

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* - Grade 8

Originally published in Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845.

Learning Objective: The goal of this two to three day exemplar is to give students the opportunity to explore the point of view of a man who survived slavery. By reading and rereading the passage closely, combined with classroom discussion about it, students will explore the various beliefs and points of view Douglass experienced as he became increasingly aware of the unfairness of his life. Students will need to consider the emotional context of words and how diction (word choice) affects an author's message. When combined with writing about the passage and teacher feedback, students will form a deeper understanding of how slavery affected those involved.

Reading Task: *Students will silently read the passage in question on a given day—first independently and then following along with the text as the teacher and/or skillful students read aloud. Depending on the difficulties of a given text and the teacher's knowledge of the fluency abilities of students, the order of the student silent read and the teacher reading aloud with students following might be reversed. What is important is to allow all students to interact with challenging text on their own as frequently and independently as possible. Students will then reread specific passages in response to a set of concise, text-dependent questions that compel them to examine the meaning and structure of Douglass' prose. Therefore, rereading is deliberately built into the instructional unit.*

Vocabulary Task: *Most of the meanings of words in the exemplar text can be discovered by students from careful reading of the context in which they appear. Teachers can use discussions to model and reinforce how to learn vocabulary from contextual clues, and students must be held accountable for engaging in this practice. Where it is judged this is not possible, underlined words are defined briefly for students to the right of the text in a separate column whenever the original text is reproduced. At times, this is all the support these defined words need. At other times, particularly with abstract words, teachers will need to spend more time explaining and discussing them. In addition, in subsequent close readings of passages of the text, high value academic ('Tier Two') words have been **bolded** to draw attention to them. Given how crucial vocabulary knowledge is for academic and career success, it is essential that these high value words be discussed and lingered over during the instructional sequence.*

Sentence Syntax Task: *On occasion, students will encounter particularly difficult sentences to decode. Teachers should engage in a close examination of such sentences to help students discover how they are built and how they convey meaning. While many questions addressing important aspects of the text double as questions about syntax, students should receive regular supported practice in deciphering complex sentences. It is crucial that the help they receive in unpacking text complexity focuses both on the precise meaning of what the author is saying and why the author might have constructed the sentence in this particular fashion. That practice will in turn support students' ability to unpack meaning from syntactically complex sentences they encounter in future reading.*

Discussion Task: *Students will discuss the exemplar text in depth with their teacher and their classmates, performing activities that result in a close reading of Douglass' prose. The goal is to foster student confidence when encountering complex text and to reinforce the skills they have acquired regarding how to build and extend their understanding of a text. A general principle is to always reread the passage that provides evidence for the question under discussion. This gives students another encounter with the text, helping them develop fluency and reinforcing their use of text evidence.*

Writing Task: *Students will write an explanatory paragraph using their understanding of the word choice and emotions expressed in the selection to present their opinions about what Douglass is trying to explain to the audience. Teachers might afford students the opportunity to revise their paragraphs after participating in classroom discussion or receiving teacher feedback, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.*

Outline of Lesson Plan: This lesson can be delivered in two to three days of instruction and reflection on the part of students and their teacher.

Standards Addressed: The following Common Core State Standards are the focus of this exemplar: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.4; W.8.2, W.8.4, W8.9; SL.8.1; L.8.4, L.8.5.

The Text: Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845)

Exemplar Text	Vocabulary
<p>The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent on errands, I always took my book with me, and by going on one part of my <u>errand</u> quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to <u>bestow</u> upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the <u>gratitude</u> and affection I bear them; but <u>prudence</u> forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey’s <u>ship-yard</u>. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. “You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?” These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.</p>	<p><i>chore (singular)</i></p> <p><i>give</i></p> <p><i>to show of thankfulness; state of being wise and careful</i></p> <p><i>place where ships are repaired or built</i></p>
<p>I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled “The Columbian <u>Orator</u>.” Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was <u>disposed</u> of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary <u>emancipation</u> of the slave on the part of the master.</p>	<p><i>speaker</i></p> <p><i>thrown out</i></p> <p><i>release</i></p>

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with **unabated** interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful **vindication** of human rights. The reading of these documents **enabled** me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and **detest** my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I **loathed** them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and **contemplated** the subject, behold! that very **discontentment** which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to **torment** and sting my soul to unutterable **anguish**. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the **remedy**. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had **roused** my soul to **eternal** wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

*a movement to
allow Catholics to
have full rights;
speaking out loud*

publicly condemn

keep alive

hate

*squirmed or
struggled*

miserable

*alive; resource or
advantage more
important than
any other (short
for trumpet)*

Day One: Instructional Exemplar for Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave*

Summary of Activities

1. Teacher introduces the day's passage with minimal commentary and students read it independently (5 minutes)
2. Teacher or a skillful reader then reads the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text (5 minutes)
3. Teacher asks the class to discuss the first set of text-dependent questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate (40 minutes)
4. Teacher then assigns a paragraph that asks students to write an analysis of Douglass' text.

