



## Juneteenth Film Lesson Plan

By Don Jenkins

**Grade level:** 6-8

**Number of Class Period:** One - Two 50 minute classes

### *Juneteenth Film: Teacher Directions*



[Juneteenth webpage link](#)

Watch the film [on YouTube](#), or via the Annenberg Classroom site [here](#).

## OVERVIEW

What is the story of Juneteenth? Why do we celebrate this newly designated federal holiday, and how is it connected to one of the most cherished American ideals — freedom? Annenberg Classroom’s “Juneteenth,” explores the history of the holiday and illustrates how and why freedom and citizenship were intertwined.

## THEMES FROM THE FILM

**One theme the lesson will focus on is freedom**, which includes personal, economic, social, and political freedom.

**Another theme will be self-determination.** In other words, how did African Americans take charge of their own destiny? For example, Robert Smalls stealing The Planter or Opal Lee leading the struggle to get Juneteenth passed as a national holiday.

## ESSENTIAL AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How did African Americans win freedom?
2. How did some Americans try to take away freedom from African Americans?
3. What is the promise of Juneteenth? Has that promise been achieved?
4. How can citizens protect freedom today?

## TEACHER DIRECTIONS

There are several different parts to this lesson plan and teachers can modify or eliminate parts of the lesson depending on time constraints and their class. The film itself is twenty-seven minutes, but using all the parts of the lesson could last one to two fifty minute class periods.

**Viewing guide and student handouts are at the end of the lesson.**

## LESSON SUGGESTIONS

**Entry Task (5-10 minutes):** Teachers could have students read the quote on their own, in small groups, or discuss as a whole class. You might consider having students write down their ideas individually before sharing out to their group or class. When done discussing, tell the students who the quote is from - Opal Lee, “Grandmother of Juneteenth” when she walked from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C., to urge lawmakers to make Juneteenth a national holiday.

**Images of Freedom (5-10 minutes):** Teachers could have students do this activity individually, in small groups, or as a whole class. Students will examine four photos and screenshots from the film that depict freedom. This could also be a gallery walk type activity where the photos are placed around the room and groups of students walk to each photo and discuss what types of freedom they see. (Possible answers could include personal, political, educational, economic, or social freedom.)

### **Watch Film and Fill Out Viewing Guide (30-40 minutes)**

Provide the viewing guide handout to students and discuss directions. Definitions of emancipation, citizenship, and self-determination are provided on the handout. The viewing guide handout will have four columns. One column will be for examples of freedoms won, another for freedoms denied, one for examples of self-determination, and the last one for questions they still have about anything from the film. For example, in the freedoms won column students might write the 13th amendment or being able to fight in the Civil War. For the freedoms denied column students might write Black Codes or the Dred Scott decision. For the

self-determination column they might write Robert Smalls or Opal Lee getting Juneteenth passed as a national holiday.

Teachers could have students view the film as a whole class or have students watch in small groups to fill out the viewing guide. Teachers might consider having certain groups focus on one of the columns and then share their answers with a group that has a different column.

Teachers could stop the film in five to ten minute intervals to discuss answers and to see if students have other questions or observations.

Discuss answers as a whole class after students are done viewing the film.

### **Primary Source Analysis (10-15 minutes)**

Students could use the document analysis worksheet found at the [National Archives](#) or a [similar analysis handout](#). Here is another [website](#) with potential handouts to use. Break students into groups of two or three to analyze one of the primary sources connected to Juneteenth. This could also be done as a gallery walk depending on how much time the teacher has to teach Juneteenth. Teachers may want to do one analysis as a whole class as a way to model analyzing documents. Teachers could also consider using only a few of the documents depending on the class and time constraints.

1. Excerpt from Dred Scott decision
2. Excerpt from Mississippi Declaration of Secession
3. Excerpt from Emancipation Proclamation

4. Frederick Douglass quote from April 6, 1863 about African Americans serving in the military.
5. President Lincoln letter to James Conkling on August 26, 1863 discussing reasons for fighting the Civil War.
6. General Order No. 3.
7. President Biden statement regarding Juneteenth made on June 17th, 2021.

### **Ending Discussion and Exit Ticket (5-10 minutes):**

This discussion could be done in small groups or as a whole class. If you use Google Classroom it could also be done as online discussion. Another option is to have groups choose just one of the questions to discuss or assign certain groups to answer a question. This could also be used as a written exit ticket at the end of class.

1. What freedoms need more protection?
2. What groups don't have their freedoms protected today?
3. What would you do to protect more freedom today?

