

AICE U.S. History Summer Assignment Part 2

Directions:

- Read Frederick Douglass' autobiography: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. There are many editions of the book available. Feel free to purchase any edition (as long as it is the entire book and not an abbreviated version) of the book. If you do not want to purchase a copy, I have uploaded a free PDF version of the text.
- Annotate the text! There is a document in the course Google Classroom with some guidelines for annotating. If you are using the PDF, please write your annotations on lined paper. Be sure to clearly label the chapters. All annotations must be handwritten.
- Complete the discussion questions for each chapter. Discussion questions must be completed on lined paper. Answers must be written in multiple sentences. Responses must be supported with text evidence. Responses must be handwritten. Please be sure to clearly label each chapter.
- All assignments must be handwritten.
- All assignments are due on the first day of class. **No excuses.**
- Please be prepared for a quiz during the first week of school.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. In the first paragraph Douglass writes, "By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs," What does Douglass mean in this statement? Then he states, "and it is the wish of most masters to keep their slaves thus ignorant." Why would most slave masters want this?
2. In this chapter, Douglass acknowledges, "the whisper that my master was my father." Why does he use the word "whisper" in this sentence? Then he writes, "the children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers"? What does he mean by the "condition of mothers" and in what way do "the children of slave women...follow the condition of their mothers"?
3. "By this cunning arrangement, the slaveholder, in cases not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and father." What is the double relation of master and father?

Chapter 2

1. In a short paragraph, describe the living conditions and rations of most slaves on Colonel Lloyd's plantations. How did some slaves supplement their necessities?
2. Douglass states, "The same traits of character might be seen in Colonel Lloyd's slaves, as are seen in the slaves of political parties." In this passage Douglass is referring to the slaves that work at The Great House Farm. How are they similar to "the slaves of political parties"? Why does Douglass make this comparison?
3. According to Douglass, what does the singing of a slave communicate? How does Douglass feel about slave songs? In what way is slaves singing misinterpreted by some people?

Chapter 3

1. What is ironic about Colonel Lloyd's treatment of his horses compared to the treatment of his slaves?
2. Slaves would often say that they were content and their masters were kind when asked. Why? What is the slave maxim Douglass uses to explain this and how does the maxim justify what slaves say?

3. Douglass describes how slaves would argue about whose master was greater, in spite the fact that they may hate their masters. How does he explain their reasoning for boasting about their masters?

Chapter 4

1. Why is Mr. Austin Gore seen as a "first-rate overseer"? Why is this description ironic?
2. What does Douglass mean when he says, "'He dealt sparingly with his words, and bountifully with his whip, never using the former where the latter would answer as well.'" How do Mr. Gore's actions reflect the slaveholders' maxim?
3. Douglass states that Mr. Gore's crime "was not even submitted to judicial investigation." Why?

Chapter 5

1. Douglass was approximately eight years old when he went to live with the Auld family. How does Douglass contrast his childhood on Colonel Lloyd's plantation with this arrival in Baltimore at the Auld's?
2. What does Douglass mean when he says "We were not regularly allowanced"? How were they "allowanced"?
3. "I may be deemed superstitious, and even egotistical, in regarding this event as a special interposition of divine Providence in my favor." What event does Douglass consider a "special interposition of divine Providence," and why might people think he is "superstitious and even egotistical"?

Chapter 6

1. Why does Douglass choose to alter his behavior around Sophia Auld? How does he act differently?
2. According to Douglass and Mr. Auld, keeping slaves illiterate allow the slave holders to keep them enslaved. What evidence do they give to support this claim?
3. What does Douglass hope to gain by learning to read?

Chapter 7

1. Why is it ironic that Douglass bribed the white boys to teach him to read? How is his life different from theirs?

2. After reading "The Columbian Orator" Douglass states this about his writings: "They gave tongue to interesting thoughts." What does the word tongue mean in this sentence?
3. When Douglass states, "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," What is the horrible pit he speaks of?

Chapter 8

1. In this chapter Douglass states, "At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder." What evidence does Douglass give to support his claim that slavery is brutal for slaveholders as well as slaves?
2. In the second paragraph, Douglass states, "We were all ranked together at the valuation." Who are the "we" he is talking about?
3. Douglas describes in great detail what he supposes his grandmother's experience to be after being set out on her own. Why does he tell this story? What was the effect of this experience on him?

Chapter 9

1. Thomas Auld violates one of the few rules of decency that most slave owners adhere to. What is this unspoken rule, and how does it affect Douglass?
2. Douglass states of Captain Auld, "After his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty." How does Captain Auld justify his actions as a slave-holder with religious reasoning? Give examples from the text to support your answer.
3. What does Douglass mean when he says, "Here was a recently converted man, holding on upon the mother, and at the same time turning out her helpless child, to starve and die! Master Thomas was one of the many pious slaveholders who hold slaves for the very charitable purpose of taking care of them."

Chapter 10

1. When Douglass states that, "Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed

- in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!" how does this passage portray the mental and emotional state of a slave who has been dehumanized? What images does the passage bring to mind?
2. Re-read the passage Douglass writes after he fights with Mr. Covey. What does Douglass mean by, "however long I might remain a slave in form, the day has passed forever when I could be a slave in fact."
 3. Compare the passage after Douglass' fight with Mr. Covey to his description of being "broken" by Mr. Covey? How does the language Douglass uses in each passage differ? How does the language demonstrate Douglass' mental and emotional state during each event?

Chapter 11

1. What is Douglass argument about escaped slaves recounting their methods of escape, and what reasons does he give to support his claim?
2. At the end of his autobiography Douglass spoke about his initial difficulties speaking publicly about slavery: "It was a severe cross, and I took it up reluctantly. The truth was, I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom and said what I desired with considerable ease." The Pygmalion effect (otherwise known as a "self-fulfilling prophecy") refers to the situation that occurs when great expectations are placed upon people, and as a result they perform better. How does Douglass' belief in himself, and the belief that others have in him, help him to succeed in this new forum of public speaking?

End of Book Questions

1. To what extent should a piece of autobiographical writing be regarded as "factual"?
2. How does Douglass revisit the mythology of Ben Franklin and the "self-made man"? How does Douglass go about making himself in the narrative? To what extent does he embody Emersonian self-reliance?
3. How does Douglass connect violence and power in his narrative (either as a means for oppression, like with Aunt Hester in Chapter I, or as a means for self-empowerment, like with Covey in Chapter X)?
4. How does Douglass conceive of freedom? What qualities or characteristics does it seem to have for him? What skills or values is it

- necessary for him to learn before he can make the transition from slavery to freedom? Why does he view these skills as essential?
5. What "American" values or ethics does Douglass seem to embrace or reject? How might we compare Douglass with Thoreau in this regard? How does each view the individual's relationship with society?
 6. What are the various methods that slaveholders use in order to keep slaves submissive? What kind of commentary does Douglass make about these methods? Which of them, for instance, seems the most insidious to him? Why?
 7. What thoughts does Douglass have about religion and God? Does his disclaimer in the appendix challenge the picture he paints in the narrative, or just offer a guide to interpreting that picture? How do his views on religion compare to the views of Equiano, Wheatley, or other writers we've discussed this semester?
 8. Compare the situations and narratives of Harriet Jacobs and Frederick Douglass. How does gender influence or differentiate the experience of these writers? Do they experience the same kind of slavery or freedom, for instance?