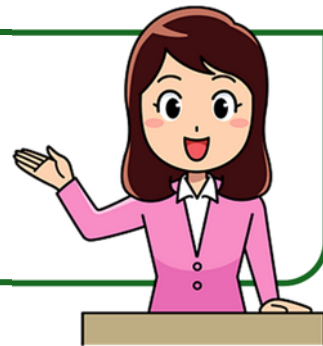


## Juneteenth's Unsung Voices

**Directions:** Read the passage about lesser-known figures who helped shape Juneteenth history. Then, answer the character-based comprehension questions that follow.



When people think of Juneteenth, they often picture the joyful celebrations that marked freedom's arrival in Texas. But behind those moments were individuals whose courage kept the dream of liberty alive long before the soldiers reached Galveston.

**Matilda Dunbar**, a teacher in Louisiana, risked her life by secretly teaching enslaved people to read. She believed that knowledge was a pathway to freedom and spent her nights whispering lessons under candlelight. Even after emancipation, she continued to open her home to anyone who wanted to learn.

**Reverend Jack Yates**, born into slavery in Virginia, earned his freedom and moved to Houston, Texas. There, he helped organize some of the first Juneteenth gatherings in the state. His leadership inspired freed people to buy land—eventually creating Emancipation Park, a place for families to celebrate together in peace.

And decades later, **Opal Lee**, often called the "Grandmother of Juneteenth," worked tirelessly to have Juneteenth recognized as a national holiday. Even in her 90s, she marched and spoke about unity, reminding everyone that freedom must be shared by all.

### Comprehension Questions:

1. What motivated Matilda Dunbar to secretly teach others to read?
2. How did Reverend Jack Yates help strengthen the Juneteenth tradition in Texas?
3. Why is Opal Lee known as the "Grandmother of Juneteenth"?
4. What common qualities do all three figures share?
5. How do these lesser-known heroes show that freedom is both a right and a responsibility?