### **Summative Performance Task (10-15 minutes):**

Using data they have collected from the film and other sources from the lesson, students work together or alone to make a claim with evidence about one of the following questions:

1. How did African Americans win freedom?
2. How did African Americans determine their own destiny?

3. How can people today live up to the promise of Juneteenth and protect hard earned freedoms?

Students could extend these arguments by using evidence or questions generated during the lesson to research important people, events, or themes.

The final product could take the form of an essay, a piece of artwork, newscast, or some other form of their choosing.

### **Suggested Grading:**

**Entry Task:** 3 points for answering all the questions.

**Images of Freedom:** 4 points for writing answers for each image.

**Film Viewing Guide:** 12 points for filling in at least three examples for each of the 3 columns and writing three questions in the last column.

**Primary Sources Analysis:** Points will vary depending on which analysis worksheet is used.

**Ending Discussion/Exit Ticket:** 4 points for written answer with explanation.

**Summative Task:** 8 points

	4 points	3 points	0 points
Claim	A clear claim is evident in product	Claim is not clearly stated or seen in product	No claim
Evidence	At least two pieces of evidence are clearly seen and explained in the final product	Less than two pieces of evidence are presented or evidence is not clearly explained	No evidence

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES/STANDARDS**

**United States History Standards - Era 5: Standard 1**

Explain the causes of the Civil War and evaluate the importance of slavery as a principal cause of the conflict.

**United States History Standards - Era 5: Standard 2**

Evaluate provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln’s reasons for issuing it, and its significance.

**United States History Standards - Era 5: Standard 3**

Identify the turning points of the war and evaluate how political, military, and diplomatic leadership affected the outcome of the conflict. (Focus on African American contributions being a turning point)

Explain the provisions of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments and the political forces supporting and opposing each.

## **Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6–12**

Key Ideas: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.





## *Juneteenth Film - Images of Freedom*

**Directions:** Which types of freedom are found in the image. Write your answers above the image. (Possible answers could include personal, political, educational, economic, or social freedom.)

**Image 1 - Types of freedom seen:**



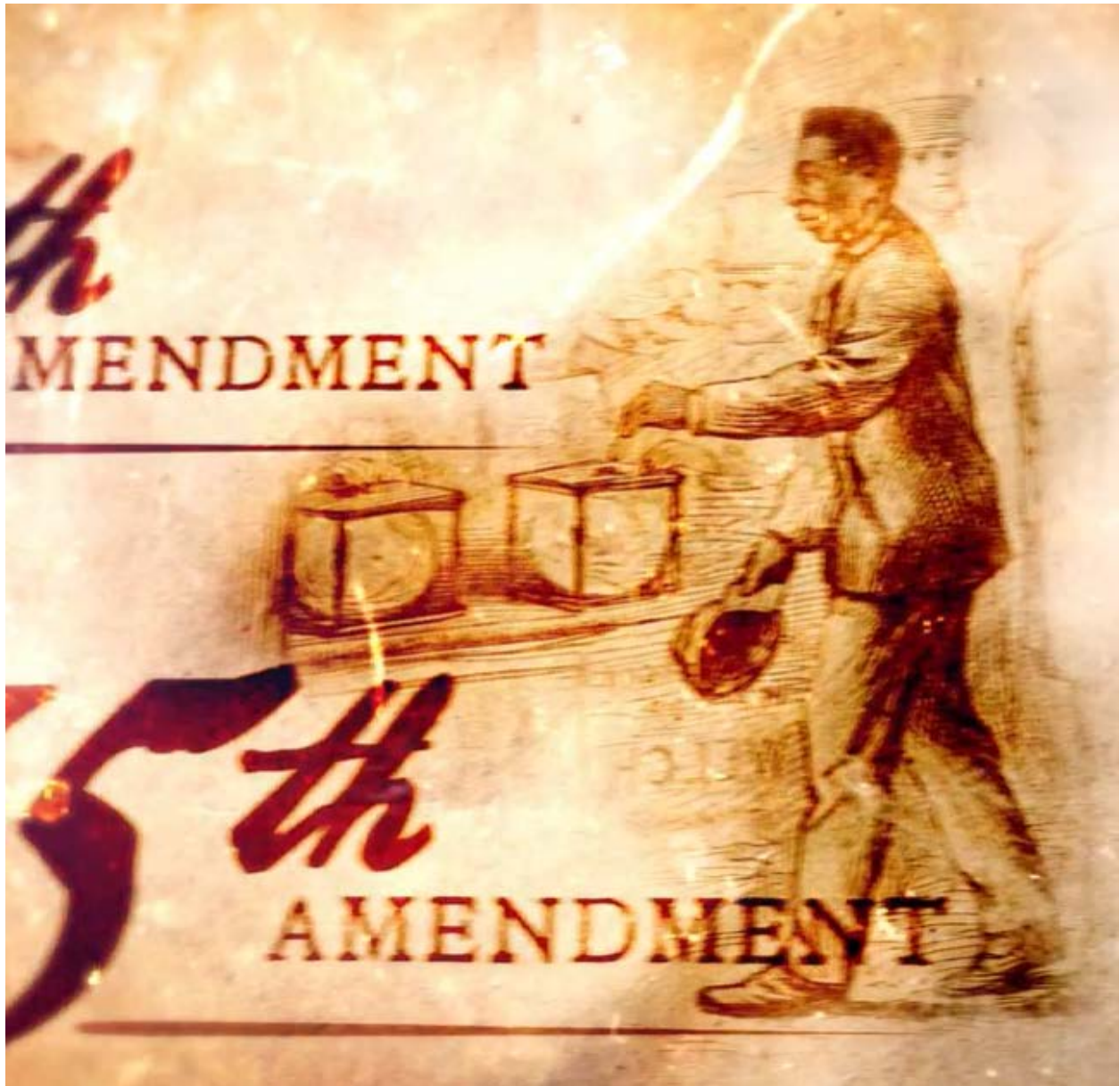
Credit: Lee Russell, 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b37034/>

