

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

This handout was prepared by Dr. William Tarvin, a retired professor of literature. Please visit my free website www.tarvinlit.com. Over 500 works of American and British literature are analyzed there for free.

An answer key is provided at the end of this handout.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Born a _____, Douglass escaped _____ in 1838 at the age of 21.
2. In the North, not forgetting the millions of slaves still suffering in the South, Douglass began active in the _____ movement.
3. In 1845, he published Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, which exposed the horrors of _____ in the South, where slaves were treated, not as people, but as _____.
4. The book had a great influence on turning opinion in the North against _____; it caused Douglass to be vilified in the _____.
5. After the Civil War, Douglass continued to work for the rights of freed _____; he also became involved in the women's _____ movement.

II. NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AN AMERICAN SLAVE

A. CHAPTER 1

1. Where was Douglass born, and when?
 He was born in Tuckahoe, _____, in Talbot County, not far from present-day Baltimore.
 As a way of insisting that slaves were property, not people, Douglass writes that slave masters keep from slaves the exact date of a slave's _____.
 Douglas writes, "I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his _____."
 From a comment by his slave master Thomas Auld in 1835 that he was about seventeen years old, Douglass establishes that he was born in _____.

2. Who were his mother and father?

"My mother was named Harriet _____," and his father was a white man, probably his _____ at that time, Captain Anthony.

3. What did slave owners always do with a slave mother and her baby? What consequence did this have for Douglass's relationship with his mother?

They took the child from the mother at the end of the first _____; the child was placed under the care of a female slave, "too _____ for _____ labor."

This early separation blunted and destroyed "the natural affection of the _____ for the _____."

(Note: Much later in the book, in Chapter 8, we find that Douglass was put under the care of Betsy Bailey, his maternal grandmother. Douglass said that she was the source of Captain Anthony's wealth because she "peopled his plantation with slaves": She had twelve children who, in turn, had children of their own. However, after Captain Anthony's death, the aged Betsy Bailey was sent to a shack in the woods to die alone since she was too old to be useful.)

Douglass wrote that he saw his mother only around _____ times, and always at night, when she would slip from the part of the plantation where she worked to see him.

A field worker, she dies when Douglass was about _____ years old. He was not allowed to go to her _____.

4. Why did slave masters sleep with slaves?

Douglass wrote that there were two reasons: To gratify "their own _____" and to produce more valuable-as-property _____: "their wicked _____ profitable as well as _____."

5. How does Douglass describe Captain Anthony, his supposed father?

Anthony is a superintendent on the large Colonel Edward Lloyd plantation. Douglass says that he does not remember Anthony's _____ name.

Anthony is not considered a rich landowner, since he had two-three _____ and about thirty _____.

Douglass remarks that the institution of slavery was not just brutal for the slaves, but it was evil for the slave owners themselves. "He was a _____ man, hardened by a long life of _____. He would at times seem to take great _____ in whipping a slave."

6. Who is Aunt Hester?

She was a beautiful slave whom _____ obviously wanted only for himself. He would often beat _____ Hester for slipping off to see a black man whom she loved on Colonel Lloyd's plantation.

7. Anthony's brutal beating of Hester awakened the young Douglass to

the inhumanity of slavery. Describe this incident.

Douglass says that he was “awakened at the dawn of day by the most heartrending shrieks of [my Aunt _____], whom [Anthony had tied] up to a joist [an open ceiling plank], and _____ upon her naked back till she was literally covered with _____. No words, no tears, no _____, from his gory victim, seemed to move his _____ heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the _____ he whipped, and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped _____. He would whip her to make her _____, and whip her to make her _____; and not until overcome by _____, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. [. . .] I never shall forget it whilst I _____ anything. [. . .] It was the _____-stained gate, the entrance to the _____ of _____, through which I was about to pass.”

B. CHAPTER 2

1. According to Douglass, Master Anthony's farms were part of whose larger plantation?

Colonel Edward Lloyd. Anthony was “Lloyd’s clerk and _____ . [. . .] The overseer of the _____.”

