

# The narrative of the life of frederick douglass history essay



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Fredrick Douglas is one of the famous black men in the United State of America who fought against slavery. During his life as a slave, he outsmarted his master and learned how to read and write which changed the tune of his life and lead to his great achievements. Douglass, as a black born slave is one of the great black heroes that fought against slavery. Douglass didn't know the happiness of his mother's arm because he left his mother at the age of six, while as a slave he does not know who his father was. His mother was a worker in corn fields within surrounding Holmes Hill, so as a worker, she got impregnated by one of her masters during the slavery period.

Douglas lived a life of sour and bitterness through slavery. But, he only knew the real meaning of slavery when he learned how to read and write. He managed to escape to the New York City since it is a non enslaving city.

At the age of six, his grandmother took him to a journey which he was following her with fear and uncertainty. As they approach a large elegant house, the Lloyd Plantation, where several children were playing on the ground. " His grandmother pointed three children which they were his brothers and sister" (Williams, 23). When his grandmother left he started crying while the other children were yelling at him, the real time he started to know the harsh realities of the slave system. Frederick's mother was rarely able to visit her children due to the distance between Holmes Hill Farm and the Lloyd plantation. Frederick last saw his mother when he was seven years old. He remembered his mother giving a severe scolding to the household cook who disliked Frederick and gave him very little food.

After the last visit to him she died but he did not know until much later. "

One day in 1826 Lucretius told Frederick that he was being sent to live with

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her brother-in-law "(Okudas, 2). When he arrived to Auld home, his only duties were to run errands and care for the Auld's infant son, Tommy.

Sophia Auld was a very religious woman and she always read her bible loud. Frederick asked his mistress to teach him how to read and his mistress was so kind that she agreed to do so. Frederick was a very talented boy that he learned the alphabet and some small words, so that makes his mistress to be very excited with his performance. Due to her excitement she went and told the husband what she has done. Hugh Auld was angry with her about what she did, that it was unlawful to teach a slave how to read and write. Hugh also told Sophia that if a slave knows how to read and write he will make his own way of how to escape from the slavery and that will also make him to be disobedient to his master. Hugh Auld instructed Sophia to stop that as soon as possible. When Frederick heard what Hugh said then he realizes that education is the key to his freedom, and then gaining this knowledge became his goal. Frederick then decided to start learning the alphabet from his fellow poor friends that he made outside the house.

Frederick used to pay them with little bread for them to teach him how to read and write. Sophia's attitude against Frederick change completely, she don't regard as a son anymore she just took him as a piece of property that whenever she saw him reading any book in her library she always screamed at him. " However, Frederick gradually learned to read and write. With little money he had earned doing errands, he bought a copy of The Columbian Orator, a collection of speeches and essays dealing with liberty, democracy, and courage" (Guelzo, 45). Frederick started to learn the how to read local news paper and some other local stuff that made him understand the real

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meaning of slavery. After the knowledge he got from the books he used to read he, he now started to detest slavery. “ His dreams of emancipation were encouraged by the example of other blacks in Baltimore, most of who were free. But new laws passed by southern state legislators made it increasingly difficult for owners to free their slaves” (Guelzo 234). After the death of Aaron Anthony, Frederick was sent back to Baltimore where his family was still leaving (his brothers and sister). So at his time in Baltimore he decided to start teaching his fellow young black children how to read and write. His family were been separated from each other, that made him to increase his hatred with slavery.

In addition, a black preacher named Charles Lawson had taken Frederick under his wing and adopted him as his spiritual son. “ In March of 1833, the 15 year old Frederick was sent to live at Thomas Auld’s new farm near the town of Saint Michaels, a few miles from the Lloyd plantation” (Sullivan, 42).

Frederick was sent to a farmer named William Freeland, who was a relatively kind master. But by now, Frederick did not care about having a kind master. All Frederick wanted was his freedom. “ He started an illegal school for blacks in the area that secretly met at night and on Sundays, and with five other slaves he began to plan his escape to the North” (Williams, 32). A year had passed since Frederick began working for William Freeland and his plan of escape had been completed. His group planned to steal a boat, row to the northern tip of Chesapeake Bay, and then flee on foot to the free state of Pennsylvania. “ The escape was supposed to take place just before the Easter holiday in 1836, but one of Frederick’s associates had exposed the

plot and a group of armed white men captured the slaves and put them in jail" (Oakes, 7).

Frederick was in jail for about a week. While imprisoned, he was inspected by slave traders, and he fully expected that he would be sold to " a life of living death" in the Deep South. To his surprise, Thomas Auld came and released him. Then Frederick's master sent him back to Hugh Auld in Baltimore. In Frederick's spare time he met with a group of educated free blacks and indulged in the luxury of being a student again. Some of the free blacks formed an educational association called the East Baltimore Mental Improvement Society, which Frederick had been admitted to. This is where Frederick learned his debating skills. At one of the society's meetings, Frederick met a free black woman named Anna Murray. Anna was a few years older than Frederick and was a servant for a wealthy Baltimore family. " Although Anna was a plain, uneducated woman, Frederick admired her qualities of thriftiness, industriousness and religiousness. Anna and Frederick were soon in love and in 1838 they were engaged" (Guelza, 8).

