

JUNETEENTH EMANCIPATION DAY

Read the text below. Then answer the questions.

“Juneteenth” combines the words “June” and “nineteenth” to commemorate the day in 1865 when enslaved people in Texas first found out they were free. President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, signed two years earlier in 1863, stated the intention that slavery would be abolished in Confederate states. The Confederate states included Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana. The Emancipation Proclamation, however, did not take full effect until after the Union (North) won the Civil War on April 9, 1865. Radios and televisions were not around to broadcast daily news in 1865. So, information about the Union’s victory and the liberation of all enslaved people did not reach outlying areas for months. Some of the last people to be informed were in Texas. On June 19, 1865, U.S. Major General Gordon Granger issued General Order No. 3, announcing that the approximately 250,000 enslaved people in Texas were now free.



The Juneteenth holiday, sometimes called Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, celebrates this day of emancipation for the enslaved people of Texas. Juneteenth became an official Texas holiday on January 1, 1980. On June 15, 2021, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, establishing Juneteenth as a federal holiday celebrated in every state. President Joseph Biden signed the bill into law two days later.

- The holiday called “Juneteenth” combines the word June with a part of the word nineteenth.
- The Juneteenth holiday commemorates the day when . . .
 - . . . Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.
 - . . . the Confederate states abolished slavery.
 - . . . enslaved people in Georgia found out they were now free.
 - . . . enslaved people in Texas found out they were now free.
- How many enslaved people lived in Texas at the time of General Order #3, issued on June 19, 1865?
 - Approximately 100,000
 - Over 300,000
 - Approximately 250,000
 - Fewer than 50,000
- Why was there a gap of several months between the end of the Civil War and when enslaved people in Texas found out they were free? Provide at least one possible reason. **Sample answer**
In 1865, radios and televisions were not around to broadcast daily news, so it took months for the information to spread.
- On June 15, 2021, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act. This law established Juneteenth as a federal holiday.
- How do you think Juneteenth should be commemorated? What activities or events would be especially meaningful in your community?
Answers will vary.