

# Narrative of the life of frederick douglass and the fire next time: the past not ...

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Both Frederick Douglas and James Baldwin use personal experiences to get their message out to the reader. These personal stories fill us with emotions and along with certain writing styles including tone and imagery. Themes are also used throughout the stories that add deeper meaning to the individual's life. Even though these stories were written more than 100 years apart their styles and messages on race and social class are similar.

In Frederick Douglas's narrative his personal experiences draw emotion to the reader to get some insight on his life. At the end of chapter 2, " I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear.". Douglas is trying to say how slave owners misinterpreted the songs that the slaves were singing. The songs were about how sad and lost the people were, not how happy they were. In chapter 6 " Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read". Even though there is an interruption in his learning he learns something very valuable. The experience showed him the power of education. Mr. Auld not wanting him to read motivates him even more to now wanting to read. In chapter 10, " My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!" This quote shows how focus he is on how he was made into a slave

and how important this experience was to show how men are made into slaves. It also shows how slavery corrupts and destroys the human mind. Douglas's life experiences have changed him forever and will leave an impact on anyone reading this story.

In the Fire next time by James Baldwin, Baldwin also uses experiences to get through to his readers. Speaking his mind, " The American Negro has the great advantage of having never believed the collection of myths to which white Americans cling: that their ancestors were all freedom-loving heroes, that they were born in the greatest country the world has ever seen ... Negroes know far more about white Americans than that...". Baldwin talks about the myths created by the white people that are brought upon to their children. They in other words are brainwashed to not have their own beliefs but to trust in what they have learned. In " A Letter to My nephew", " I know what the world has done to my brother and how narrowly he has survived it. And I know, which is much worse, and this is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it.". Here Baldwin alludes to the ignorance of the common white folks. They have no idea what kind of pain, both mentally and physically, is brought upon them. Also, in " A Letter to My Nephew", " You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as

many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity.”. Here he wants us to realize what people set for African Americans and others. You were born like here so you must be this and you look like this so you’re like that. These labels are set to make people feel bad about themselves while people should be proud of who they are and where they come from. Baldwin’s experiences and stories has given insight to the reader to learn more about his point of view. The people of color have been given these labels to make them feel worthless.

Frederick Douglas also used a lot of themes to get his stories across. In the beginning of the story, “ Never having enjoyed, to any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful care, I received the tidings of her death with the much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.”. Douglas is talking about how slavery ruins the chance to truly have a family. Family is supposed to love one another and spend time happily with one another. Slavery tears this bond and makes it impossible to truly have a functioning relationship with one another. In chapter 3, “ He was immediately chained and handcuffed; and thus, without a moment’s warning, he was snatched away, and forever sundered, from his family and friends, by a hand more unrelenting than death.”. He continues to talk about family and how the greatest fear for slaves was not death but being ripped away from your family. They have no say in where their family will be, and the truth is family is the most important thing to any person. The

theme of family is just one of the many themes in the story, however its what is most important to someone who goes through such a tragedy.

James Baldwin also talked a lot of themes in his story. Talking in the Letter to his nephew, " And now you must survive because we love you, and for the sake of your children and your children's children.' . Family also meant a lot to Baldwin, writing to his nephew about being proud of who he is. Filling him with hope in a loveless world not wanting him to be treated like he had. Also stating to his nephew, " And if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it.' . Baldwin also teaches his nephew about the word integration, however changing the meaning to the process of teaching the white person to accept him for who he is. He doesn't want him to be filled with any other form of doubt. Family is also a very important theme, Baldwin through his letter is trying to help his nephew to change the stereotypical norm that has developed.

Frederick Douglas also used certain writing styles including diction and imagery. In chapter 10, " The dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!". Douglas uses the words " dark night" together to put emphasis on the word slavery and how cruel it was. Also using the word " Brute" to show the destruction one might face. Also, in chapter 10, " I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died;'. He also does a great job of word choice here " broken in body soul and spirit" really helps to show the

extent of what is happening. The use of the words “cheerful spark” is also a great set of diction to set up the quote. Leaving the reader with a question, “Will not a righteous God visit for these things?”. Douglas leaves off with this question, which entails him questioning God. This also makes him question everything he’s ever done. These word choices and images help the story flow with greater extent.

James Baldwin also used a variety of writing styles to add more emotion to his book. Using imagery, “One is responsible for life: It is the small beacon in that terrifying darkness from which we come and to which we shall return.”. Baldwin uses the phrase “small beacon” to set an image of light to the reader. In doing so we see how in life we can overcome the darkness that is set in front of us. Another use of imagery, “No more water, but the fire next time!”. Baldwin is referring to when God flooded the earth and instructed Noah to build an ark. However instead of ending the world in water it will end in fire. Which really means that if we fail to solve the issue of racial discrimination, God will punish us. Writing about Elijah, “And when I sat at Elijah’s table and watched the baby, the women, and the men, and we talked about God’s—or Allah’s—vengeance, I wondered, when that vengeance was achieved, what will happen to all that beauty then?”. We also see questions in Baldwin’s story too. He is leaving us with an ultimatum and what will truly happen?

In the end both narrative and James Baldwin’s “A Fire Next Time” discuss an important matter, which is racial discrimination. Both touch on slavery and how people of color have always been treated terribly. Both also use

experiences, themes, and writing styles to emphasize what they are explaining. These stories and authors will forever be a reminder to what the past has been like for African American people, which has been a rough and unforgettable experience.