Frederick started his plans for escape but he knew that time was not going to be easy because of the professional slave guards that were patrolling the border. " Frederick arranged with Hugh Auld to hire out his time, that is, Frederick would take care of his own room and board and pay his master a set amount each week, keeping any extra money for himself" (Thomas, 4). This also gave him the opportunity to see what it was like living on his own. Frederick decides to borrow money from Anna, and then he bought a ticket to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He also had a friend's " sailor's protection, a document that certified that the person named on it was a free seaman. <https://assignbuster.com/the-narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-history-essay/>

Dressed in a sailor's red shirt and black cravat, Frederick boarded the train. "On September 4, 1838, Frederick arrived in New York City. Frederick could not find the words to express his feelings of leaving behind his life in slavery" (Thomas, 5).

At New York he realizes that he was free, but he wasn't free because he heard that both the blacks and white people that are employed to catch blacks that were slaves and send them back to where they were from. So due to this he realizes that he should not trust anybody either black or white. Finally, he told an honest-looking black sailor about his predicament. The man took him to David Ruggles, an officer in the New York Vigilance Committee. Ruggles and his associates were the City's link in the Underground Railroad, a network of people who harbored runaway slaves and helped transport them to safe areas in the United States and Canada. On his moment in that place he decided to sent for his fiancée.

" Frederick got married to Anna Murray on the September 15 1838. Ruggles told Frederick that in the port of New Bedford, Massachusetts, he would be safe from slave catchers and he could find work as a caulker" (Chapman, 21-22). Upon arriving in New Bedford, Anna and Frederick stayed in the home of the well-to-do black family of Nathan Johnson. It was on that process Frederick Baily decided to change his name to Frederick Douglass so that it will be difficult for slave catchers to trace him. During his time in New Bedford he realizes that there was not different between blacks and white because they attend same school, churches and other places. Anna Douglass worked too as a household servant and laundress. " In June 1839, Anna gave

birth to their first child, a daughter which they named Rosetta. A son, Lewis was born the following year” (Oakes, 20).

After living in New Bedford for only a few months, a young man approached Douglass and asked him if he wanted to subscribe to the *Liberator*, a newspaper edited by the outspoken leader of the American Anti-Slavery Society, William Lloyd Garrison. Douglass immediately became caught up in the *Liberator*’s attacks on southern slaveholders. “ The paper became my meat and drink,” wrote Douglass. “ My soul was set all on fire.” Inevitably, Douglass became involved in the abolitionist movement, regularly attending lectures in New Bedford. “ The American Anti-Slavery Society, of which he was a member, had been formed in 1833. In August 1841, at an abolitionist meeting in New Bedford, the 23 year old Douglass saw his hero, William Lloyd Garrison, for the first time. A few days later, Douglass spoke before the crowd attending the annual meeting of the Massachusetts branch of the American Anti-Slavery Society” (Thomas 11). Garrison immediately recognized Douglass’s potential as a speaker, and hired him to be an agent for the society. As a traveling lecturer accompanying other abolitionist agents on tours of the northern states, his job was to talk about his life and to sell subscriptions to the *Liberator* and another newspaper, the *Anti-Slavery Standard*. For most of the next 10 years, Douglass was associated with the Garrisonian school of the antislavery movement.

“ Frederick Douglass decided to write a story of his life during the winter of 1844-45” (Williams, 14). He sat down and remembered all the people and places he went during his slavery time. “ In May 1845, he publishes 5000 copies of the book *The Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* an <https://assignbuster.com/the-narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-history-essay/>

American slave. Immediately after his publishes the book, his author biography became a best seller” (Douglass, 8). The success brought by Douglass’s Narrative after its publication in 1845 was due in large part to its moral force. His book is a story of the triumph of dignity, courage, and self-reliance over the evils of the brutal, degrading slave system. It is a sermon on how slavery corrupts the human spirit and robs both master and slave of their freedom. “ The book enjoyed widespread popularity in the North, and European editions also sold very well” (Hakim, 8).

However, Douglass’s fame as an author threatened his freedom. Federal laws gave Thomas Auld the right to seize his property, the fugitive slave Frederick Baily. “ The fear of losing his freedom prompted Douglass to pursue a dream he had long held; in the summer of 1845 he decided to go to England” (Guelza, 10). There he would be free from slave catchers, and also have the opportunity to speak to English audiences and try to gain support for the American antislavery movement. “ By 1838 all slaves within the British Empire had been given a gradual emancipation and were free. The vigor of the English abolition movement was still very strong” (Chapman 11).