Text Passage under Discussion	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students
<p>The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read . . .</p> <p>[read the intervening text]</p> <p>. . . The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary <u>emancipation</u> of the slave on the part of the master.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce the passage and students read independently. Other than giving the brief definitions offered to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in the text), avoid giving any background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson while students are reading the text silently. This close reading approach forces students to rely exclusively on the text instead of privileging background knowledge and levels the playing field for all students as they seek to comprehend Douglass' prose. It is critical to cultivating independence and creating a culture of close reading that students initially grapple with rich texts like Douglass' text without the aid of prefatory material, extensive notes, or even teacher explanations.2. Read the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text. Asking students to listen to <i>Narrative of the Life</i> exposes them a second time to the rhythms and meaning of Douglass' language before they begin their own close reading of the passage. Speaking clearly and carefully will allow students to follow Douglass' narrative, and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English.

Text Under Discussion	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students
<p>The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent on errands, I always took my book with me, and by going on one part of my <u>errand</u> quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to <u>bestow</u> upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the <u>gratitude</u> and affection I bear them; but <u>prudence</u> forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey’s <u>ship-yard</u>.</p>	<p>3. Ask the class to answer a small set of text-dependent guided questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate.</p> <p>As students move through these questions and reread Douglass’ text, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (which will be boldfaced the first time it appears in the text). At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary.</p> <p>(Q1) Why is Douglass specific about making friends with “little white boys”? Students may not have internalized the title and may not understand that this is a story of a former slave or that this is during the period where whites had a lot more power. Teachers should point them back to the title if they cannot answer this question, allowing students to clarify their own thinking through the text.</p> <p>(Q2) How did Douglass learn how to read when running errands? Taking bread with him, he would quickly finish the first part of an errand and then exchange the bread for a reading lesson before completing the remainder of his chores.</p> <p>(Q3) In what ways does Douglass’ life differ from the white boys’ lives? Students should see that Douglass is not condemning his upbringing totally. He was denied an education, which he finds more valuable than food. However, he does have bread, where many of the white boys are hungry.</p> <p>(Q4) Douglass is describing events from the past. These “boys” are now adult men, so why would he avoid giving their names? He thinks they still might get in trouble for having taught a slave to read. This is the “unpardonable offence.” He is also concerned that as adults they may be embarrassed at having done this.</p>

chore

give

*to show
thankfulness;
state of being
wise and
careful*

*place where
ships are
repaired or
built*

Text Under Discussion	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students
<p>I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. “You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?” These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.</p> <p>I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled “The Columbian <u>Orator</u>.” Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was <u>disposed of</u> by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary <u>emancipation</u> of the slave on the part of the master.</p>	<p>(Q5) Which of these meanings of “trouble” is Douglass using? Why did he choose this word? How would the meaning have changed if he had chosen the word “anger”?</p> <p>Students may vary in which definitions they believe apply, but they should see that Douglass is using multiple meanings of this word. He is emphasizing that slavery can cause more than one kind of trouble: emotional or physical pain, frustration, or even anxiety. The use of “trouble” instead of “angry” suggests that the boys did not feel all that strongly about slavery even if they were uncomfortable with Douglass being a slave.</p> <p>(Q6) Why does Douglass describe the master’s response as both “desired” and “unexpected”? Why the contrast between these two words?</p> <p>He did not expect the slave to be freed, which is why the voluntary emancipation surprised him. Advanced students might infer that as much as Douglass desires for masters to acknowledge the arguments of a former slave in this book against slavery, he does not expect it.</p> <p>Ask students to parse the syntax of the final sentence in the passage, paying careful attention to how the constituent parts of the sentence add up to create the unique meaning of Douglass’ words.</p> <p>Assign a paragraph that asks students to write an analysis of Douglass’ text.</p> <p>Teachers can ask students to spell out their answers to (Q5) or (Q6) in greater detail using evidence drawn from the text, or if they prefer, ask students to address the following prompt:</p> <p><i>Explain the irony implicit in Douglass’ observation that “it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country.”</i></p>

speaker

thrown out

release

Day Two: Instructional Exemplar for Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave*

