

JUNETEENTH!

Have you ever heard of Juneteenth? You probably know about America's Independence Day, which is celebrated on the 4th of July, but Juneteenth is also called "America's second Independence Day". Keep reading to find out more!



Deze clip bevat informatie uit 2022

Every year, Black families and communities come together to celebrate Juneteenth with food, singing and dancing, and parades. There are also often readings of works by famous Black authors. As a result, Juneteenth has become a celebration of Black culture, but it is also a day on which people remember their history and teach others about it.

On June 19th 1865, two years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation¹, enslaved African Americans in Texas learned that they were free. People celebrated their freedom and many generations have celebrated this day ever since!

The first annual celebration of Juneteenth took place in Texas in 1866, but it eventually spread throughout the country as previously enslaved Texans moved to other areas and took their traditions with them. In 2021, Juneteenth officially became a federal holiday².

Juneteenth is important because it gives the Black community a day on which it can celebrate its culture, commemorate (*herdenken*) its history and speak out against the injustices that still happen to Black people up to this day. Juneteenth is also important because there are Black people who feel left out on Independence Day on July 4th because slavery continued for another 89 years after America became independent from England on July fourth 1776. Unlike other Americans, their enslaved ancestors did not gain their freedom on this day.

Therefore, some Black people feel like the celebration of independence and freedom on July 4th is not for them. These feelings are why there was a push to make Juneteenth a national holiday, which finally happened in 2021 when President Biden signed the *Juneteenth National Independence Day Act* into law. This year (2023), Juneteenth will be celebrated for the third time since it became a federal holiday and hopefully it will be celebrated for many years to come.

Did you know...?

Did you know that the American Civil War (1861-1865) started over the issue of slavery? For years, the Northern and the Southern states did not agree on this. The North did not want slavery to spread to new states. The South thought the US government should not get to decide if a state used enslaved people or not. The South was also afraid that slavery would be banned completely because this would harm their economy. The Southern states left the United States and became the Confederacy. The North was called the Union. Their armies fought each other during the Civil War. In the end, the Union won the war. The announcement on June 19th happened a few weeks after the end of the Civil War.

Notes:

1. Emancipation Proclamation: on September 22nd 1862, President Abraham Lincoln announced that enslaved people in the rebelling southern states would be freed on January 1st 1863. This freed enslaved people on paper, but not in reality.
2. Federal holiday: a holiday that is recognised by the US government. It is a paid day off for federal employees.

Adapted from:

Juneteenth - Wikipedia | Independence Day: What does Fourth of July mean to black Americans? - BBC News, Juneteenth | History, Meaning, Flag, Importance, & Facts - Britannica | Why Do We Celebrate Juneteenth? Columbians Share the History and How They Observe the Day - YouTube American Civil War - Britannica Kids

Questions



1 Work in pairs. Prepare a one-minute presentation or a short article for your school newspaper (+/- 100 words) about Juneteenth. Use information from the text and the video above, and do your own research. Use the grid to take notes and include that information as well. When you're done, share your presentation or article with another pair and give each other feedback.

Information you need to include	Notes
Why the celebration is called <i>Juneteenth</i>	
How long Juneteenth has been celebrated.	
Who informed the enslaved people of their freedom and the name of the order he read.	
Where it first took place.	



2 Watch the video on the first page. What does Opal Lee's 2.5 mile walk on Juneteenth symbolise?



3 Watch the video and look at the Juneteenth flag. Describe the flag and its meaning using your own words.

[Watch the video](#)

Discussion questions

Discuss the following questions with a classmate or in small groups.



4 Look at the websites of Juneteenth events that are being organised this year. Which event would you like to attend and why?

[Juneteenth concert](#)

[Juneteenth walk/run](#)

[Juneteenth festival](#)



5a On July fifth 1852, famous abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass gave a speech in which he asked “What, to the American slave, is your fourth of July?”. Watch the video. Based on the speech and the other information you have read so far, how would you answer this question?



[Watch the video](#)



5b In the second part of the video (4:41), Douglass’ descendants respond to the speech. Isidore says: ‘I think that there is hope and I think it’s important that we celebrate Black joy and Black life, and we remember that change is possible, change is probable, and that there’s hope’. How does Juneteenth help do this?



6a Do you know what Keti Koti is? Look up Keti Koti online and write down what it is, when it is celebrated, and why.



You can use this website, for example:

[Open the website](#)



6b In which ways is Keti Koti similar to Juneteenth? In which ways is it different?



7 Do you think teaching about the history of slavery is relevant in today’s world? Why do you think so?

Sources

Juneteenth - Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juneteenth>

Independence Day: What does Fourth of July mean to black Americans? - BBC News <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/newsbeat-53284807>

History, Meaning, Flag, Importance, & Facts - Britannica
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Juneteenth>

Why Do We Celebrate Juneteenth? Columbians Share History and How They Observe the Day - Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pfzXbBQVIY>

American Civil War - Britannica Kids
<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/American-Civil-War/352967>