“ As the wife of a traveling lecturer, Anna Douglass had probably grown used to her husband’s long absences. By August 1845, the Douglass had 4 children: 6 year old Rosetta, 5 year old Lewis, 3 year old Frederick and 10 month old Charles” (Chapman, 11). Anna not only raised the children, but also toiled in a shoe factory in Lynn, Massachusetts where the Frederick Douglass had moved in 1842. Frederick Douglass sailed to England on the British steamship Cambria. He was forced to stay in the steerage (second class) area of the ship, but he made many friends on board and was even <https://assignbuster.com/the-narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-history-essay/>



asked to give a lecture on slavery by the captain. Some men were so angry at his speech that they threatened to throw him overboard. The captain had to step in and threaten to put the men in irons if they caused any more trouble. The rest of the voyage was peaceful.

After Frederick settle down back to America, he have much time to stay with his family. After that then he decided to engage himself into the American politics. " So in 1860 there was an election which produces many candidates, the democrats spilt in to different categories" (Chapman 17). Those who were proslavery supported Vice President John Breckinridge, while moderates in the North favored the Illinois senator Stephen Douglas. Abraham Lincoln was the candidate of the Republicans, who were opposed to the spread of slavery into new territories. At first Frederick Douglass was campaigning for Smith, but few months before the election he decided to back Abraham Lincoln. " The two Democratic candidates received far more votes than anyone else did, but the division in the party gave the presidency to Lincoln. South Carolina, unwilling to accept the results of the election, seceded from the Union in December 1860" (Oakes, 47).

Abolitionists became the targets of angry mobs in the North, which blamed them for dividing the nation. Northern attempts to win back the South were to no avail. " In February 1861, six more southern states - Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas seceded and established a separate government under the name of the Confederate States of America" (Oakes, 47). As the Civil War got under way, Douglass marked out two goals for which he would fight: emancipation for all slaves in the Confederacy and the Union Border States, and the right of blacks to enlist in the armies of the

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North. As the war progressed, more and more people in the North would come to agree with these aims. While battles raged throughout the South, Douglass traveled on the lecture circuit, calling for Lincoln to grant slaves their freedom. “ On April 16, 1862, the president signed a bill outlawing slavery in Washington, D. C., but he was slow to approve congressional measures confiscating slaves in captured areas of the South” (Oakes, 56). Lincoln believed that if he passed laws that emancipated the slaves, the Union’s Border States might rebel and join the Confederacy.

Douglass continued to insist in his speeches and newspaper editorials that the aim of the war must be to abolish slavery and that blacks must be allowed to join in the battle for their freedom. Battlefield casualties were frighteningly high, and anti draft riots erupted in northern cities. Gradually, as the costly war dragged on, with no final victory in sight for the North, Lincoln began to realize that stronger actions needed to be taken against the Confederacy. “ In the summer of 1862, Lincoln read to his cabinet a draft of an order that would emancipate slaves in the Confederate states” (Chapman, 11). He decided to issue the proclamation as soon as the North won a major battle. In September, Lincoln got his victory when northern troops pushed back a Confederate army at the bloody battle of Antietam in Maryland.

“ On the night of December 31, 1862, the president issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that as of the next day all slaves in areas not held by Union troops were free. Slavery was not abolished in the Border States or in already captured areas of the South” (Guelza, 17). Nevertheless, Lincoln’s act freed millions of blacks, who fled from their masters and took “ freedom’s  
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road” to areas controlled by Union forces. “ By the end of 1864, the South was hungry and bankrupt” (Hakim, 17). Standing among crowds gathered in the nation’s capital, Douglass felt himself to be a man among men. As though to prick that bubble, government officials refused to allow Douglass or any other black to attend the evening reception in the White House. “ But when Douglass sent word of this refusal to the president, he was quickly ushered in to the ceremony. Lincoln personally greeted him with the words, Beginning of April, the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, was captured. A few days later, the commander of the Confederate forces, General Robert E. Lee, surrendered to the Union commander, Ulysses S. Grant, at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. “ On April 9, 1865, the Civil War was over. To the horror of the newly reunited nation, President Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, while attending a play at Ford’s Theater in Washington on April 14” (Hakim 13). He died the next day. With the rest of the country, Douglass mourned the man he had grown to respect. No sadness could completely overshadow Douglass’s joy at this time, however. A single, glorious fact remained: the war to end slavery had been won.

With the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, slavery was officially abolished in all areas of the United States. “ This was a great achievement in the history of his life that he was among the first black person that brings an end to slavery in the United States of America.

Douglass was struck by a massive heart attack and died at the age of 77” (Hakim, 22). As news of Douglass’s death spread throughout the country, crowds gathered at the Washington church where he lay in state to pay their  
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respects. Black public schools closed for the day, and parents took their children for a last look at the famed leader. His wife and children accompanied his body back to Rochester, where he was laid to rest. No one has struggled more resolutely for the rights of his people than Frederick Douglass. Born at a time when strong voices were desperately needed to cry out for freedom, he established himself as a powerful speaker for all men and women.

Due to this paper you will notice that Fredrick Douglas is one of the famous black men in the united state of America who fights against slavery. During his life as a slave, he outsmarts his master and learns how to read and write which change the tune of his life and lead to his great achievements.

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