



## Juneteenth - Freedom and Citizenship

A Lesson Plan by Jennifer Smith for the Juneteenth Film

**Grade Level:** Middle School 6-8

**Time:** This lesson is divided into four parts. Each part will take approximately 45 minutes.

Introduction: As a K-12 student, I did not learn about Juneteenth in school. I don't recall learning about it during my undergraduate experience either. I knew that Juneteenth was a holiday to commemorate the arrival of the news of the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States but I did not fully understand the history of the holiday. Viewing the video, *Juneteenth: Exploring Freedom's Stories*, provided me with a more rounded understanding of the events that led up to Juneteenth as well as the significance of the holiday. This lesson plan was designed to help middle school students explore key historic documents and events to build background for understanding the significance of Juneteenth.

### THEME AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

**Themes:** Freedom and Citizenship

**Essential Questions:**

What events led up to the issuance of General Order #3?

Why is Juneteenth significant for all Americans?

What is the relationship between freedom and citizenship?

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to

- Critically examine primary source documents that ensured the freedom of slaves and the citizenship of African Americans.
- Identify characteristics of freedom, citizenship, and equity, noting similarities and differences in that one may not guarantee the others.

## MATERIALS

### Primary Sources

- [Dred Scott v. Sanford \(1857\)](#)
- [Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation](#)
- [Emancipation Proclamation](#)
- [General Orders #3 - Article containing transcript of General Order #3](#)
- [Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America](#)
- [Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America](#)

Video- [Juneteenth: Exploring Freedom's Stories](#)

Website - [The Citizenship Clause](#)

### Graphic Organizers and Worksheets

- [What Does it Mean?](#)
- [Relationships Among Terms](#)
- [Examining a Primary Source](#)
- [Examining a Primary Source - Possible Responses](#)
- [Reflection sheet](#)

## STANDARDS

### *Social Studies*

Time, Continuity, & Change - b. Identify and use key concepts such as chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity. f. Use knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history, along with methods of historical inquiry, to inform decision-making about and action-taking on public issues

People, Places, & Environments - k. Describe ways that historical events have been influenced by, and have influenced, physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings.

Power, Authority, & Governance - a. Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare

Civic Ideals & Practices - b. Identify and interpret sources and examples of the right and responsibilities of citizens

### *Common Core Language Arts - Grades 6-8*

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

## TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

**Teacher Preparation:** Prior to teaching this lesson the teacher should access and review the primary sources. It may be helpful to print the primary documents or place them all in a digital folder for easy student access. Some of the primary documents, specifically the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision, contain racist ideas. The teacher should be prepared to discuss this with the students. Additionally, as this lesson discusses citizenship, it is important for teachers to approach the topic carefully as students who are undocumented or who may have family members who are undocumented should not be made to feel isolated by this lesson.

### Teacher Notes

#### *Part One:*

The teacher will begin the lesson by asking students to write down definitions/explanations and provide examples of citizenship, freedom, promise, Juneteenth. This can be done using the [What Does it Mean?](#) page. The aim of this part of the lesson is to activate students' prior knowledge about the terms, encourage all students to participate, and provide the teacher with an understanding of the students' thoughts about the terms. As the students work on their definitions the teacher should actively circulate through the room to review student responses. At this point in the lesson, the teacher should not evaluate the students' definitions as correct or incorrect. If students get stuck on a word, the teacher may ask them to think about what the word looks like, sounds like, feels like.

Once students have had a chance to complete their definitions, the teacher can ask for volunteers to share their responses. This is an opportunity to look for similarities and themes across responses. The teacher may ask students clarifying questions or ask for additional examples as a way to help students better form their ideas.

After activating the students' prior knowledge about the terms, the teacher should place students in small groups of 3-5 students. Within these groups the students should discuss the relationships between the words citizen, freedom, promise and Juneteenth and create a diagram to explain their thinking. Teachers could write each word on a notecard and have students show connections between the notecards. Alternatively, students could write the terms on a whiteboard or online document ([Relationships Among Terms](#)) and show the relationship between the terms. If students have difficulty starting the task, the teacher may ask the students if they can think of any connection between two of the terms, such as freedom and citizenship. If students think there is a connection, the teacher could ask them to draw a line between the two and include a brief explanation of the connection. For example, students may think that freedom is a result of citizenship.

