

Frederick douglass paper assignment

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Frederick Douglass Final Assessment Essay To modern America, the idea of slavery seems horrifying. It is, in their eyes, an institution that is a dark remnant of the past and that is to be fought against at all costs now.

However, Americans weren't always so vehemently against slavery and in fact, many used to not know the reality of the atrocities that occurred on various southern plantations. It's been because of the slave narratives in the United States that the American public has come to realize the horrifying nature of slavery and thus, that has led to increased political activism.

One slave narrative in particular that helped spread awareness of slavery in the United States was Frederick Douglass' "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass". Due to his exceptional use of language through the argumentative methods of irony, allusion, and imagery, Douglass succeeds in arguing for his main claim: the idea that slavery ultimately hurts all those who are exposed to it and so, must be banned. The first method that Douglass uses to argue his claim is irony. "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" is full of ironic examples and passages, all which serve to expose the true horrors of slavery.

In particular, Douglass presents ironic characters as a way of letting the audience know about the almost inhuman characteristics of slavery in the United States. One example of this is the character of Mr. Severe. Douglass writes, "Mr. Severe was rightly named; he was a cruel man." (7) Although it seems relatively simple, the above sentence presents an ironical juxtaposition that intensifies the audience's potential reaction to this character and his role in slavery. Thus, this example of irony illustrates the

way that Frederick Douglass used irony to highlight the severity of characters involved in and the general institution of slavery.

Another example of similar irony is when Douglass writes, “ Mr. Gore was a grave man, and, though a young man, he indulged in no Jokes, said no funny words, seldom smiled... When he whipped, he seemed to do so from a sense of duty, and feared no consequences. ” (13) This quote presents the overseer named Mr. Gore in an ironic light as well, which once again serves to intensify his harsh characteristics and showcase the cruelty of slave owners and overseers. Therefore, Douglass clearly argues his claim against slavery through the use of irony. Moreover, Douglass’ second method of argumentation for his main claim is allusion.

He uses allusion in particular to invoke ethos in his audience and thus, make it easier for them to agree with his arguments. This use of allusion is most effective when Douglass uses biblical allusions. This is because his audience at the time was largely Christian and so, if he could convince people that slavery was not condoned by the bible, then it would add credibility to his argument. When Douglass , ... he would quote this passage of Scripture-‘ He that knoweth his master’s will, writes ” and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. (33), he is talking about his master’s Justification for severely beating a lame young slave. Although he isn’t citing any part of the Bible that directly condones slavery, his allusion to the Bible and the way he Juxtaposes the passage with the cruel actions of his master present a shocking picture to the audience. This quote presents the contrast between a biblical unwarranted actions of Douglass’ Master, thereby showing the

audience that he and other slave owners are wrongly using the Bible to justify their atrocious actions.

It's due to these allusions that Douglass adds another level of credibility to his argument and thus, persuades the audience that there is no religious justification for slavery and that it's ultimately bad. Finally, Douglass uses the method of imagery to illustrate and argue his main claim. The entirety of "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" contains shocking and vivid imagery that truly affects the reader by invoking pathos. One example of this is when Douglass describes the scene of his Aunt being whipped and how it affected him.

He writes, "The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin." (4) The above quote transports the reader to where a young Frederick Douglass watches his aunt get viciously beaten and thus, effectively showcases the horror and fear he felt when that happened.

In another chapter, Douglass once again portrays the merciless beating and violent nature of slavery through imagery. Here he says, "I have known [Master] to tie her up early in the morning, and whip her before breakfast; leave her, go to his store, return at dinner, and whip her again, cutting her in the places already made raw with his cruel lash. (33) This quote, along with the previous one, paints a vivid image in the reader's mind, which invokes feelings of dread, horror, and fear amongst them.

It's due to this eloquent use of imagery by Douglass that the audience is convinced of the savagery of slavery on both the slave and the slaveholder. Therefore, Douglass' use of imagery in "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" adds pathos to his main claim and shows how he effectively argues it. "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" is all in all a slave narrative unlike any other. Douglass' skillful use of words and language, through the methods of argumentation of irony, allusion, and imagery, make his novel one of the most impactful slave narratives in American history.

The effect the novel has on the United States pre-slavery is astonishing. It not only portrays the reality of something that was often sugarcoated back then, but it also convinces many Americans of the atrocities of slavery on everyone and the need for it to be abolished. Thus, when analyzing slavery in the past and the American opinion of it now, it's essential to realize that "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" was a critical piece in the struggle against slavery.