Summary of Activities

1. Teacher introduces the day's passage with minimal commentary and students read it independently (5 minutes)
2. Teacher or a skillful reader then reads the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text (5 minutes)
3. Teacher asks the class to discuss the first set of text-dependent questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate (40 minutes)
4. Teacher then assigns a culminating writing assignment that asks students to synthesize the entire reading

Text Passage under Discussion	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students
<p>In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of <u>utterance</u>. . .</p> <p>[read the intervening paragraphs]</p> <p>. . . The silver <u>trump</u> of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce the passage and students read independently. Other than giving the brief definitions offered to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in the text), avoid giving any background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson while students are reading the text silently. This close reading approach forces students to rely exclusively on the text instead of privileging background knowledge and levels the playing field for all students as they seek to comprehend Douglass' prose. It is critical to cultivating independence and creating a culture of close reading that students initially grapple with rich texts like Douglass' text without the aid of prefatory material, extensive notes, or even teacher explanations.2. Read the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text. Asking students to listen to <i>Narrative of the Life</i> exposes them a second time to the rhythms and meaning of Douglass' language before they begin their own close reading of the passage. Speaking clearly and carefully will allow students to follow Douglass' narrative, and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English.

Text Passage under Discussion	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students
<p>In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan’s mighty speeches on and in behalf of <u>Catholic emancipation</u>. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of <u>utterance</u>. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold <u>denunciation</u> of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to <u>sustain</u> slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to <u>abhor</u> and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men.</p>	<p><i>a movement to allow people from this religion to have full rights</i></p> <p><i>speaking out loud</i></p> <p><i>publicly condemn</i></p> <p><i>keep alive</i></p> <p><i>hate</i></p> <p>3. Ask the class to answer a small set of text-dependent guided questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate.</p> <p>As students move through these questions and reread Douglass’ text, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (which will be boldfaced the first time it appears in the text). At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary.</p> <p>(Q7) When Douglass says, “They gave tongue to interesting thoughts,” how is he using the word “tongue”?</p> <p>Douglass is using it to mean talking or writing about—that they talked about interesting thoughts. The idea of talking also matches the idea of tongue.</p> <p>(Q8) What moral did Douglass learn from these books?</p> <p>Truth and good arguments can be more powerful than prejudice—even the strong prejudice of a slaveholder. He also learned the power and the potential of the printed word to change minds and attitudes—a lesson he turned around and used himself in writing his autobiography.</p> <p>(Q9) How does the word “enable” change the meaning of the line it appears in? How can documents “enable” him to “utter [his] thoughts” or write?</p> <p>Reading others’ thoughts gave him the power and the need to write his own. (Teachers should note how the common use of the word today is different from Douglass’ use of it.)</p> <p>(Q10) In what ways is Douglas saying slaveholders are like robbers? Find and explore the structure of the sentence that gives voice to this idea most clearly.</p> <p>Both leave their own homes to go into someone else’s home and take something that does not belong to them; in this case robbing people of their rights and freedoms. (Teachers may even introduce the word “avarice” here since that is the common denominator.)</p>

Text Passage under Discussion	Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students
<p>As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I <u>writhed</u> under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my <u>wretched</u> condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this ever- lasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, <u>animate</u> or inanimate. The silver <u>trump</u> of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.</p>	<p>(Q11) What prediction did Douglass’ owner make about what would happen if he learned to read? Did it come true? Why or why not?</p> <p>Master Hugh said he would be discontented (unhappy), and Douglass admits that he is. The harder idea here is that he is suffering because he is seeing his own “wretched condition” without seeing any solution, and this is leaving him feeling lost and possibly even depressed.</p> <p>(Q12) What is the horrible pit? Why does Douglass envy someone’s stupidity?</p> <p>Students should look at the qualities of a pit and recognize that Douglass is talking about slavery as a pit. As a slave, he envies those individuals who are not as self-aware of their condition because they are not as aware of the horrors of slavery. By being duller, they do not observe and feel the injustice as strongly as a smart observant person does.</p> <p>(Q13) Why is freedom tormenting Douglass?</p> <p>Becoming aware of freedom has roused “my soul to eternal wakefulness”; Douglass sees it everywhere, but is himself still enslaved.</p> <p>Sidebar: Additional Activities</p> <p>Teachers who have time may want to consider having students brainstorm how different groups or individuals might have perceived this writing at the time of its publication in 1845, before the Civil War started. See Appendix A for a possible enrichment opportunity and Appendix B for two examples of reviews published when the narrative was first released.</p>

squirmed or struggled

miserable

alive resource or advantage more important than any other (short for trumpet)