***Image 2 - Types of freedom seen:***



Credit: Screenshot from Juneteenth film.

*Image 3 - Types of freedom seen:*



Credit: Screenshot from Juneteenth film.



***Image 4 - Types of freedom seen:***



Credit: Screenshot from Juneteenth film.

# Juneteenth Film

## Viewing Guide

**Directions:** Read over the words to know before the film. As you [watch the film](#), write down 3-5 examples from the film for each of the first three columns. Also, write down 3-5 questions you have about anything you saw in the film. For example, in the freedoms won column you might write down the 13th Amendment which legally ended slavery. Be prepared to discuss your answers during and after the film.

### **Words to know:**

**Emancipation:** To set free from legal, social, or political restrictions.

**Citizenship:** The state of having the rights, privileges, and duties of a citizen.

**Self-determination:** The process by which a person controls their own life.

<b>Examples of Freedoms Won</b>	<b>Examples of Freedoms Denied</b>	<b>Examples of Self-Determination</b>	<b>Questions You Still Have???</b>

## *Juneteenth Primary Sources*

**Directions:** Each one of these primary sources is connected to the story of Juneteenth. Primary sources are original documents and objects that were created at the time under study. Follow the directions given by your teacher to read and analyze the documents.

***Primary Source #1: Dred Scott vs. Sandford Supreme Court Case - excerpt (a short part) from majority opinion of Supreme Court judges.***

We think they (African Americans) are not included, under the word “citizens” in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the Government might choose to grant them.

***Primary Source #2: Excerpt from A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union. (1861)***

Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery – the greatest material interest of the world...and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution, and was at the point of reaching its consummation. There was no choice left us but submission to the mandates of



abolition, or a dissolution of the Union, whose principles had been subverted to work out our ruin.

***Primary Source #3: Emancipation Proclamation excerpt.  
(January 1, 1863)***

"...all persons held as slaves within any State ...the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

"...and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places..."

"...and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons."

***Primary Source #4: Frederick Douglass - military service. (April 6, 1863)***

"Once you let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny he has earned the right to citizenship."

***Primary Source #5: President Lincoln writes a letter to his friend James Conkling. (August 26, 1863)***

You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but, no matter. Fight you, then exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all

resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time, then, for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes.

***Primary Source #6: Union General Gordon Granger and his troops traveled to Galveston, Texas to announce General Order No. 3 on June 19th, 1865.***

The people 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, become that between employer and hired labor. The freed are advised to remain 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.

***Primary Source #7: President Joseph Biden - A Proclamation on Juneteenth Day of Observance. (June 18, 2021)***

"On Juneteenth, we recommit ourselves to the work of equity, equality, and justice. And, we celebrate the centuries of struggle, courage, and hope that have brought us to this time of progress and possibility. That work has been led throughout our history by abolitionists and educators, civil rights advocates and lawyers, courageous activists and trade unionists, public officials, and everyday Americans who have helped make real the ideals of our founding documents for all."

## *Summative Task*

**Directions:** Using data you have collected from the film and other sources from the lesson, make a claim with evidence about **one** of the following questions:

1. How did African Americans win freedom?
2. How did African Americans determine their own destiny?
3. How can people today live up to the promise of Juneteenth and protect hard earned freedoms?

Your final product could take the form of an essay, a piece of artwork, newscast, or some other form of your choosing.