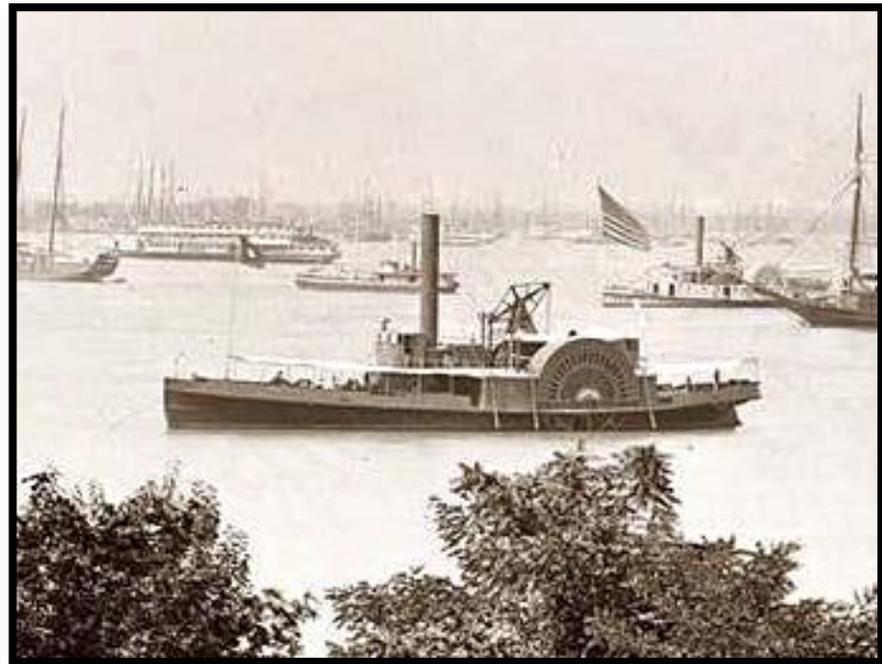
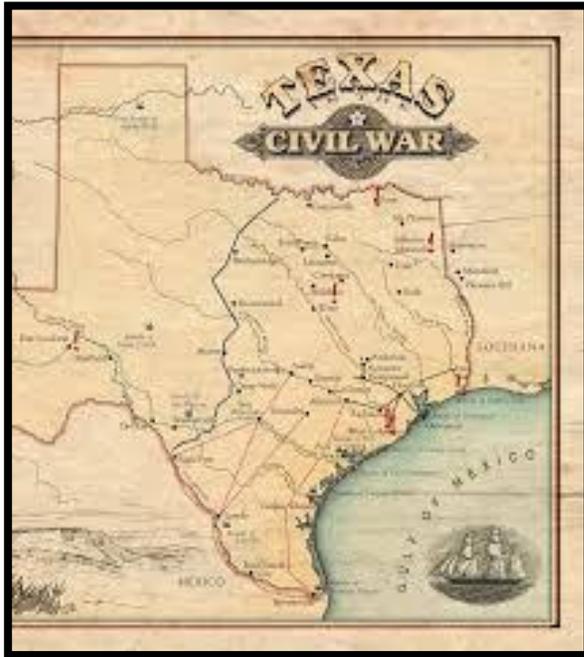


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UNIT NARRATIVE

When the Civil War erupted in 1861, tens of thousands of Anglo-Texans enlisted in the newly formed Confederate armies, driven by loyalty to the South and the defense of slavery as an economic and social system. A small number of Texans, such as those who served in Hood's Brigade, fought on the eastern front in states like Virginia and Pennsylvania. However, most Texas soldiers served on the western front, particularly along the Mississippi River. Others joined the state's home guard to protect settlements near the frontier and Indigenous nations. Not all Texans supported the Confederacy—many within German communities in central Texas resisted secession and the war effort, reflecting the divided loyalties within the state.

Although Texas was far from the main battlefields of the Civil War, it played a vital supporting role for the Confederacy. Its untouched farms provided food, livestock, and clothing for southern armies. Texas's long border with Mexico also became a crucial lifeline, allowing Confederate traders to bypass the Union naval blockade by exporting cotton and importing weapons and goods through ports like Matamoros. Additionally, the state became a refuge for Confederate soldiers and slaveholders fleeing advancing Union troops. Between 1863 and 1865, an estimated 50,000 enslaved people were forcibly moved to Texas, increasing the enslaved population to around 230,000 by the war's end.

The Confederate defeat in 1865 brought monumental change. When Union forces arrived in Galveston on June 19, 1865, they announced the end of slavery in Texas—an event celebrated today as **Juneteenth**, a national holiday marking freedom for nearly a quarter of a million enslaved African Americans. The abolition of slavery triggered a massive social, political, and economic transformation as Texas, along with other southern states, entered the period of **Reconstruction (1865–1876)**. Reconstruction raised three defining questions: What would become of the newly freed African Americans in Texas? How would the United States deal with former Confederates who had rebelled against the Union? And under what conditions would Texas and the other Confederate states be readmitted to the Union?

During **Presidential Reconstruction**, President Andrew Johnson offered a lenient path to reunification. Texas was allowed to rejoin the Union by ratifying the **13th Amendment**, which abolished slavery, and ex-Confederates were pardoned and permitted to vote and hold office again. However, this leniency enabled Anglo-Texans to pass restrictive "Black Codes" that denied citizenship rights and economic independence to African Americans, while also electing former Confederates to represent the state in Congress.

