



“Frederick Douglass” Text from *Freedom: A History of US*, Webisode 5

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/web05/segment4.html>

(Assessment Text)

1. In 1841, a runaway slave, a tall, handsome man named Frederick Douglass, speaks up at an abolitionist meeting on Nantucket Island, near Boston: “I felt strongly moved to speak. But the truth was, I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down.”
2. Yet he finds the courage to speak out. Frederick Douglass just tells his own story: how he has lived and what he had seen. That is enough to send chills down the backs of his listeners. “I never saw my mother more than four or five times in my life,” he says. “She made her journeys to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot (twelve miles), after the performance of her day’s work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise. I do not recollect ever seeing my mother by the light of day.”
3. Young Frederick became determined to read and write. He traded bread with white boys for reading lessons. But when he was sent away to a cruel new master, he was beaten with a whip until he was bloody and scarred. He was not given enough to eat. He was sent into the fields to work long, long hours. He saw the terrible things that happen when one person has complete control over another. He says, “But for the hope of being free, I have no doubt that I should have killed myself.”
4. What happened next is all put down in a book he wrote called *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, American Slave*. But he didn’t tell how he escaped to freedom. If he had, the slave catchers would have known how to capture others who were using the same route. Frederick Douglass kept telling people this simple truth: “Justice to the Negro is safety to the nation.” And he said things like this: “People in general will say they like colored men as well as any other, but in their proper place. They assign us that place; they don’t let us do it ourselves nor will they allow us a voice in the decision. They will not allow that we have a head to think, and a heart to feel and a soul to aspire. You degrade us, and then ask why we are degraded—you shut our mouths and then ask why we don’t speak—you close your colleges and **seminaries** against us, and then ask why we don’t know more.”

**Definitions:**

Degrade: to treat someone without respect

Seminary: colleges for training priests and ministers

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Mid Unit 1 Assessment:  
Using Evidence to Support Analysis: "Frederick Douglass"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the "Frederick Douglass" text and then answer the questions below using a quote sandwich.

1. How did slavery affect Douglass' relationship with his mother? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Slavery affected Douglass' relationship with his mother in a negative way, as Frederick says, "I do not recollect ever seeing my mother by the light of day." A child rarely seeing his mother can ruin their relationship.

2. All of the following are evidence that Douglass' master was cruel except

- a. He traded bread with white boys for reading lessons.
- b. He was beaten with a whip until he was bloody and scarred.
- c. He was not given enough to eat.
- d. He was sent into the fields to work long, long hours.



Mid Unit 1 Assessment:

Using Evidence to Support Analysis: "Frederick Douglass"

(quote sandwich)  
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3. What argument is Douglass making when he says, "You close your colleges and seminaries against us, and then ask why we don't know more"? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

When Douglass says this he means that they don't even give slaves a chance. as it states in the text, "you degrade us and then ask why we are degraded." \*Douglass does not understand why they take away something and ask why they don't have it\*

4. Which of the following conclusions about Douglass does the text provide strong evidence for?
- a. Douglass inspired many people to join the abolition movement.
  - b. Douglass never overcame his sense of inferiority because he had been a slave.
  - c. Douglass was very courageous.
  - d. Douglass hated the U.S. because it allowed slavery.

Explain your answer in a quote sandwich using evidence from the text.

The text provides strong evidence for the argument that he was courageous. As it states in the text, "he finds the courage to speak out." Douglass told his story to a large group of white people even though they were mostly abolitionists he still could get killed for doing that.