

Essay on narrative of the life of frederick douglass

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Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
The literary devices used by Frederick Douglass in his autobiography make the telling more approachable to his audience. Douglass writes from a first person point of view demonstrating his evolution from an uneducated young slave to an articulate orator. He uses pathos, ethos, and logos. As well as a variety of other devices three of which are allegories, epiphanies, and parables. Through these techniques Douglass creates a vivid portrayal of life as a slave that dramatically impacts his audience.

One literary device used by Douglass is ethos, a rhetorical appeal to the writer's credibility. Throughout his narration Douglass uses Christianity to illustrate the ethical inconsistencies inherent in the practice of slavery. His example of ethos is particularly poignant in the character of Edward Covey. Mr. Covey considers himself to be a devout Christian man and tries to deceive himself and God, but his evil actions reveal him to be a hypocritical sinner. This connects with readers by depicting a very clear example of the ethical paradox of being a Christian slaveholder.

Logos, the rhetorical appeal of logic is another literary device used by Douglass. He uses logos in his writing style which is generally straightforward and engaged, though he does occasionally use an ironic tone, or that of someone emotionally overcome. Douglass's factual diction and logical outlook on the aspects of slavery help the audience get a better depiction of slavery. His formal writing style makes the reader know that he is an intelligent man. Another literary technique used in the autobiography is pathos, a rhetorical appeal to emotion.

Douglass's depiction of slave women is an example of pathos. Women, who should have a larger more significant role in his narrative such as his Aunt Hester, are only seen in relation to an emotional response to abuse. Douglass describes " I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine...no words no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose... not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cow skin. (21) He doesn't write about them as people but more as a way to display overwhelming emotions of abuse. Allegory is another device that Douglass that uses to convey his thoughts on freedom. Allegory is the literary work in which characters, objects, or actions represent abstractions. Douglass conveys the abstract idea of freedom portraying the white-sailed ships that he encountered as a way to suggest spiritualism or rather freedom that comes from spirituality. Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to the eye of freemen, were to me so many shrouded ghosts, to terrify and torment me with thoughts of my wretched condition. "(63) To Douglass the ships represent freedom from slavery by going from port to port, while the white sail he associates with angels. Epiphany is a literary device used to show a moment of sudden revelation or insight. Douglass shows this in the example of Mr. Auld ordering his wife to stop teaching a young Frederick to read.

Douglass says, " 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. " The epiphany that Douglass reaches regarding the value of education would resonate with his

audience. Douglass's fight with Covey is a microcosm for the global issue of slavery. This microcosm is an example of how Douglass uses parables to impact the reader. Parables are a simple story that illustrates a moral or religious lesson.

Slaves as a population succumbed to their environment (beatings) as Douglass did with Covey by losing all desire to better himself. Douglass explains this by saying, " My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye dies; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute. "(63) When Douglass stands up to Covey, a fight lasting hours, reflects the freedom movement's long, protracted struggle against slavery.

Slavery itself is such a heavy topic that it will affect any reader. But Douglass's is a true account. He doesn't hold back and writes the brutal truth. And that I think shocked so many people in that era because Americans did not want to believe that such an eloquent and intelligent Negro man had been subjected to such harsh conditions. Writing such an engaging story, by jumping between the two personas he represents, he shocked the culture. Douglass's autobiography was so shocking because of the amount of pathos used graphically to enrage the reader and cause social change many decades later.