

Lesson Plan: Juneteenth



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ENGLISH

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Juneteenth

[1] On January 1, 1863, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln issued The **Emancipation** Proclamation. This order gave **freedom** to “all persons held as slaves.” However, for years, some **enslaved** people did not know they were free. On June 19, 1865, the news of their freedom finally reached the U.S. state of Texas. Juneteenth is the holiday that celebrates this day.

[2] The official name of the holiday is Juneteenth National Independence Day, but most people call it Juneteenth. The word Juneteenth is a combination of the month of June and the nineteenth day. Juneteenth started as a holiday in Texas, and the celebration spread over time across the United States. It became a federal holiday in 2021. It is the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day became a federal holiday in 1983. Some people also call this day Freedom Day or Emancipation Day.

[3] People celebrate Juneteenth in many ways. The holiday is about community, freedom, history, and joy. On Juneteenth, people spend time with family and friends at celebrations and community events. They have **barbecues** and **picnics** with live music, dancing, poetry readings, storytelling, and historic-themed performances. Some communities have parades and festivals. People also read, watch videos, or talk about history.

[4] The Juneteenth **flag** was originally designed in 1997. The flag has the same colors as the U.S. national flag. The top half of the Juneteenth flag is blue, and the bottom half is red. The halves are separated by a curved line that **symbolizes** the promise and progress of freedom. There is a white star in the middle of the flag. This star is similar to the star on the Texas state flag. The white star symbolizes freedom. A white outline around the star **represents** a new beginning for African Americans. In 2007, the date “June 19, 1865” was added to the official Juneteenth flag design. You can see the flag at celebrations, parades, educational programs, and government buildings and institutions in honor of the holiday.

[5] Many Juneteenth celebrations include different kinds of red food and drinks like apples, red beans, strawberries, watermelons, hibiscus tea, and red soda pop. The color red in food and drinks at Juneteenth celebrations represents the strength and **resilience** of the African American people and culture.

[6] The colors and symbols in Juneteenth celebrations show that enslaved people in the past and their **descendants** living in the United States now are Americans. Juneteenth is important because it reminds Americans that freedom is for everyone, and we should remember and honor our past.

Overview

In this 90-minute lesson, students learn about the origin of Juneteenth and how it is celebrated in the United States. Students identify and practice language used to discuss this celebration, practice active reading strategies, and use common symbols, shapes, and colors to design a holiday flag.

Goals

Students will:

- Practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.
- Learn about Juneteenth celebration and traditions in the U.S.
- Make connections between their own lives and how Juneteenth is celebrated in the United States.
- Strengthen collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking skills on the topics of celebrating and coming together as a community.

Lesson Materials

1. Printed or projected copy of the photo at the beginning of this lesson.
2. Printed or projected copy of the Juneteenth reading included with this lesson.
3. Printed or projected copy of the Juneteenth flag included with this lesson.
4. Printed or projected copy of the Word Cloud image included with this lesson.
5. Printed copy of the What is a Picnic? T Chart (Extension Activity).
6. Blank paper
7. Colored markers (including blue highlighters and red pens) and pens or pencils.

Preparation

1. Read through this lesson in its entirety.
2. Review the **Juneteenth** article and the **Vocabulary from the Reading** list below.
3. Determine whether you will need to activate students' prior knowledge, pre-teach, or otherwise provide scaffolding, or support, for your students beyond the suggestions in the Procedures section.
4. Consider if, or how, you will adapt or change this lesson to better meet your students' needs.

Vocabulary from the Reading

- **barbecues** (plural noun) – Outdoor meals or parties with meat that is prepared outside, slow cooked, and covered in a special spicy sauce.
- **descendants** (plural noun) – People who are related to a person or group of people who lived in the past.
- **emancipation** (adjective) – When someone is free from someone else’s control or restrictions.
- **enslaved** (adjective) – People treated as slaves or the property of other people and forced to do work.
- **flag** (noun) – A piece of colored cloth with a special design to represent a nation or group of people.
- **freedom** (noun) – The state of not being a slave; the right to go somewhere without being controlled; a political right.
- **picnics** (plural noun) – Events or parties to eat outdoors, often held in parks or other open places.
- **represents** (verb) – To be a sign or symbol of someone or something.
- **resilience** (noun) – The ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.
- **symbolizes** (verb) – To be a symbol of something, often shown as an image that is used instead of a word or group of words.

Procedures

Opening Writing Activity: See, Imagine, Share (5 Minutes)

1. Share the photo at the beginning of this lesson with students. Ask them to imagine they are in the photo and write descriptive sentences that address each of the 5 senses below.
 - *See*: I see . . .
 - *Hear*: I hear . . .
 - *Smell*: I smell . . .
 - *Taste*: I taste . . .
 - *Touch*: I feel
2. Ask students to share 1-2 of their sentences with a partner or small group.

Listening and Reading Activity: Vocabulary Word Cloud (10 minutes)

1. Put students into pairs or small groups.
2. Display the Word Cloud image with vocabulary words from this lesson. If you are unable to display the Word Cloud image, write the vocabulary words on the board.

3. Read the descriptions listed below and ask students to write down the vocabulary word that matches each description. Not all of the words will be described. If students are not sure of an answer, they can guess.
4. Ask students to exchange their answers with another pair or group.
5. Check answers as a class.
6. Tell students to return the answers to the original pair or group.
7. Ask students to keep their answers to use in an activity at the end of the class.

