

# Imagery of disgust vulnerability and separation

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Imagery of Disgust, Vulnerability, and Separation Frederick Douglass once said, “ If there is no struggle, there is no progress. ” If there was any one person who experienced this first-hand, it would be Frederick Douglass. In his narrative, Douglass writes of many struggles faced by slaves during their confinement to slavery and the progress that came from them. When writing of these struggles, Douglass uses many rhetorical strategies in order to persuade the reader into thinking a particular way about slavery. A particular strategy which Douglass uses is imagery.

Imagery, the use of vivid or figurative language to represent objects, actions, or ideas, is frequently used in Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. In Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass uses imagery order to persuade the reader to stop slavery. Frederick Douglass uses imagery in his narrative in order to cause the reader to develop disgust for actions taken upon slaves by their masters. Slaves were terribly treated by their slave masters during slavery. Many times, Slaves were whipped and punished for no reason.

Slave whipping could have been done merely out of displeasure to the master or for taking too much food during the evening meal. In order to portray this message, Douglass uses imagery when writing about the beatings and whippings of his aunt. Mr. Plummer, the overseer of Captain Anthony’s plantation, is said to have taken great pleasure in whipping a slave. Frederick Douglass writes, in the beginning of the narrative, that he awoke many times by the “ heart-rending shrieks” of his own aunt who Mr. Plummer would “ tie up a joist, and whip upon [Frederick’s aunt’s] naked back till she was literally covered with blood. Douglass 3)” The reader is

captured by the gruesome imagery which Douglass illustrates in portraying the scenes of a slave-whipping. Writing of these events paints a clearer picture in which the reader is able to learn the true and uncensored events which took place during slavery. This particular picture painted by Frederick Douglass creates a heart-wrenching scene that the reader is able to picture within the mind. This imagery allows the reader to picture the abhorring treatment which slave masters inflicted upon slaves.

This causes the reader to think down upon slavery when this type of imagery is brought to the mind. The reader is then more likely to want to put a stop to such an image. Frederick Douglass uses imagery once again in order to depict the vulnerability faced by slaves during slavery. Vulnerability is the act of being susceptible or unprotected to physical or emotional injury. Vulnerability was one of the biggest difficulties faced by slaves during slavery. Frederick Douglass uses imagery in his narrative to depict vulnerability when writing of Master Andrew's constant whipping of slaves.

Douglass writes that Master Douglass “ took [Frederick's] little brother by the throat, threw him on the ground, and with the heel of his boot stamped upon his head until the blood gushed from his nose and ears. (Douglass 28)” When describing this scene, Douglass causes the reader to paint an especially gory picture with the mind. This is a very bold picture in which the reader is able to form from the description given by Douglass. When the reader imagines a small boy, beaten and frail, with blood gushing from inside the body to the outside, it causes them to want to help the young boy and save him from his vulnerability to the slave master.

Frederick Douglass also would have wanted to help his brother. However, Frederick Douglass watched as his vulnerable little brother was whipped and Frederick was able to do nothing about it. Vulnerability is able to be depicted from both the standpoint of Douglass and his little brother because both were confined by helplessness. This inclines the reader to help this situation of vulnerability and put an end to it. Imagery also is used by Douglass to depict the separation among slavefamilymembers. Slaves were bought out by masters during slavery.

However, they were not often bought in ‘ family packages’. This means that many marriages and siblings could be easily separated. Frederick Douglass uses imagery when writing his mother, Harriet Bailey. In the beginning of the narrative, Douglass writes that he and his mother were separated when he was an infant and scarcely saw her four or five times in the entirety of his life (Douglass 2). Douglass goes on to explain that when he heard of his mother’s death, it was if he had just heard that a stranger passed. He was calloused towards the hearing of her death.

This imagery of separation between Frederick as a young child and his mother paints a dismal picture for the reader. When writing that he was separated from his mother as a infant, Frederick Douglass gives the reader a picture of a baby being taken from its mother without consultation. Mothers are often seen as those who possess the skills and needs necessary to care for a young child. When stripped of these needs, the child suffers. Douglass uses this imagery in order to capture the reader’s sympathy for separation of the mother and child in hope to incline them to put a stop to it and slavery.

Imagery was a key which Frederick Douglass used in order to persuade his readers to think down upon slavery. It is important for readers to picture these scenes so that they will know the true events which took place during slavery. The harsh actions of slave masters, the vulnerability of slaves, and the separation of slaves are only a few horrible events which happened during slavery. Certain events grip the mind and hearts of readers to capture what they believe is to be wrong. Frederick Douglass believed slavery to be wrong. Imagery helped Douglass to portray this message in a way that could help the readers relate to the story.