Northern Republicans responded with outrage, ushering in a new phase known as **Congressional Reconstruction**. Congress placed Texas and other former Confederate states under military rule and required them to ratify the **14th Amendment**, granting citizenship and equal protection under the law to African Americans, before regaining full representation. Later, the **15th Amendment** secured voting rights for Black men, further redefining citizenship in America. These federal actions aimed to empower freedpeople and reduce the political influence of ex-Confederates.

Many Anglo-Texans resisted these changes. Some joined violent groups like the **Ku Klux Klan**, using terror to intimidate African Americans and their Republican allies. Despite federal efforts, ex-Confederates gradually regained political control. By the mid-

1870s, they had reasserted dominance in Texas politics, culminating in the adoption of the **Texas Constitution of 1876**, which rolled back many Reconstruction-era reforms and sharply limited the powers of the state government.

The Civil War and Reconstruction transformed Texas from a slaveholding frontier society into a state struggling to define freedom, equality, and governance in the aftermath of conflict. These years left a lasting legacy—Juneteenth as a celebration of emancipation, the 1876 Constitution as the framework for state government, and an enduring struggle over civil rights and democracy that continued long after the war’s end.



This unit is adapted from the Texas History for Teacher Curriculum. For additional resources, check out: [Texas History for Teachers](#).

CONTENT STANDARDS

Below are the standards taught and assessed in this unit.

Civil War and Reconstruction	
7.5 History. The student understands how events and issues shaped the history of Texas during the Civil War and Reconstruction.	
Readiness Standards	Supporting Standards
<p>7.1(A)^ identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including ... Texas in the Civil War and Reconstruction ...</p> <p>7.5(A)* explain the central role the expansion of slavery played in the involvement of Texas in the Civil War</p> <p>7.5(C)* explain the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Texas</p> <p>7.8(C)^ analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas</p> <p>7.16(A)^ identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues, past and present</p>	<p>7.1(B)^ explain the significance of the following dates: ... Civil War begins; 1876 ...</p> <p>7.5(B)* identify significant events concerning Texas and the Civil War such as the Battle of Galveston, the Battle of Sabine Pass, and the Battle of Palmito Ranch</p> <p>7.8(A)^ locate and compare the Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, and Coastal Plains regions</p>

UNDERSTANDINGS AND QUESTIONS

Key Understandings

- **Sectionalism and slavery divided the United States and Texas.**
Growing tensions between the North and South over slavery, states' rights, and economic systems led Texas to secede from the Union in 1861 and join the Confederate States of America.
- **Texans experienced the Civil War differently than other Southern states.**
While few major battles occurred on Texas soil, the state contributed soldiers, supplies, and refuge for the Confederate cause. Battles such as Galveston and Sabine Pass highlighted Texas' strategic importance to the Confederacy.
- **The Civil War deeply transformed Texas society.**
Enslaved people made up a quarter of the population, and as the war continued, thousands were moved into Texas to prevent escape. The Union blockade and wartime shortages affected both the economy and daily life.
- **Emancipation redefined freedom and labor in Texas.**
General Gordon Granger's General Order No. 3 in Galveston on June 19, 1865—commemorated as Juneteenth—announced the end of slavery in Texas. Freedom brought both opportunity and hardship as freedpeople built new lives under restrictive social and economic conditions.
- **Reconstruction reshaped Texas politically, economically, and socially.**
Presidential and Congressional Reconstruction required Texas to rewrite its constitution, abolish slavery, and accept the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. Military rule enforced new laws but faced resistance from white Texans who opposed federal authority.
- **The Black Codes revealed the limits of freedom for African Americans.**
Laws passed in 1866 restricted the rights of freedpeople to work, travel, and participate in public life. These efforts to maintain white control led to federal intervention through Radical Reconstruction.
- **Military and federal oversight exposed conflicts over justice and power.**
Letters from leaders like General Charles Griffin showed how violence, corruption, and discrimination persisted in Texas courts, demonstrating that Reconstruction required ongoing federal enforcement.
- **Freedpeople built new communities and institutions despite barriers.**
African Americans established churches, schools, and Freedmen's Towns, creating spaces for education, faith, and civic life that laid the foundation for future movements for equality.
- **Reunification brought progress and backlash.**
The Texas Constitution of 1869 expanded voting rights and public education, but resistance from white Southerners led to the rise of groups like the Ku Klux Klan and to long-term racial and political divisions.
- **The end of Reconstruction marked both continuity and change.**
By 1870, Texas was readmitted to the Union, but Reconstruction's promises remained incomplete. While African Americans gained citizenship and voting rights, the return of white Democratic control limited progress for decades to come.

Key Questions

- What political, economic, and social tensions divided the United States and led Texas to join the Confederacy?
- How did geography and resources shape Texas' role in the Civil War compared to other Southern states?
- In what ways did Texans experience the Civil War at home, and how did the war transform daily life across the state?
- How did emancipation and the arrival of Union forces in Texas change the lives of formerly enslaved people?
- What challenges did Texas face in rebuilding its government, economy, and society after the Civil War?
- How did Reconstruction policies—such as the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments—redefine citizenship and rights in Texas?
- In what ways did state laws like the Black Codes and federal actions like military Reconstruction reveal conflicts between state and federal power?
- How did freedpeople work to build new communities, institutions, and opportunities despite widespread resistance?
- What does the struggle over Reconstruction in Texas reveal about the broader challenges of reunifying the nation?
- To what extent did Reconstruction succeed in transforming Texas politically and socially, and in what ways did its legacy remain incomplete?