Informative/Explanatory Assignment: Directions for Teachers and Students / Guidance for Teachers

This question requires students to look at diction and connotation, i.e. how do words "feel." Students may have a variety of answers, but as long as they are correctly labeling some words as contributing to particular emotions, they are correct. A few examples are included below to give the teacher an idea of the possible groupings. If students are struggling, teachers may wish to choose one of the following words to use as a model. Teachers may also wish to have students write strong words or phrases on pieces of construction paper and then group them into emotion "families" together as a class. However, teachers should avoid giving students too many of the words from Douglass or from labeling all possible emotions. Students should be allowed to interact with the text on their own.

- **happy:** kindly; better off; gratitude; affection; dear little fellows
- **frustrated:** have not I as good a right; wretched; horrible pit; it pressed upon me
- **sad:** console; bear heavily upon my heart; died away; painful; discontentment
- **passionate:** unabated interest
- **angry:** abhor; detest; robbers; loathed; meanest; most wicked
- **hurt:** torment; sting; writhed; agony; unutterable anguish; agony; tormented; torment me
- **jealous:** envied my fellow slaves; wished myself a beast; meanest reptile
- **hopeful:** silver trump of freedom; it smiled in every calm

This is a complex task, but students have ample experience with understanding and labeling emotions in real life. With the scaffolding of the previous questions, students should be able to identify one of two possible patterns:

- A. He feels negative when considering his own slavery; however, the thought of freedom brings calm and the image of the "silver trump."
- B. As a child, he has this hopeful feeling with gratitude and affection; however, as he got older, the feelings turned more negative with despair and depression being more prominent.

Students can then use their research and their identification of patterns to help them answer the following prompt:

Student Prompt: How do Douglass' feelings change over the course of this piece? What is Douglass trying to show about how slavery makes people feel? Write a paragraph in which you show how his feelings change and what you believe he is trying to show the reader.

Alternate Assignment: An alternate assignment for students with more experience might include asking them to write about where in the text they see evidence that Douglass is consciously crafting his narrative to present a particular point of view. Students should choose passages they feel present evidence of intentional crafting in word choice.

Appendix A: Additional Instructional Opportunities for Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave*

If teachers wish to explore the relationship between the individual and society or offer an additional day of instructional time, they may want to consider having small groups of students of mixed abilities tackle one or more of these tasks. Each of these require students to consider a point of view outside of themselves, evaluate Fredrick Douglass from that point of view, and consider how the text might have influenced behavior. Teachers may use the general information on this page to debrief the various attitudes with students, or for enrichment, they may take it one step further. After students have done the following exploration, show excerpts from the reviews included in Appendix B or the poetry included in Appendix C. Did groups with points of view similar to the two reviews correctly predict the attitudes?

Speaking and Listening: Teachers may wish to have student groups report their conclusions to the class, listening for evidence that their assigned point of view would either agree or disagree with the various other points of view. Class discussion about which groups would form likely alliances might help students understand how various groups chose sides in the war. This could also be an opportunity for additional writing.

I. (No text) President Polk in his diary said that he wanted the Missouri compromise extended, leaving the country permanently split between slave and non-slave states.

II. (No text) Gerrit Smith and his wife Ann Carrol Fitzhugh became increasingly active in the abolitionist movement. He gave land to free blacks to try and help them establish residency and earn voting rights in New York, and his house became a stop on the Underground Railroad.

III. See Appendix B) *Lynn Pioneer* is the name of a paper based in Lynn, Massachusetts. The paper focused on abolitionism and temperance and would have reflected the views of journalists and editors such as William Lloyd Garrison (from role play group III), even though William Lloyd Garrison did not write that review.

IV. See Appendix B) A.C.C. Thompson wrote a public review in which he claimed that the narrative slandered the honorable men mentioned and that no slave, much less the "average Negro" he knew only by his first name "Frederick." He claims that someone else actually wrote the book using some of Frederick's stories, and that it is all propaganda from abolitionists.

V. (See Appendix C) Emily Dickinson never did publicly comment on slavery; however, at the time, other writers often compared the hunting of an animal to the hunting down of an escaped slave. In the 1850s she wrote a number of poems about the agony of a hunted animal. Some people have interpreted that as her sympathy for running slaves (the fugitive slave laws were hotly debated at this time); however, many people point to the fact that she sympathizes with those who run without explicitly connecting it to slavery to suggest that she sees all forms of "Mastery" (slave owner over slave/husband over wife/hunter over deer) as equally demeaning. Advanced students may want to explore her poetry in appendix C and decide if they believe, as some experts do, that she is writing about slavery.

