

## AP Language and Composition Summer Reading Assignment for Douglass

### Introduction

Frederick Douglass's slave narrative is readily accessible to high school students. It is short (slightly more than 120 pages), easy to read and understand, and filled with warmth and wisdom. In addition it presents a vivid picture of a horrifying period of American history that far too few students understand. Students may read about the institution of slavery in history textbooks, some of which attempt to show the cruel inhumanity of many slave owners, but few textbooks allow students to see and feel the fear Douglass has as a small child separated from his mother, the pain inflicted by undeserved whippings, the weakness caused by too little food and too much physical exertion, and the hate of the slave for the master. In addition, students witness how destructive slavery is not only for the slaves but for the slaveholders whose hatred allows them to keep other human beings as chattel.

Frederick Douglass not only provides students with an understanding of the horrors of slavery but also helps students understand how they can overcome adversity. Although a slave, Douglass's mind was never enslaved. He who was denied any formal education and deprived of books and paper writes eloquently about the importance of knowledge.

### Notebook Assignment:

As you read, please keep a notebook. Your notes must be neat, hand-written, and bound in an orderly fashion. A composition notebook that allows you to tear out the pages neatly to turn in will do just fine. The notes can be anything that you feel or think as you read; they may be an analysis of a passage; they may be questions concerning something you don't understand; they might be whatever you like or dislike or agree or disagree with. Try to find passages that show how slavery is injurious to all, not just the slaves. Please select textual evidence and note the chapter and page number. Then, comment on what you think is important. I'm interested in what YOU bring to the text. These journals should not exceed thirty, but fewer than twenty will be a poor grade. Because the comments are individual, no two journals should be alike. Do not resort to Cliff's or Spark Notes, which are often wrong! Besides, you don't need them. The reading is very easy on purpose. **These journals are due the first day of school for full credit.** Late work takes quite a hit on Zangle. I will assign the study guide below the first week of school. You may want to keep it in mind as you read.

### *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass Study Guide:*

**In a couple of sentences, explain each quote as it pertains to Douglass's meaning of Christian hypocrisy and the effect of that hypocrisy on the Christian whites.**

1. "Between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognized the widest possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land."

2. "The slave prison and the church stand near each other. The clanking of fetters and the rattling of chains in the prison, and the pious psalm and solemn prayer in the church, may be heard at the same time."

3. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, and the pulpit, in return, covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity."

4. They would be shocked at the proposition of fellowshipping with a sheep-stealer; and at the same time they hug to their communion a man-stealer."

5. They attend with Pharisaical strictness to the outward forms of religion, and at the same time neglect the weightier matters of law, judgment, mercy, and faith."

**The following passages attend to Douglass's overall meaning, targeted audience, and purposes for writing his narrative. Answer each question in your own words.**

1. Why does Douglass believe "slavery proved as injurious to [his master's wife] as it did to [him]"? The passage with Mrs. Auld is particularly meaningful.
2. After his confrontation with Mr. Covey, what does Douglass mean when he writes "however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact"?
3. When Douglass writes, "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man", what does he understand a man to be?
4. Once free, why does Douglass allow a white man to choose a name for him?
5. Douglass describes knowledge as "valuable bread" and the Liberator, an anti-slavery paper, as his "meat and drink". How does literacy sustain him?
6. How is Douglass able to maintain his religious faith when that same Christian faith of his owners is used to justify their treatment of him?
7. Why does Douglass describe the sails on Chesapeake Bay as "so many shrouded ghosts"?

**Listed below are key points Douglass makes in his argument. Be prepared to discuss each with evidence from the text. You need not write any response to these key points, just find the passages.**

- justice for slaves (and all men of color) is different from justice for whites
- the way to enslave someone is to keep them from all learning.
- slaves were treated no better than, sometimes worse than, livestock
- by encouraging depravity (drunkenness), slaves learn to hate freedom
- the Christianity of the slaveholders is hypocritical and used to justify their actions
- white men fear that men of color will steal their jobs if they are educated and learn how to perform the job