

**FREDERICK
DOUGLASS:
WHEN THE LION WROTE
HISTORY**



CFE 3248V

OPEN CAPTIONED

PBS VIDEO

1994

Grade Levels: 10-13+

88 minutes

1 Instructional Graphic Enclosed

DESCRIPTION

Presents a comprehensive biography of Frederick Douglass, former slave, orator, abolitionist, journalist, publisher, and civil-rights advocate. Depicts Douglass as an advocate for civil rights for African Americans and as an outspoken advocate for women's voting rights. Portrays Douglass' life through archival photographs, interviews with historians, and live-action reenactments on location.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

- To emphasize Douglass' place in American history.
- To illustrate the impact of Douglass' writing and oration.
- To stimulate discussion of historical and current racial issues in America.
- To depict the impact of one individual on a nation.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Preview the video to determine unfamiliar vocabulary and language concepts.
2. Make a time line of major historical events during Douglass' lifetime (1818-1885).
3. Include events relevant to African Americans such as the: Jim Crow laws, fugitive slave laws, Emancipation Proclamation, and 13th and 15th Amendments.
4. Include other events in American and local history.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss Douglass' experience as a slave.
 - a. Describe Douglass' family and how slavery robbed Douglass of his individual identity.

- b. Identify people who influenced Douglass during his years as a slave.
 - c. Describe dangerous and courageous choices that Douglass made while a slave.
 - d. Describe the importance of knowing parenthood, ancestry, and birth date.
2. Describe how the following quotes emphasize dehumanization by slavery:
 - a. “Bought and sold and bred like cattle”
 - b. “Inventoried in careful lists”
 - c. “Open season on African-American women”
 3. Discuss slavery in America.
 - a. Explain how slavery robbed African Americans of their individual identities.
 - b. Record examples of denials and obstructions of freedom faced by slaves.
 - c. Justify Douglass labeling slavery as a sin.
 - d. Evaluate the reasons given for teaching a slave to read and write as being illegal.
 4. Answer the following questions and determine the impact of the following events on slavery.
 - a. How did Nat Turner’s rebellion affect laws related to slaves? How did it affect white persons’ perceptions of slaves?
 - b. Why did some abolitionists demonstrate against slavery by burning the Constitution?
 - c. Which group of people made up the core of the abolitionist movement in the northern states?
 - d. Why might white women more easily identify with slaves?
 - e. What oppression did white women and slaves have in common?
 - f. What were the arguments regarding the pre-Civil War idea of returning slaves to Africa?
 - g. How did abolitionists play a part in bringing about the Emancipation Proclamation?
 5. Discuss the changes that Douglass saw in his lifetime.

- a. On a map, locate places of importance in Douglass' life. Indicate places Douglass went as a slave and as a free man.
 - b. Describe racial problems in America during Douglass' lifetime.
 - c. Identify reasons for Douglass' travels to Canada, England, northern Africa, and Haiti.
 - d. Describe how the relationship between Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison changed over time.
 - e. Contrast *The Liberator* and *The North Star*.
 - f. Characterize the responses to Douglass' second marriage.
6. Discuss Douglass' experience as a fugitive slave.
- a. Why did Douglass choose to live in New Bedford, Massachusetts?
 - b. Why were some people disappointed and doubtful about Douglass' orations regarding slavery?
 - c. In what kinds of risky activities did Douglass engage as a fugitive slave? What were his reasons for risk-taking?
 - d. What kind of orator was Douglass at the beginning of his career?
 - e. What startling differences did Douglass encounter in England?
 - f. Why did the American press condemn Douglass' orations in England?
 - g. Why did some abolitionists disagree with Douglass?
 - h. How did Douglass legally gain his freedom?
7. Evaluate Douglass' impact on America.
- a. Justify Douglass' refusal to speak on July 4th.
 - b. Discuss Douglass' reasons for not joining John Brown at Harper's Ferry.
 - c. Hypothesize possible outcomes if Douglass had joined John Brown at Harper's Ferry.
 - d. List reasons that Douglass welcomed the Civil War.

- e. Record Douglass' response to his sons' enlistment in the Union Army.
 - f. Justify Douglass' post-Civil War promotion of African-American male suffrage over white female suffrage.
 - g. Describe Douglass' view of President Lincoln.
8. Identify five events which took place after the Civil War. Determine whether these events were triumphs or tragedies for modern African Americans.
9. Evaluate why Douglass saw the "exodus" from the post-Civil War south as evidence of personal failure.
10. Examine the character of Douglass.
- a. Define Douglass' *self-made man*. Identify events in his life that reinforced his belief.
 - b. Hypothesize why Douglass may have written three autobiographies.
 - c. Record the belief that inspired Douglass daily.

Applications and Activities

1. Write a biography of Douglass using a biopoem format. (See INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHICS.)
2. Consider Douglass' goal to impact America.
 - a. Justify Douglass' belief that he crusaded for "not a Negro problem but a national problem."
 - b. Debate if this national problem has been eradicated or if it still exists.
 - c. Identify current issues for which Douglass might have agitated.
 - d. Describe methods Douglass might have used to demonstrate his support for these issues.
3. Survey the local school and community.
 - a. What is the mission of America?
 - b. Are biracial marriages ethical?
4. Douglass credits his grandmother with building his self-esteem.
 - a. Write a dialogue between Douglass and his grandmother, showing ways she might have built his self-esteem.