The Audience, Group I:

For the following question, imagine you are an American in 1845. This year alone, the United States voted to allow Texas and Florida into our country, a huge fire destroyed large parts of Pittsburgh, and people started to suggest that American cities might be unsafe, while Mexico is starting to threaten us with war over the fact that Texas left Mexico and has joined us. However, many of us Americans are really focused on slavery. Pennsylvania tried passing a law saying people in the state, including runaway slaves, are automatically free, but just three years ago, the Supreme Court said that slave states have a right to reclaim their “property” and struck down that Pennsylvania law. Several states in the north have been passing laws saying that state officials and governments won’t help slave owners find runaway slaves, and the Southern states are complaining that their property is being stolen and the North is refusing to uphold the law. They say the North is trying to tell them how to run their states, and that they have a right to their own laws and their own beliefs. The Methodist church actually splits into two churches over the issue of slavery. And this year, 1845, Fredrick Douglass publishes this narrative.

How would the following person react? Answer the questions with your character in mind.

James Polk: the eleventh president of the United States. Raised in North Carolina and Tennessee, he took office in 1845. He inherited 8000 acres of land and twenty slaves. He never sold a slave, and in his will it said his slaves would go free after he and his wife had both passed away, but he did buy slaves and run his plantation, even when he was president.

What one line in the Douglass narrative would stand out to him as most accurate or truthful?

What one line in the Douglass narrative would he question? What line from Douglass might stand out to him as most inaccurate or what might he call a lie?

Would this change his mind about slavery? Why or why not? Give a specific reason why you have that opinion, using quotes from the reading to support your idea.

The Audience, Group II:

For the following question, imagine you are an American in 1845. This year alone, the United States voted to allow Texas and Florida into our country, a huge fire destroyed large parts of Pittsburgh, and people started to suggest that American cities might be unsafe, while Mexico is starting to threaten us with war over the fact that Texas left Mexico and has joined us. However, many of us Americans are really focused on slavery. Pennsylvania tried passing a law saying people in the state, including runaway slaves, are automatically free, but just three years ago, the Supreme Court said that slave states have a right to reclaim their “property” and struck down that Pennsylvania law. Several states in the north have been passing laws saying that state officials and governments won’t help slave owners find runaway slaves, and the Southern states are complaining that their property is being stolen and the North is refusing to uphold the law. They say the North is trying to tell them how to run their states, and that they have a right to their own laws and their own beliefs. The Methodist church actually splits into two churches over the issue of slavery. And this year, 1845, Fredrick Douglass publishes this narrative.

How would the following person react? Answer the questions with your character in mind.

Gerrit Smith: a politician who helped form the Liberty Party. Born in New York, Smith spent much of his life fighting to get women the vote, and he married a seventeen-year-old suffragette (a woman who fought for the right of all women to vote). Together, the two of them founded Free Churches in New York. Smith ran for governor of New York in 1840 and remained active in politics after the narrative was published.

What one line in the Douglass narrative would stand out to him as most accurate or truthful?

What one line in the Douglass narrative would he question? What line from Douglass might stand out to him as most inaccurate or what might he call a lie?

Would this change his mind about slavery? Why or why not? Give a specific reason why you have that opinion, using quotes from the reading to support your idea.

The Audience, Group III:

For the following question, imagine you are an American in 1845. This year alone, the United States voted to allow Texas and Florida into our country, a huge fire destroyed large parts of Pittsburgh, and people started to suggest that American cities might be unsafe, while Mexico is starting to threaten us with war over the fact that Texas left Mexico and has joined us. However, many of us Americans are really focused on slavery. Pennsylvania tried passing a law saying people in the state, including runaway slaves, are automatically free, but just three years ago, the Supreme Court said that slave states have a right to reclaim their “property” and struck down that Pennsylvania law. Several states in the north have been passing laws saying that state officials and governments won’t help slave owners find runaway slaves, and the Southern states are complaining that their property is being stolen and the North is refusing to uphold the law. They say the North is trying to tell them how to run their states, and that they have a right to their own laws and their own beliefs. The Methodist church actually splits into two churches over the issue of slavery. And this year, 1845, Fredrick Douglass publishes this narrative.

How would the following person react? Answer the questions with your character in mind.