Vocabulary Words and Descriptions

1. the month between May and July (Answer: June)
2. an event where food is eaten outdoors, often in a park (Answer: picnic)
3. what you eat when you are hungry (Answer: food)
4. sounds sung by people or played on instruments (Answer: music)
5. a piece of cloth with a special design used as a symbol or a nation or group (Answer: flag)
6. your mother, father, brother, and sisters (Answer: family)
7. people who are related to a person or group of people who lived in the past (Answer: descendants)
8. a letter or image that is used instead of a word or group of words (Answer: symbol)

Reading and Critical Thinking Activity: Blue, Red, and Stars (15 minutes)

1. Give each student (or group of students) a copy of the Juneteenth article, a blue highlighter, and a red pen or marker. (The teacher can also display a copy of the article and complete this task as a whole-class activity.)
2. Ask students to actively read the article. As they read, ask them to:
 - highlight dates and places in blue
 - underline celebration activities in red
 - draw a star near information they find most interesting
 - Draw a question mark next to information they don't understand.
3. When students finish, explain that they just practiced a reading strategy called *active reading*. It can help students to better understand and remember what they read. Discuss these questions as a whole class.
 - What is the article about?
 - What is one important fact you learned about this holiday?
 - What was interesting?
 - What was confusing?
4. Explain new words and help students better understand information that is confusing.

Creativity and Speaking Activity: Holiday Flag (20 minutes)



1. Put students into small groups. Show them the Juneteenth flag and remind them of the description from the article.
2. Tell groups to make a short list of holidays they celebrate in their communities.
3. Ask each group to choose one holiday and create a list of 3 to 4 ideas that best represent the holiday. It's okay if different groups choose the same holiday.
4. Ask students to choose a symbol, shape, or color for each idea and use them to design a flag for their holiday.
5. When they are finished making their flag, bring the class back together.
6. Let each group show their flag to the class. Tell the rest of the class to ask questions to learn about the symbols, colors, and design choices.

Creativity and Communication Activity: What are You Bringing to the Picnic? (20 minutes)

1. If necessary, work with your class to brainstorm a list of food and supplies for a picnic.
2. Ask students to choose one item they would like to bring to a community picnic with their class.
3. Give students time to draw their item and think about why it is useful for a picnic. (This could also be done in small groups with each group drawing on a single piece of poster paper.)
4. Bring students together in a circle. Tell students to take turns showing their drawing and explaining why they want to bring this item.
5. When everyone has shared, collect the drawings and ask students to return to their desks.
6. Give students 1 minute to make a list of as many of the items as they can remember.
7. After 1 minute, work together as a class to list all of the items and write them on the board.

Word Cloud Revisited (10 minutes)

1. Put students into the same pairs or small groups they had in the Vocabulary Word Cloud activity earlier in the lesson.
2. Display the Word Cloud with vocabulary words from this lesson. If you are unable to display the Word Cloud, write the vocabulary words on the board.
3. Read the descriptions listed below and ask students to write down the vocabulary word that matches each description. If students are not sure of an answer, they can guess.
4. Ask students to exchange their answers with another pair or group.
5. Check answers as a class and tell students to return the answers to the original pair or group.
6. Ask students to compare how many correct answers they had this time with the activity from earlier in the class.

Vocabulary Words and Descriptions

1. the month between May and July (Answer: June)
2. an event where food is eaten outdoors, often in a park (Answer: picnic)
3. what you eat when you are hungry (Answer: food)
4. sounds sung by people or played on instruments (Answer: music)
5. a piece of cloth with a special design used as a symbol or a nation or group (Answer: flag)
6. your mother, father, brother, and sisters (Answer: family)
7. people who are related to a person or group of people who lived in the past (Answer: descendants)
8. a letter or image that is used instead of a word or group of words (Answer: symbol)

Writing Exit Ticket Activity (10 minutes)

1. Ask students to work individually to complete the following sentences:
 - I liked
 - I learned
 - I'll try
 - I still wonder
2. When they finish, students can share their answers with a partner.
3. If there is time, ask a few students to share their answers with the class.
4. You may wish to collect student answers to assess students' understanding and interest in the lesson.

Variations and Extensions

Critical Thinking and Communication Variation Activity: What is a Picnic?

Students may complete this activity in place of or in addition to the See, Imagine, Share activity.

1. Share the photo at the beginning of this lesson with students.
2. Ask students make a T chart with "In the Photo" and "At Picnics I Know" categories or use the handout at the end of this lesson.
3. Give students time to complete their T charts individually or in pairs.
4. Ask students to compare their T charts with those of their classmates.
5. Lead a discussion about similarities and differences between the categories on their T charts.

Collaboration and Writing Activity Variation: Make Your Own Word Cloud

Students may complete this activity as a variation or extension to the Word Cloud Revisited activity.



1. Put students in pairs and give a blank card or half sheet of blank paper to each pair.
2. Ask each pair to choose 5-7 new words they learned in this lesson and write their own definition for each word.
3. Guide each pair to create a word cloud card with the vocabulary words on one side and the definitions on the other.
4. When they finish, ask each pair to find another pair.
5. Pairs should take turns showing the front of their word cloud to the other pair. As they read each definition, the other pair listens and chooses the word that is the best match for the definition they hear.

Creativity and Collaboration Activity: What are You Bringing to the Picnic?

Extension Activity

Students may complete this activity as an extension to the What are You Bringing to the Picnic? activity.

1. Ask students to write recipes for their favorite foods.
2. Collect the recipes into a class cookbook.
3. If appropriate, students could try a recipe from a classmate or work together to create their favorite foods for a class picnic.

What is a Picnic? T Chart (Extension Activity)

In the Photo

At Picnics I Know

| In the Photo | At Picnics I Know |
|--------------|-------------------|
| | |