

What is Juneteenth?

Discussion Guide

Grades 3 - 7

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Preview the content of the story using the author’s description on their [website](#).
- Engage your students in [an activity](#) to help them understand the inequality.
- Review strong habits of discussion and active listening with students. Teachers are encouraged to use whatever norms they already have within their classroom (*if needed, use [this resource](#)*).

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapter 1

- What story does everyone in the town talk about?
- How did living in Texas change Tempie Cummins’ life?
- What did Abraham Lincoln do to change slavery?

Chapters 2–3

- What did Elizabeth Van Lew do during the war?
- Why might some people stay on the farm even after they were free?
- Why is a family reunion important for Juneteenth?

Chapters 4–5

- Why do people dress up for Juneteenth?
- What is the connection between Juneteenth and red foods?
- How are July 4th and Juneteenth similar? How are they different?
- How did Jim Crow laws affect life after slavery?
- Why is Emancipation Park important?

Chapters 6–7

- What was the Great Migration, and why did it happen?
- Why is Clara People called the "Mother of Juneteenth"?

Chapters 8–9

- What is a peaceful protest?
- Why was the Civil Rights Era important?
- How did Martin Luther King Jr. fight for Black rights?
- What does the Juneteenth flag look like, and what does it mean?
- How do different states celebrate Juneteenth in unique ways?

Chapter 10

- How did COVID-19 affect racism, both positively and negatively?
- Why is Al Edwards called "Mr. Juneteenth"?
- How do people celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day?
- What did Opal Lee believe in, and what did she do for Juneteenth?

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After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- Why do people celebrate Juneteenth?
- Utilize [RIF's Main Idea Graphic Organizer](#) to deepen students' understanding using specific phrases from the book.
- **Writing Activity:** Opal Lee walked 1,400 miles to make Juneteenth a national holiday. Describe why she did this and what kept her motivated.
- **Timeline task:** This book explains the history of slavery and the importance of the national holiday Juneteenth. Using dates from the book create a timeline highlighting the story behind this holiday.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.
- Read the other books about Juneteenth.
 - [Opal Lee and What It Means to Be Free: The True Story of the Grandmother of Juneteenth](#) (2022)
 - [J is for Juneteenth](#) (2024)