William Lloyd Garrison: journalist and abolitionist writer. Born in Massachusetts, Garrison was raised by his mother after his unemployed father left the family. He sold lemonade and delivered wood to help his mother pay the bills. By fourteen, he had a job in a newspaper, and at twenty-five, he became an abolitionist. Starting his own newspaper in Maryland, a slave state, he published stories of the horrors of slavery and was sued by a man he wrote about. He spent seven weeks in jail until someone else paid his fine, at which time he moved to Boston and started the newspaper, *The Liberator*.

What one line in the Douglass narrative would stand out to him as most accurate or truthful?

What one line in the Douglass narrative would he question? What line from Douglass might stand out to him as most inaccurate or what might he call a lie?

Would this change his mind about slavery? Why or why not? Give a specific reason why you have that opinion, using quotes from the reading to support your idea.

The Audience, Group IV:

For the following question, imagine you are an American in 1845. This year alone, the United States voted to allow Texas and Florida into our country, a huge fire destroyed large parts of Pittsburgh, and people started to suggest that American cities might be unsafe, while Mexico is starting to threaten us with war over the fact that Texas left Mexico and has joined us. However, many of us Americans are really focused on slavery. Pennsylvania tried passing a law saying people in the state, including runaway slaves, are automatically free, but just three years ago, the Supreme Court said that slave states have a right to reclaim their “property” and struck down that Pennsylvania law. Several states in the north have been passing laws saying that state officials and governments won’t help slave owners find runaway slaves, and the Southern states are complaining that their property is being stolen and the North is refusing to uphold the law. They say the North is trying to tell them how to run their states, and that they have a right to their own laws and their own beliefs. The Methodist church actually splits into two churches over the issue of slavery. And this year, 1845, Fredrick Douglass publishes this narrative.

How would the following person react? Answer the questions with your character in mind.

A.C.C. Thompson: an owner of land in Baltimore, Maryland, Thompson lived near the Auld family, the family that Frederick Douglass served while he was learning to read. No one knows what goes on inside someone else’s house, but Thompson was friends with the Aulds. He knows they treated slaves well because they were good people. Moreover, he saw slavery as very normal. The average household in Maryland owned three slaves, and almost a third of the state was enslaved.

What one line in the Douglass narrative would stand out to him as most accurate or truthful?

What one line in the Douglass narrative would he question? What line from Douglass might stand out to him as most inaccurate or what might he call a lie?

Would this change his mind about slavery? Why or why not? Give a specific reason why you have that opinion, using quotes from the reading to support your idea.

The Audience, Group V:

For the following question, imagine you are an American in 1845. This year alone, the United States voted to allow Texas and Florida into our country, a huge fire destroyed large parts of Pittsburgh, and people started to suggest that American cities might be unsafe, while Mexico is starting to threaten us with war over the fact that Texas left Mexico and has joined us. However, many of us Americans are really focused on slavery. Pennsylvania tried passing a law saying people in the state, including runaway slaves, are automatically free, but just three years ago, the Supreme Court said that slave states have a right to reclaim their “property” and struck down that Pennsylvania law. Several states in the north have been passing laws saying that state officials and governments won’t help slave owners find runaway slaves, and the Southern states are complaining that their property is being stolen and the North is refusing to uphold the law. They say the North is trying to tell them how to run their states, and that they have a right to their own laws and their own beliefs. The Methodist church actually splits into two churches over the issue of slavery. And this year, 1845, Fredrick Douglass publishes this narrative.

How would the following person react? Answer the questions with your character in mind.

Emily Dickinson was fifteen when the narrative came out. She grew up in a Massachusetts home, where her father encouraged her to go to school and wrote to her when he went on extended trips for business; however, her mother seemed to have almost no relationship with Emily. Emily wrote to a friend that her older brother was the only “mother” she had. Her father sent her to an academy where she loved learning, but after a friend died of typhus in 1844, she became so depressed and strange that they brought her back home to the house ruled by a mother she seemed to dislike.

What one line in the Douglass narrative would stand out to her as most accurate or truthful?

What one line in the Douglass narrative would she question? What line from Douglass might stand out to her as most inaccurate or what might he call a lie?

Would this change her mind about slavery? Why or why not? Give a specific reason why you have that opinion, using quotes from the reading to support your idea.

Appendix B: Two contemporary reviews of Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave*

Both reviews were taken from *Documenting the American South* (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>), a collection of original source documents.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

FROM *The Liberator*, 30 May 1845.

My readers will be delighted to learn that Frederick Douglass—the fugitive slave—has at last concluded his narrative. All who know the wonderful gifts of friend Douglass know that his narrative must, in the nature of things, be written with great power. It is so indeed. It is the most thrilling work which the American press ever issued—and the most important. If it does not open the eyes of this people, they must be petrified into eternal sleep.

