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 Tuchahoe, ________________, 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 result 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 caulk er, 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?

   Douglas 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 America 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.”
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.