2. What products were grown on Col. Edward Lloyd's plantation?
_____, corn, and wheat.

3. How many slaves did Col. Lloyd have?
_____ on his home plantation and many more on the neighboring farms belonging to him.

4. What provisions concerning food, clothing, and shelter were given to slaves?

They were given just enough _____ to subsist on.
Yearly, they were given two _____, two pairs of _____, one pair of socks (stockings), and one pair of _____.

Children unable to work in the field were given only two shirts. When they wore out, “they went _____ until the next allowance-day.”

Slaves had little time to sleep before the early morning slave driver's _____ would sound and they must go to the field.

5. Why was Severe an appropriate name for one of Col. Lloyd's overseer?
“Mr. Severe was rightly named: he was a _____ man. I have seen him _____ a woman, causing the blood to run half an hour at the time; and this, too, in the midst of her crying _____, pleading for their _____ release. He seemed to take pleasure in manifesting his _____ barbarity.”

6. Why does Douglass suggest that slaves at that time sang much?

Douglass writes that a slave's song actually expresses his deepest sorrow and misery. "Every tone was a testimony against _____, and a _____ to God for deliverance from _____."

"To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the _____ character of slavery."

Once he gained his freedom, Douglass was astonished to find that some people in the North consider the slaves' singing as "evidence of contentment and _____. [. . .] I have often sung to drown my _____, but seldom to express my _____."

C. CHAPTER 3

1. What is ironic about Colonel Lloyd's treatment of his horses compared to the treatment of his slaves?

The white plantation owner treated his _____ better than his slaves.

2. What happens to the slave who unknowingly told Colonel Lloyd the truth, and what did slaves learn from this incident?

Since Colonel Lloyd had so many slaves, some had never _____ him.

One day, when Lloyd is traveling, he meets one of his _____, who does not know Lloyd. Upon being asked if his "master" is good or bad, the slave honestly says that his master, Col. Lloyd, does not _____ him well.

Two-three weeks later, the unfortunate slave is taken from his _____ and sold to a _____ slave trader.

Lloyd also sent _____ among the slaves to report any discontent. Douglass writes that the slaves learned "a _____ tongue makes a wise _____."

D. CHAPTER 4

1. One of the overseers is Austin Gore, who sadistically abuses the slaves. What reason does Gore give for killing Demby the slave?

To escape being whipped by Gore, Demby plunges himself into a _____, refusing to come out. Gore threatens to shoot Demby if he does not come out by the count of three.

"The second and third calls were given with the same result. Mr. Gore then, without consultation or deliberation with any one, not even giving Demby an additional call, raised his musket to his face, taking _____ aim at his standing victim, and in an instant poor _____ was no more."

Gore justifies the loss of "property" to Col. Lloyd and Capt. Anthony by saying that if one slave is allowed to be _____, all will

follow. His defense is accepted, and _____ receives no punishment for his cold-blooded murder.

2. What other examples does Douglass give of his statement “that killing a slave, or any colored person, [. . .] is not treated as a _____, either by the courts or the community”?

(1) He tells of a man who kills two _____, one by _____ him to death with a hatchet. Although the killer brags about the grisly murder, he is never _____.

(2) In another incident, a white woman beats Douglass's female _____ to death with an oak stick for having fallen _____ while watching the woman's baby. Again, the killer is not prosecuted.

(3) In a third instance, an old slave of Col. Lloyd is shot to death for unknowingly _____ onto private property. The man who shot the slave shows no remorse at having killed an innocent, confused human being, but only a willingness “to pay [Lloyd] for [the loss of] his _____.” Subsequently, the murder is _____ up.

E. BRIEF SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 5-8

1. When Douglass was around seven, he was sent from Lloyd's plantation to Baltimore, Maryland, to be an in-house slave of Hugh Auld, the brother of Lloyd's son-in-law, Captain Thomas Auld.

2. Mrs. Sophia Auld, his new mistress, begins to teach Douglass to read, but her husband finds out and forbids it.

3. Douglass continues to learn to read and write, often bribing the poor white children to help him.

4. In 1828, when Douglass was ten, Captain Anthony dies and his property—which included slaves—was divided between his children.