The picture it presents of slavery is too horrible to look upon, and yet it is but a faint picture of what to millions is a vivid life. It is evidently drawn with a nice eye, and the coloring is chaste and subdued, rather than extravagant or overwrought. Thrilling as it is, and full of the most burning eloquence, it is yet simple and unimpassioned. Its eloquence is the eloquence of truth, and so is as simple and touching as the impulses of childhood. There are passages in it which would brighten the reputation of any living author,—while the book, as a whole, judged as a mere work of art, would widen the fame of Bunyan or De Foe. A spirit of the loftiest integrity, and a vein of the purest religious sentiment, runs through its pages, and it must leave on every mind a deep conviction of the author's strength of mind and purity of heart. I predict for it a sale of at least twenty thousand in this country, and equally great in Europe. It will leave a mark upon this age which the busy finger of time will deepen at every touch. It will generate a public sentiment in this nation, in the presence of which our pro-slavery laws and constitutions shall be like chaff in the presence of fire. It contains the spark which will kindle up the smouldering embers of freedom in a million souls, and light up our whole continent with the flames of liberty. Great efforts will be made in the name of the Constitution and the Bible, of James Polk and the Apostle Paul, to suppress it: but it will run through this nation from house to house, and from heart to heart, as the wild fire, finding wings in every wind which blows, flies across the tall and boundless prairies. Its stirring incidents will fasten themselves on the eager minds of the youth of this country with hooks of steel. The politics of the land will stand abashed before it, while her more corrupt religion will wish to sink back into the hot womb which gave it birth. It will fall in among the churches and state-houses of the land like a bomb-shell, and those who madly undertake to pick it to pieces will share the fate of that poor New-Yorker who attempted something of the kind on a bomb-shell picked up on the shores of Jersey, i. e., they will be blowed to atoms at the first blow.

—Lynn Pioneer

REFUGE OF OPPRESSION.

From the Delaware Republican

TO THE PUBLIC.

FALSEHOOD REFUTED.

A. C. C. Thompson

FROM *The Liberator*, 12 December 1845.

It is with considerable regret that I find myself measurably compelled to appear before the public; but my attention has lately been arrested by a pamphlet which has been freely circulated in Wilmington and elsewhere, with the following superscription:—Extract from a Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, written by himself.

And although I am aware that no sensible, unprejudiced person will credit such a ridiculous publication, which bears the glaring impress of falsehood on every page, yet I deem it expedient that I should give the public some information respecting the validity of this narrative, because I was for many years a citizen of the section of country where the scenes of the above mentioned narrative are laid; and am intimately acquainted with most of the gentlemen whose characters are so shamefully traduced, and I am also aware, that the Narrative was not written by the professed author; but from statements of this runaway slave, some evil designed person or persons have composed this catalogue of lies to excite the indignation of the public opinion against the slaveholders of the South; and have even attempted to plunge their venomous fangs in the vitals of the church.

I shall, therefore, briefly notice some of the most glaring falsehoods contained in the aforesaid Narrative, and give a true representation of the character of those gentlemen, who have been censured in such an uncharitable manner, as murderers, hypocrites, and everything else that is vile.

I indulge no animosity against the fabricators and circulators of the Narrative, neither do I know them, but I positively declare the whole to be a bucket of falsehoods, from beginning to end.

1st. The identity of the author. About eight years ago I knew this recreant slave by the name of Frederick Bailey, (instead of Douglass.) He then lived with Mr. Edward Covy, and was an unlearned, and rather an ordinary negro, and am confident he was not capable of writing the Narrative alluded to; for none but an educated man, and one who had some knowledge of the rules of grammar, could write so correctly. Although, to make the imposition at all creditable, the composer has labored to write it in as plain a style as possible: consequently, the detection of this first falsehood proves the whole production to be notoriously untrue.

Again. 'It is a common custom in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to separate children from their mothers at a very early age.'

This also I know to be false. There is no such custom prevalent in that section of the country; but, on the contrary, the children are raised with their mothers, and generally live with them in the same house, except in some few instances where the mother is hired out as a cook or laborer in some other family.

The gentlemen, whose names are so prominently set forth in the said Narrative are Col. Edward Lloyd, Capt. Anthony, Austin Gore, Thomas Lamdin, (not Lanman,) Giles Hicks, Thomas Auld, and Edward Covy. Most of these persons I am intimately acquainted with and shall give a brief sketch of their characters as follows:

Col. Edward Lloyd was one of the most wealthy and respectable planters in the State of Maryland. He was at one time the Governor of the State, and for several years, a member of the Legislature. He owned several thousand acres of land, and between 4 and 500 slaves. He died before I had much knowledge of him; but I know that he was a kind and charitable man, and in every respect an honorable and worthy citizen.