- b. List ways that a parent can build up or tear down a child's self-esteem.
- 5. Construct a model of a self-sufficient southern plantation prior to the Civil War. Consider needs for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, income, and medical supplies/treatment.
- 6. Research a slave auction.
 - a. Report on the auction in an abolitionist newspaper and a southern newspaper.
 - b. Record personal response to the auction as a slave buyer, a slave seller, and a slave at the auction.
- 7. Study historical texts to deepen understanding of Douglass' life and times.
 - a. Read "Sympathy" by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Compare the caged bird to an American slave.
 - b. Douglass memorized speeches of famous orators. Research, memorize, and present famous American speeches, including those of Frederick Douglass.
 - c. Identify passages of the American Constitution and the Declaration of Independence which related to slavery during the Civil War.
- 8. Relate Douglass' life and times to modern American social issues.
 - a. Compare Douglass' family of origin and a twentieth-century family that for generations has been dependent on welfare.
 - b. Hypothesize how the events occurring during Douglass' lifetime are related to modern racial issues and events.
 - c. Compare demonstrations of burning the Constitution in the 1800s to flag burning in this century.
 - d. Compare Douglass' attitudes towards racial freedom to the struggle for deaf self-determination at Gallaudet University in 1988.
- 9. Consider the role of religion in African-American culture.

- a. Research and translate Negro spirituals from the Civil War era into American Sign Language.
 - b. Visit an African-American church.
 - c. Identify passages of the Bible that could be used to argue for slavery, against slavery, or in favor of slave rebellion.
10. Teaching a slave to read and write was illegal. Examine the power of literacy.
- a. Visit an adult literacy program.
 - b. Research and compare the literacy rates of developed, developing, and under-developed nations.
 - c. Debate the value of literacy in modern America.
11. Evaluate the use of moral persuasion, violence, insurrection, and political influence to end oppression.
- a. Consider the tactics of Mohandas Gandhi, Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa.
 - b. Consider civil wars in Russia, El Salvador, South Africa, and China.
 - c. Consider American social struggles related to abortion, homosexual rights, and euthanasia.
12. Consider the role of the minority voice.
- a. Evaluate performances where African-American, deaf, or women characters are played by nonminority actors and actresses.
 - b. Read literature and news reports written about minority struggles by non-minority authors.
 - c. Compare visual art representative of the African-American, deaf, or female experience.
13. Investigate African-American regiments in the United States armed forces, considering:
- a. The 54th Massachusetts Regiment in the Civil War.
 - b. General Pershing's troop prior to World War I.
 - c. The Tuskegee Airmen in World War II.

INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHICS

One instructional graphic is included with this lesson guide. It may be enlarged and used to create transparencies or copies.

- BIOPOEM: FREDERICK DOUGLASS

SUMMARY

“Agitate!” Frederick Douglass cried, fighting for freedom and civil rights. Born a slave, Douglass searched until his death for the identity stolen by slavery—his birth date. As a child raised by his grandmother, Douglass was unaware of his slavery. His mother walked miles to see him occasionally and died never revealing his father’s identity.

His master’s wife taught Douglass to read and write. After this illegal teaching was discovered, Douglass was sent to a master renowned for breaking difficult slaves. Repeated whippings almost defeated Douglass, but a hand-to-hand struggle with the master unbelievably led to Douglass being sent to Baltimore to work as a shiphand. There he met his future wife, a African-American freewoman who helped plan his successful escape.

Despite danger, he spoke and wrote against slavery. Criticized for speaking in an educated and intelligent way unexpected in a fugitive slave, some doubted his slave roots. Speaking in England, he was astounded by the freedom to go wherever he wanted. His forceful outcry against American injustice to his people brought condemnation from the American press but led his English supporters to buy Douglass’ freedom from his former master.

While Douglass also advocated for voting rights for women, he increasingly stated that rebellion and political influence, not moral persuasion, would alone suffice to end slavery. This viewpoint alienated Douglass even from some white abolitionists.

As the Missouri Compromise and the fugitive slave laws were passed, Douglass became increasingly active in the Underground Railroad. Douglass refused to speak on July 4th, “the white

man's independence day." He chose not to join John Brown's ill-fated attack in Harper's Ferry, while the Dred Scott ruling denied legal rights for African Americans. Although Lincoln's eventual Emancipation Proclamation earned Douglass' praise, he viewed Lincoln as a reluctant abolitionist. One of Douglass' greatest triumphs was winning the opportunity for African Americans, including his two sons, to fight for their independence by joining Union troops.

At the end of the Civil War, Douglass pushed for passage of the 15th Amendment, which gave African-American men voting rights. He was irate over monuments and reunions honoring Confederate soldiers. While Douglass was honored in unprecedented ways, his well-trained sons were unable to find work because of their race. President Hayes appointed Douglass to a government position, and then later ended southern reconstruction. Seemingly out of touch with the needs and concerns of many southern African Americans, Douglass spoke against their exodus to northern and western states.

Douglass' wife died after he wrote his third autobiography. He then married a white woman twenty years his junior. Whites and African Americans, including his daughter, disapproved of the marriage. Returning from travels to Europe, northern Africa, and Haiti, an African-American female journalist enlisted Douglass to speak out against the lynchings of African Americans by white supremacists. Until his death, he was actively speaking and advocating for "not a Negro problem but a national problem"--the issue of civil rights and racial reconciliation.

BIOPOEM: FREDERICK DOUGLASS



DIRECTIONS: Compose a biopoem with Frederick Douglass as its focus. Follow this outline:

- Line 1. First name
- Line 2. Four traits that describe character
- Line 3. Relative ("brother," "sister," "daughter," etc.) of _____
- Line 4. Lover of _____ (list three things or people)
- Line 5. Who feels _____ (three items)
- Line 6. Who needs _____ (three items)
- Line 7. Who fears _____ (three items)
- Line 8. Who gives _____ (three items)
- Line 9. Who would like to see _____ (three items)
- Line 10. Resident of _____
- Line 11. Last name