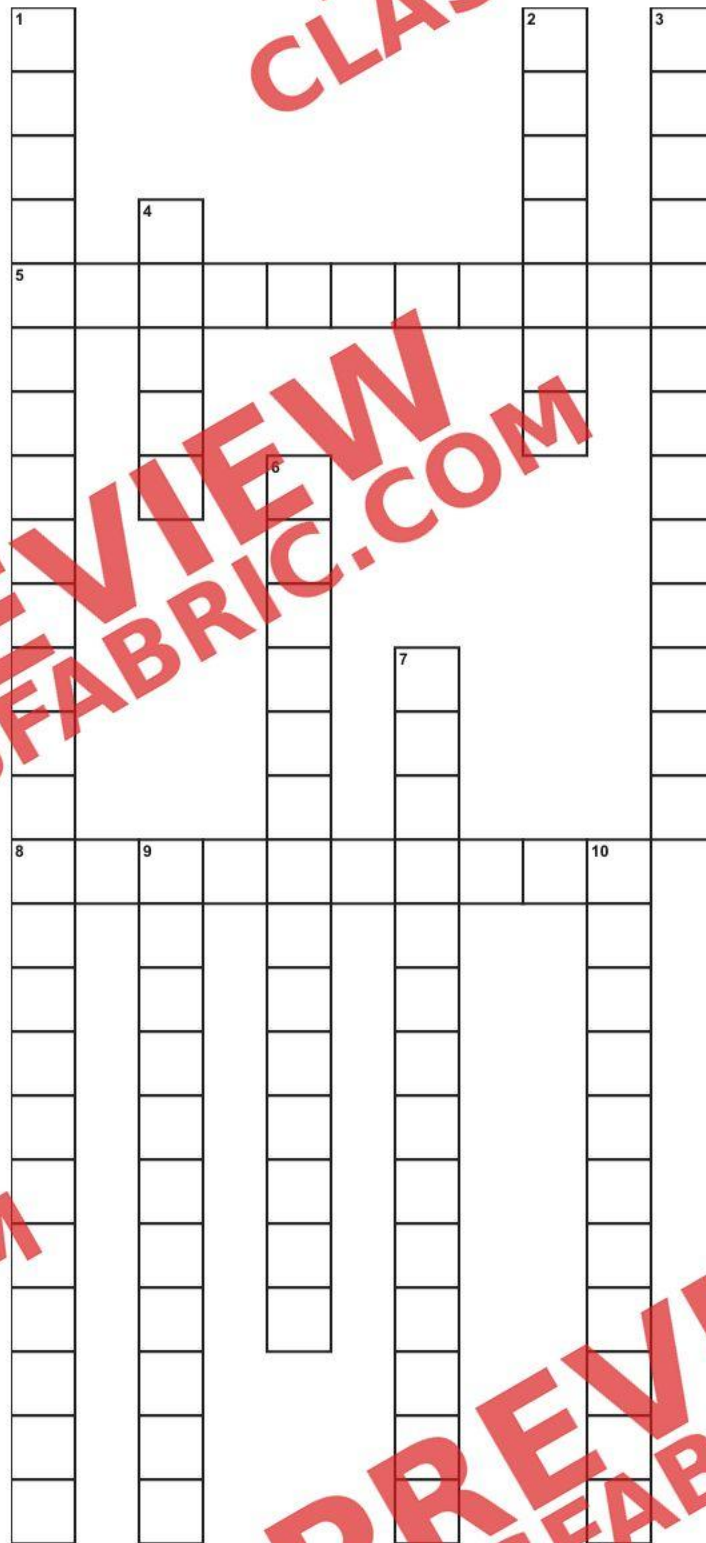
Juneteenth celebrations have brought communities together since 1866, featuring traditions like communal meals, music, and remembrance.

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The Day the News Finally Arrived: Understanding Juneteenth

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



The Day the News Finally Arrived: Understanding Juneteenth

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

5. Relating to the _____ States of America, the group of Southern states that left the Union before and during the Civil War.
8. The ability to recover from hardship and keep going despite difficult or unfair circumstances.

DOWN

1. An executive order issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, that declared all enslaved people in Confederate states to be free.
2. The condition of being enslaved and forced to work without freedom or pay.
3. A ceremony or celebration held to honor and remember an important event from the past.
4. The name for the United States government and the Northern states that remained loyal to it during the Civil War.
6. An official day of observance recognized by the United States government, on which many government offices and businesses are closed.
7. The official announcement read by Union General Gordon Granger in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, that declared all enslaved people in Texas were free.
9. The deliberate act of preventing information or news from being shared or known by others.
10. The act of making sure a law or order is actually carried out and followed by people.

The Day the News Finally Arrived: Understanding Juneteenth

WORD SEARCH

R B O N D A G E S F S P N N Y K B M X Y F C W Z
D V Q N X B C F Z L J W N S U P P R E S S I O N
J R Z C L E F N Y R Q O W F W P E F O M K M D S
B F I Y O U F S F M R V C N U I X V I U W X V R
E M A N C I P A T I O N P R O C L A M A T I O N
N L A N E T I H F P M L B M H Z M S S Y J B B S
I W T W C H G D U Q A O F Y P Z X L Z U W G C V
D Y M Q M D J T N A P Z Z I S V L D P F K O O L
R E S I L I E N C E P W G C E L S W I E C M M R
G R A W G N K E U R C C O N V C P X V P Z V M N
E E U O F E K Y A O O T T I Z Q R V S D K K E C
N Z H Q F A P V U E N A I J V G U Q V E P N M A
E B T F U U A E X M F V T F J E S L R C E J O Z
R H O G E P I P E B E B E H S K O L Z A W W R O
A T B U Y S N F R E D C A M V Z C V K Y N D A A
L A H P S L Y V J Q E L A V Y L L P T X F Y T B
O H N F T Z D X H K R K C A N E P R J S Q R I O
R W M O I X B Z T U A B L Z F K D Y V Y O U O T
D Y O A T T U C I R T R N W V N R P I E Q N N Y
E C Q I S R Z N S C E Y I Y J W S U Q W B I H Q
R O I U J H T O P O H K O N S H K S B B Q O R J
N J X B Y Y U Y P S Y E P R H R L J O J W N G Y
O W E N F O R C E M E N T E G I A A L A C E G S
N M A Z L L O V G F E D E R A L H O L I D A Y J

FIND THESE WORDS

Emancipation Proclamation
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bondage

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Union

General Order No. 3
suppression

commemoration
resilience