Most of the same slaves are now owned by his three sons, and they manage their servants in the same manner as did their father; and I know there are no such barbarities committed on their plantations.

Could it be possible that charitable feeling men could murder human beings, with as little remorse of conscience, as the narrative of this infamous libel wishes to make us believe; and that the laws of Maryland, which operate alike upon black and white, bond or free, could permit such foul murders to pass unnoticed? No! it is impossible; and every sensible man knows that these false accusations are the ebullition of an unchristian prejudice.

Captain Anthony and Giles Hicks, I know but little of. The accused murderer, Mr. Gore, is a respectable citizen, living near St. Michaels, and I believe a worthy member of the Methodist Episcopal Church: he was formerly an overseer for Col. Lloyd, and at this time, all who know him, think him anything but a murderer.

Thomas Lamdin, who, it is said, (in the Narrative,) boasted so frequently of his murders, is at this time an honest school teacher in the District where I formerly lived; and all the harm that can be said of him is, that he is too good-natured and harmless to injure any person but himself.

Capt. Thomas Auld, whose hypocritical meanness is so strongly depicted in the aforesaid Narrative, was for many years a respectable merchant in the town of St Michaels, and an honorable and worthy member of the Methodist E. Church, and only notable for his integrity and irreproachable Christian character. He is now retired from the turmoil of a mercantile life, and engaged in the worthy occupation of tilling the soil, little dreaming of the foul accusations that are circulated against him.

Edward Covy, the renowned 'negro breaker,' is also a plain, honest farmer, and a tried and faithful member of the Methodist E. Church. Mr. Covy lived for several years on a farm adjoining my father's, at which time this runaway negro lived with him, and I am well aware that no such bloody tragedy as is

recorded in that lying Narrative ever occurred on Mr. Covy's farm. All that can be said of Mr. Covy is that he is a good Christian, and a hard working man, and makes every one around him work and treats them well. By his honest industry, he has purchased a fine farm, and is now reaping the reward of his labor.

Such are the characters of the men whom the imposers of this dirty Narrative have so uncharitably traduced, and by blending these false accusations with the Methodist religion of the South, they wish to lacerate her already bleeding wounds.

I was raised among slaves, and have also owned them, and am well aware that the slaves live better and fare better in many respects than the free blacks.

Yet, I am positively opposed to slavery, for I know it is a great evil; but the evil falls not upon the slave, but on the owner.

Intrigue and false accusations will never liberate the slave of the South; but, on the contrary, every such attempt will only forge for them new and stronger fetters.

Let the tender-hearted philanthropists of the North speak truth and love towards their southern brethren, and make a liberal application of their gold for the removing the blacks from the country, and their chance of success will be more flattering:

I have given a true representation of the persons connected with the aforesaid Narrative, and I respectfully submit the facts to the judgment of an impartial public.

-A. C. C. THOMPSON.

No. 101 Market-st. Wilmington, Del.

Appendix C: Three poems by Emily Dickinson on the trope of hunting

One Anguish—in a Crowd—
A Minor thing—it sounds—
And yet, unto the single Doe
Attempted of the Hounds

'Tis Terror as consummate
As Legions of Alarm
Did leap, full flanked, upon the Host—
'Tis Units—make the Swarm—

A Small Leech—on the Vitals—
The sliver, in the Lung—
The Bung out—of an Artery—
Are scarce accounted—Harms—

Yet might—by relation
To that Repealless thing—
A Being—impotent to end—
When once it has begun—

This Merit hath the worst—
It cannot be again—
When Fate hath taunted last
And thrown Her furthest Stone—

The Maimed may pause, and breathe,
And glance securely round—
The Deer attracts no further
Than it resists—the Hound—

A wounded deer leaps highest,
I've heard the hunter tell;
'Tis but the ecstasy of death,
And then the brake is still.

The smitten rock that gushes,
The trampled steel that springs:
A cheek is always redder
Just where the hectic stings!

Mirth is mail of anguish,
In which its cautious arm
Lest anybody spy the blood
And, "you're hurt" exclaim
I never hear the word "Escape"
Without a quicker blood,
A sudden expectation –
A flying attitude!

I never hear of prisons broad
By soldiers battered down,
But I tug childish at my bars
Only to fail again!