5. Douglass had to return to Talbot County for this inheritance division. There Douglass witnesses the horrible treatment of his grandmother, Betsy Bailey, who had reared him; as mentioned earlier, since she was too old to be of any value, she was sent to a cabin nearby to die of starvation.

6. Douglass became the slave of the daughter of Captain Anthony, Mrs. Lucretia Auld, the wife of Captain Thomas Auld. Lucretia sent him back to Baltimore to continue to work for Hugh Auld.

7. When Douglass was eleven, he found an abolitionist newspaper and learned that slaves could gain their freedom by making their way north. Douglass resolves to run away.

F. CHAPTER 9

1. When Douglass is fourteen, he is sent to live with Thomas and Lucretia Auld in St. Michael's, Maryland. What rule of slaveholding does Thomas Auld violate?

Auld starves his slaves. "The rule is, no matter how coarse the _____, only let there be _____ of it."

To keep from starving, Auld's slaves have to resort to "begging and _____."

2. What major aspect of Southern society does Douglass say was used to give the stamp of approval to slavery?

Religion.

"I believe [Thomas Auld] to have been a much worse man after his [religious] _____ than before. [. . .] [A]fter his conversion, he found _____ sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty."

"I have seen [Auld] tie up a lame young woman [her name is _____], and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders [. . .] and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of _____—that 'He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'"

3. Auld considers that Douglass has been spoiled as a slave by his life in Baltimore. Thus Auld set out to break Douglass's spirit. Despite numerous whippings, Auld cannot succeed. To whom does he decide to hire Douglass out, and why? To Edward _____, one of Auld's tenant farmers, who had a "_____ " for breaking defiant young slaves.

G. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 10

1. Chapter 10 is by far the longest chapter in the book; thus many significant events happened. Douglas was fifteen when he went to work for Covey. He endured countless beatings from Covey, until one day he fought back, telling Covey that he would rather die than be whipped again. Afraid of being responsible for the loss of a valuable slave, and perhaps ashamed that the word would get around that he could not break this particular slave, Covey backs off.

2. When Douglass is sixteen, he is sent to work for William Freeland. On his farm, Douglass begins a secret school to teach other slaves how to read and write.

3. When he is seventeen, Douglass and several other of Freeland's slaves plot an escape, but they are discovered and sent to jail.

4. When Douglass's slave owner, Thomas Auld, hears of this attempted escape, he first decides to send Douglass south (to Alabama); being sold or sent south was the usual punishment for runaway slaves. However, Auld inexplicably changes his

mind and orders Douglass to go back to Baltimore to work for Hugh Auld.

5. Douglass had not been in Baltimore for three years. There Hugh Auld hires Douglass out to learn a trade, ship-caulking. The intelligent Douglass becomes an expert caulker, soon earning top wages. However, it galls Douglass that he must give all of his salary to Hugh Auld.

H. CHAPTER 11

1. Douglas is now around 21. Why does Douglass not give all of the details of his escape from slavery?

He is afraid such details would endanger those people who helped him and also would “induce greater vigilance on the part of _____,” thereby “closing the slightest avenue by which a _____ slave might clear himself of the chains and fetters of slavery.”

2. How did Douglas cleverly plot his escape?

Douglass convinces Hugh Auld to hire him out by the _____, thus allowing Douglass to be away from the Auld household for a long period of time.

He saw Auld only on _____ night when he had to give Auld his week’s _____.

Thus Douglass had the time to arrange for his escape and the money, since he was earning around _____ dollars a week, but was expected to give Auld only three dollars.

3. When and where does Douglas run away?

“[. . .] on the third day of _____, 1838, I left my chains, and succeeded in reaching New _____.” (Note: Douglass gives no other details.)

4. What contrasting emotions does he feel during the first days of his freedom?

At first, he felt “the highest _____ I ever experienced [. . .] like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions.”

However, he also felt “_____,” since, he writes, “There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger; without home and without friends.”

Also he felt fear: “I was _____ to speak to any one for _____ of speaking to the wrong one, and thereby falling into the hands of money-loving _____, whose business it was to lie in wait for the panting fugitive [runaway slave] [. . .]. The motto which I adopted when I started from slavery was this—“Trust no man!” I saw in every white man an _____, and in almost every colored man cause for _____.”

