

# From courage to freedom



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Frederick Douglass, in his article Learning to Read and Write, describes how his mistress believes: " Education and slavery were incompatible with each other" (qtd. In Douglass 61). Douglass was born a slave in 1818. He realized becoming a literate slave was considered as having too much power because it made him aware of unjust circumstances of slavery. For a slave to be literate was not tolerated. If a slaves knew how to read and write, it would make them unfit for being slaves. For Douglass to be able to do both describes his character even before reading the passage.

It expresses that he is a very ambitious, courageous and strong-minded person. Douglass saw that his only pathway to freedom was through literacy, so his goal was to learn how to read and write no matter the circumstances. In the article, Learning to Read and Write, Douglass describes his process of all the things he had to go through to learn to read and write as well as learn other things regarding his own life as a slave. He first starts of talking about his process of learning to read.

He talks about how his mistress gave him the alphabet to look at, but once he wanted to look at the newspaper his masters would not approve.

Douglass then proceeds to explain how he also go help from white kids around his neighborhood. He would go to them and give them a piece of bread, and in return they would teach him to read. While learning from the white boys, he came to realize he could potentially be freed when he turned 21 years old, although in his mind, slavery lasts a lifetime. Douglass was able to capitalize on all resources possible.

He gained additional knowledge from the slave master's son, Master Thomas. Every Monday afternoon the mistress would leave the home to attend class meetings and Douglass would remain to look after his responsibilities. He took time to indulge and scour Master Thomas's copy books and spelling books. Douglass was so determined to learn the words that he would not stop until he could write all the words without looking at the book. He continued to follow this path and soon could write on par with Master Thomas. This process continued for years until Douglass was successful in grasping reading and writing.

Acquiring the many resources, Douglass was able to do what no other slave accomplished, he learned to read and write. The article was very in depth to show Douglass's motivation level and how he used everything he could find to his advantage. He turned negative obstacles into powerful tools. He gives examples of what he had been through to accomplish his goal. " The plan which I adopted was making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of them as I could, I converted them into teachers (62). This is an example of a resource he created and used fully to reach his goal.

At one point in the story, he tells about himself finally learning to read. You would think this would be a big accomplishment for him and he would be proud of himself. Douglass tells of himself regretting his own existence and wishing himself dead. This seems to be the turning point of the story. I did not suspect him feeling this way at all. By Douglass learning how to read, he has found out so much information about slavery and what the whites have done to his people.

He is appalled by some of the information he has found out but soon realizes that he cannot do much about it because if anyone was to find out he could read it could “ injure” him. It took many steps for Douglass to be able to read and write. His mistress, who was said to be kind and tender hearted, was the one person who supported him and even taught him the alphabet. Ironically, there was a change in her character and she took on the same ill feelings towards slaves. She stopped teaching him things and even hated to see him with a newspaper.

Douglass makes the point clear that anything is possible and never let obstacles hold us back. This is a strong lesson to anyone about how to never give up. Douglass was a slave and in the beginning was treated very well, but eventually mistreated. But throughout his life, he never once gave up. Douglass recognized the inequality that his masters were making because they thought that slavery and education were not compatible. Succeeding at reading gave him the power to make his own decisions. His perseverance emphasizes that hard work will pay off. Becoming educated is necessary to being successful.