When the groups have finished making connections, the whole class should form a circle with each group explaining the connections they made between words. The students' work should be saved so they can revisit their ideas at the end of the lesson.

*Part Two:*

In this section of the lesson, the students will view and discuss the video, *Juneteenth: Exploring Freedom's Stories*. Before viewing the video, the teacher should remind the students of the work they did in the prior lesson. The teacher will explain that the students will view a video that will help them better understand the history of Juneteenth. The teacher will also explain that students should take out a piece of paper and a writing utensil. As the students view the video, they should write down key words or phrases that stand out to them. The students should identify at least three words during the video.

After the video, the teacher will ask the students to review the words they wrote on their paper and to select the three that they think most represent the information from the video. These words will be used to make a word cloud. [AnswerGarden](#) is a free online platform that allows multiple users to enter responses to create a word cloud. Teachers could also have students share their responses in a Word document and then upload the document to a word cloud creator of their choice. A low-tech option would be for the words to be written on poster paper or the board in the classroom.

Once the word cloud has been generated, it can serve as the basis of discussion about the video. The teacher can ask the students to share key ideas and information that stood out to them from the video as well as answer questions that students may have. The teacher will also ask students to make connections between the previously discussed terms (citizenship, freedom, promise, Juneteenth) and the video, encouraging students to make additions to their initial definitions and examples on their [What Does it Mean? worksheet](#). The teacher may choose to discuss [other topics](#) from the video as well.

*Part Three:*

The teacher will explain that in order to better understand the importance of Juneteenth, the class will review some of the primary documents discussed in the video. The teacher will remind the class of the words from the video that they thought were important and ask the class to keep these words in mind as they examine primary documents. \*As some of the documents, particularly the Dred Scott v. Sanford decision, display racist attitudes, it is important for the teacher to note that the document presents racist ideas/attitudes. The teacher should remind students that people are not property and that all people in the United States should be treated with respect and dignity as equals.\*

The Dred Scott v. Sanford decision is also a lengthy document, so the teacher may select key paragraphs for students to read.

The teacher should place the students in small groups and ask each group to examine one of the primary documents. The documents include [Dred Scott v. Sanford \(1857\)](#) (11:45 in the video), [Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation](#) (9:12 in the video), [Emancipation Proclamation](#) (9:54 in the video), [General Order #3 - Article containing transcript of General Order #3](#) (16:58 in the video), [Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America](#) and [Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America](#) (21:04 in the video).

Each small group will create a summary ([Examining a Primary Source](#)) of the document to share with the class. Students may utilize the primary documents and the video explanation of the documents to create their summaries. If a group finishes reviewing a source early, they can work on reviewing additional sources. This page ([The Citizenship Clause](#)) may be helpful in further explaining citizenship in respect to the Constitution. After each group shares their summary with the class, the teacher should have the class discuss why the document is important to freedom and citizenship and provide evidence from the primary documents to support their responses.

The class will then review the summaries to create a [timeline](#) of events noting how African Americans were granted freedom and US citizenship.

After creating the timeline, the class will focus on Juneteenth to discuss what the holiday represents and why. The teacher will ask students to describe the Juneteenth celebrations as noted in the video and ask students to share the ways that they celebrate Juneteenth.

#### *Part Four:*

The class will revisit their initial word maps to see if they would make any changes to the connections between the four words they explored (citizen, freedom, promise, Juneteenth). The teacher will lead a discussion regarding the primary sources and the video in terms of the ways that freedom did not necessarily grant citizenship and how citizenship did not necessarily grant equal treatment. Examples of this may include the discussion of Jim Crow laws and current discriminatory practices toward minoritized groups in the United States. To conclude the lesson, students will be asked to complete a [reflection sheet](#) on which they can reflect on the events of the past, think about the current state of equity, and share their hopes for the future.

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed informally on their participation in group activities and discussion. Students will be assessed formally on their completion of a reflection explaining the history leading up to Juneteenth, explaining why Juneteenth is relevant to everyone in the US, and listing at least two future actions that should be taken to better ensure equity in the US.