5. Who helps Douglass in New York? How?

An African American David _____, who helped many runaway slaves passing through _____ City.

First, he gave Douglass shelter. Next he arranged for Douglass to be united with a freed slave _____ Murray. (Note: Murray was a free African American woman in Baltimore when Douglass met her. Douglass does not explain how their romance and marriage commitment developed.)

Ruggles paid for the _____ of Douglass and Murray on Sept. 15, 1838. (Note: The marriage is important since in the South slaves were not permitted to marry.)

Finally, Ruggles advised the couple to go further north to Massachusetts since there were too many slave trackers in New _____.

6. In New Bedford, Massachusetts, Douglass decides to take a new name. This experience causes him to pause and reflect on the many names he had been given in his young life. List these.

He says that “the name given me by my mother was, ‘Frederick Augustus Washington _____.’” In Maryland, he writes, that he was known as Frederick _____.

In New York, he used the pseudonym Frederick _____.

In New Bedford, the person who was helping him suggested that he take for his last name that of _____, a character from a poem by the English writer Walter Scott.

“From that time until now I have been called ‘Frederick _____.’”

7. How does Douglass find life in the North?

Douglass is surprised to find that the North, without slave labor, can be so _____, since the luxury of Southern whites, Douglass knew, was due to the hard work of their slaves.

Douglass is surprised to see a clean, cultivated city whose people “looked more able, stronger, _____, and happier, than those [whites] of _____.”

He found former slaves in Massachusetts, who “had not been seven years out of their chains, living in finer houses, and evidently enjoying more of the comforts of life, than the average of _____ in Maryland.”

Douglass does encounter some “_____ against color” among northern whites when he goes to seek work as a caulker, but through persistence and hard work he was soon able to establish a good life for him and his family.

8. He also became involved in the abolitionist movement and “never felt _____ than when in an anti-slavery meeting.” What happened on August 11, 1841?

He stood up at one of the meetings and gave an account of his years in slavery. “It was a severe _____, and I took it up reluctantly.”

Tarvin 9

From 1841 to 1845 (the year of the publication of his book) “I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my _____ [Southern slaves].”

9. Note: Up until all slaves were freed, Douglass was one of the foremost figures of the abolitionist movement.

Answer Key

I.

1. slave; slavery.
2. abolition.
3. slavery; property.
4. slavery; South.
5. slaves; rights.

II.

- A.
1. Maryland; birth; birthday; 1818.
 2. Bailey; slave master.
 3. year; old; field; mother; child; 4 - 5; seven; funeral.
 4. lusts; slaves; desires; pleasurable.
 5. first; farms; slaves; cruel; slaveholding; pleasure.
 6. Anthony; Aunt.
 7. Hester; whipped; blood; prayers; iron; harder; longest; scream; hush; fatigue; remember; blood; hell; slavery.
- B.
1. superintendent; overseers.
 2. tobacco.
 3. 300-400.
 4. food; shirts; trousers; shoes; naked; horn.
 5. cruel; whip; children; mother's; fiendish.
 6. slavery; prayer; chains; dehumanizing; happiness; sorrow; happiness.
- C.
1. horses.
 2. seen; slaves; treat; family; Georgia; spies; still; head.
- D.
1. creek; deadly; Demby; disobedient; Gore.
 2. crime.
 - (1) slaves; hacking; punished.
 - (2) half- cousin; asleep.
 - (3) trespassing; property; hushed.
- F.
1. food; enough; stealing.
 2. conversion; religious; Henny; Scripture.
 3. Covey; reputation.
- H.
1. slaveholders; brother.
 2. week; Saturday; wages; eleven.
 3. September; York.
 4. excitement; loneliness; afraid; fear; kidnappers; enemy; distrust.
 5. Ruggles; New York; Anna; wedding; York.
 6. Bailey; Bailey; Johnson; Douglass; Douglass.
 7. prosperous; healthier; Maryland; slaveholders; prejudice.
 8. happier; cross; brethren.