

The effect of education on the pursuit of freedom



Without education, there can never be true freedom.

Although your body may be free, your mind will remain confined by ignorance. Education frees your mind to the wonders of the world and allows you to think for yourself. In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass, Douglass realizes that he needs to be educated. In order to be totally free, one must first educate him or herself. In Frederick Douglass's narrative, he first realizes that in order to gain freedom, he needs to educate himself.

When Hugh Auld forbids Sophia Auld from educating Douglass, he realizes that in order to gain his freedom, he must have knowledge. Hugh Auld says that if a slave educated, he will never be satisfied with being a slave and will rebel against his master. By keeping slaves uneducated, they remain ignorant and will not question why the slaveholders have the right to own people and use them as slaves. Auld reveals that a slave will become corrupted if given knowledge.

If a slave is given a tiny bit of information, the slave will then become curious and keep digging to gain more information, until the slave is satisfied. Then, the slave will start to question the master and loathe him. Because of Auld, Douglass comes to understand that slaveholders maintain their power over slaves by keeping them uneducated and ignorant. With education comes literacy, the ability to read and write.

If a slave is able to read, he/she can then read what others have written, including works by abolitionists. By reading, the slave will gain knowledge of the true cruelty of slavery through the eyes of another. Slaves may then feel

that they will be supported if they try to escape. By reading the works of abolitionists, slaves become aware of people who are willing to help them escape. Slaves would then know that if they try to escape, they will have others who support them and will help them. This would give them a sense of security, a bit of confidence to escape.

Frederick Douglass also gained confidence and a bigger drive to escape after reading *The Columbian Orator*. When a slave is able to write, he/she can articulate the details of slavery through written means. Without knowing how to write, the slave can only speak. If he/she can write, he/she can publish books on their experiences in slavery to expose the cruelty of slavery to more quickly and efficiently than public speaking. If a slave cannot write, he/she cannot tell their side of the story. When a slave learns to read and write, he/she will gain a sense of confidence. With the ability to write, slaves may feel as if they are or should be equal to white men. They gain a sense of capability, self sufficiency, and independence. Slaves are not allowed to know basic facts like their birthday and their parents, things that white children take for granted.

This withholding of information robs the slaves of their sense of individuality. By learning to read and write, the slave starts to think more, giving him or herself their individuality. The slave then frees his mind from the restrictions of ignorance, giving room for new ideas and questions to settle. The slave will start to question the injustice of slavery and come to loathe the master.

Many slaves lived without ever being educated, and then they die without experiencing freedom. Frederick Douglass refused to be one of these slaves.

In Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave, he relates education to freedom, stating that education is needed in order to obtain freedom. Without education, one cannot fully experience freedom. After learning how to read and write, Frederick Douglass starts to gain more knowledge and individuality.

He later reads more and more works by others who are against slavery, opening his mind to the meaning of freedom and human rights.