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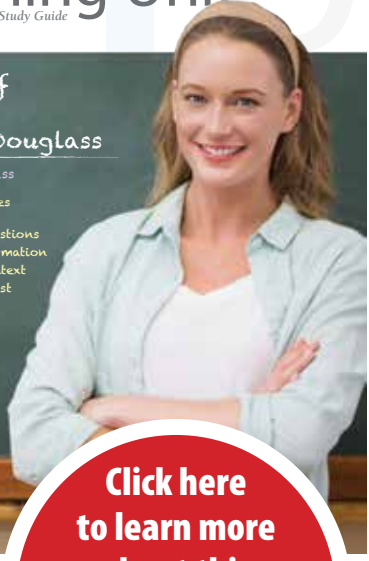
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

by Frederick Douglass

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define the vocabulary words listed at the beginning of each chapter of the study guide and comment on the significance of Douglass' accomplishment at overcoming illiteracy to develop his substantial vocabulary.
2. trace Douglass' thirst for knowledge and discuss how the development of his mind impacts his quest for freedom.
3. relate events in the narrative demonstrating Douglass' personal growth in the following areas:
 - self respect
 - aggressiveness
 - courage
 - intelligence
 - racial pride
4. define persuasive writing and demonstrate how this autobiographical narrative is an example of persuasive writing intended to gain support for the abolitionist movement.
5. identify examples of allusion used in Douglass' arguments against slavery.
6. support or refute that Douglass believes in destiny or fate and that he credits "kind providence" with his successful escape to freedom as a result.
7. identify the author's use of sarcasm and puns to add humor and interest to the narrative.
8. comment on the dramatic descriptions of slavery and point out how these descriptions manipulate the reader's feelings to gain support for the anti-slavery movement.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Review the vocabulary words at the beginning of each chapter. List the words whose meanings suggest they are used by Douglass in his narrative to describe the horrors of slavery. For example: abhorrence means loathing, detestation, and disgust. It can be linked to the abolitionist's hatred of slavery. However, barouche is a four-wheeled carriage, and does not describe the horrors of slavery.
2. How does Douglass learn the meaning of the word "abolitionist"?
3. In what way does Douglass' career as an orator influence the way he has written this narrative?
4. How does Mr. Covey succeed in turning Douglass into a "brute"? How does a "root" help Douglass develop the aggressiveness necessary to resist Mr. Covey?
5. Why does Douglass' first escape attempt fail?
6. List the qualities of a good overseer and give an example of an overseer Douglass defines as good.
7. Why does Douglass not know the date of his birth? What evidence is there that his mother cares about him even though they are separated early in his life?
8. How is the quality of Douglass' life in Baltimore different from his life on the plantation?
9. What surprises Douglass about life in New Bedford?
10. Why do the masters give slaves a whole week off at the holidays? What do the slaves do with their free time?
11. Briefly identify the following men: David Ruggles, Rev. J.W.C. Pennington, William C. Coffin, Nathan Johnson.
12. Why do the slaves sing in the forest on their way to the Big Farm to collect their rations? How is their singing often misinterpreted by white people?
13. Discuss the following statement: A religious master is the worst kind of slaveholder.
14. Which do you think is worse for Douglass, the physical imprisonment or the mental deprivation imposed by slavery?
15. Why do more slaves, particularly those living in Baltimore, not try to escape?

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Chapter 1

Vocabulary

cudgel – a club with a rounded head
gratification – getting pleasure or satisfaction
impertinent – not showing proper respect or manners
intimation – a hint or indirect suggestion
joists – the parallel beams that hold up the planks of a floor
lineal – in the direct line of descent
mulatto – a person of mixed black and white ancestry
overseer – one who watches over and directs the work of others

1. Why does Frederick Douglass not know his true age or date of birth?

2. What is Douglass' relationship with his mother? Who is his father? Who raises Douglass?

3. Why do the slaves who are also the illegitimate children of the slaveholder suffer more than other slaves?

4. What kind of overseer is Mr. Plummer? In what way does Mr. Plummer show Douglass “the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery”? What offense does Aunt Hester commit?

Chapter 5

Vocabulary

abhorrence – loathing; detestation, causing fear, or disgust
egotistical – an exaggerated sense of self-importance; conceited
interposition – an intervention
manifestation – clear or evident formation; shown plainly
scurf – little dry scales shed by the skin

1. Briefly describe Frederick's life on the plantation. What does he wear and eat? How does he spend his time?

2. What does Frederick think about leaving the Lloyd plantation to live in Baltimore?

3. Why is Mrs. Auld, his new mistress, a pleasant surprise for Douglass?

4. Support Douglass' belief in destiny or what he refers to as the "manifestation of that kind providence which has ever since attended me."

5. Some critics think this narrative is as much a story of personal discovery as it is an account of Douglass' life. Douglass "discovers" the following qualities in himself, enabling him to rise out of the bonds of slavery: self-respect, aggressiveness, courage, intelligence, and racial pride. Cite incidents described in Chapter Five to show that young Douglass already possesses the qualities of courage and intelligence before he leaves for Baltimore.

Chapter 10

Vocabulary

ague – a fever with chills; a fit of shivering
brute – an unreasoning person
epoch – the beginning of a new and important period of history
imbue – to permeate or inspire
languished – became slack or dull; dispirited
quailed – lost heart; grew feeble
turbid – muddy, cloudy; confused or perplexed

1. Why does Covey whip Douglass almost every week for the first six months he works for him?

2. Why do the slaves on the Covey farm continue to do their work even if Mr. Covey is absent?

3. Support the following statement by citing incidents from the story: Covey believes himself to be a very religious man, but he is deceiving himself and trying to deceive God.

4. Why does Douglass believe Covey is successful in breaking him and turning him into a brute?

