

# Douglas vs stowe essay



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Before the Civil War, America was plagued with a complicated social quandary that incorporated individual, societal, political, economic, and religious principles. Its authorship includes Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe who dually challenges the legitimacy of slavery in their literature. While both Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and Frederick Douglass's "Narrative of the Life of an American Slave," offer impelling accounts, regarding the historical slavery era throughout the 1800s, the two authors write from distinctive experiences.

Stowe's Uncle Tom, a fictional character, attracts his audience through his profound Christian faith, which gives him an unbreakable spirit that enables him to see both the hand of God in all that happens and, in the critical moment, to stand up for what he believes is morally conscientious. Douglas, on the other hand, attracts his audience through his short but extremely powerful autobiography, which the great abolitionist brilliantly brings out slavery's corrupting influence on society.

Although both literary works have won over the hearts of numerous audiences during the time of its public release, Douglas, as his own character, presents a more imperative perception of his identity as a slave than Stowe's Uncle Tom through his strategy of writing, his audiences, and initiative for freedom. Frederick Douglass's strategy as a writer proves to be effectively powerful in terms of his narrative describing his life as a former slave.

As the character, whose name is Proximo of the movie film, "Gladiator," says to Maximus; "Win the crowd and you will win your freedom," Douglas

must strive to do the same to his primary audiences in the North. In his narrative, Douglas offers a calm, concise, yet compelling account of his experience as a slave. He describes heart-wrenching scenes of beatings and whippings and of the most basic failures in decency, like the one in which the small slave children, separated from their mothers and raised by their owner like a litter of puppies, eat from bowls of food slopped on the floor indiscriminately among them for their meals.

It is explicit details of his story that allows the author to gain support and sympathies from his audience, which will ultimately convince his audience that he is a man worth listening to. This means Douglass must show he knows more, has seen more, and is something extraordinary. By sharing his harsh experiences, regarding his past life as a slave, Frederick Douglas states his turning point when he finally earns the respect that he deserves, “You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man” (1211).

His complexion is unfavorable, and to see beyond that, he cleverly assumes the role of a hero: a slave-turned hero. Stowe’s strategy for her writing is more religiously based, as well as less bias than Douglas in terms of speaking against slavery since she lacks his personal-accounts. Instead, she uses the idea of cruel hardships for slaves as a tool to protest human enslavement. This permits the writer to unleash a small hint of emotions, which downplays the brutality of southern life. On the other hand, Stowe’s writing style lacks Douglass’ scholastic command, utilizing emotional appeal instead.

As a result, Harriet Beecher Stowe's writing sounds preachy and a little too engaged on sentimental story resolutions. Because Stowe's novel is based on her personal abomination towards the foundations of slavery, she cannot mimic the same sense of empathetic emotions as Douglas, when he speaks of his own horrifying and excruciating experiences. Frederick Douglass writes a first hand depiction that is a non-fiction account of his life as a Southern owned slave including horrible details involving his actual comrades and relatives.

While Stowe's way of writing is more vivid than Douglass's Narrative, she does capture the imagination of her readers by bringing her fictional characters to life. Both authors, Douglass and Stowe, enforce their own anti-slavery disputes, yet come from different places. Douglass's primary target audiences are those from the North, in favor of convincing the abolitionists to produce a change. Stowe's intention is to convince her northern audience that slavery was evil and could no longer be acceptable.

The importance of deconstructing both of these anti-slavery acclamations is that they should make the reader think passionately while learning about the difficult struggles all black people had to endure during this unruly period in history. Although Frederick Douglass's disposition against slavery is expected of him since he is a former slave, he backs up his statements with convincing explanations. A prime example of Douglass's bitterness towards slavery is the fact that as a boy, he experienced no love or affections; that is until his master sent him to Baltimore to live among relatives.

On page 1195, Douglas shares his experience with his new mistress, “ And here I saw what I had never seen before; it was a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions; it was the face of my new mistress, Sophia Auld. I wish I could describe the rapture that flashed through my soul as I beheld it. ” What Douglass believes is the opportunity to be finally treated with goodness and affections by a motherly figure, backfires on him in a short matter of time. Here the author describes how powerful “ the influence of slavery” quickly takes over the conscious of first time slave owners, “ But, alas!

This kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon” (1196). Douglass’s intention to exploit what is behind the curtains of slavery is fueled by the fact that he wants to persuade his audience to be morally correct and to realize that slaves too want to be treated equally as human beings.

The universal saying “ heroes are born, not made” brings individuals to a disheartened yet expected reality that they are no such things. As a result, there is a natural tendency to be intrigued by someone who is. Douglass plays on this and entrances his audience by describing the unimaginable events he lived through. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s intention to win over her crowd through Uncle Tom is vastly different than Frederick Douglass through his narrative because Stowe uses Uncle Tom’s Christian foundation as a

persuasive tactic to develop her statement that slaves are not mere chattel, but are human beings.

Uncle Tom readily did all the tasks that he was required to do, except to do the ones that he felt were morally false. An example of Uncle Tom's Christianity in defense is written in chapter thirty-three of the original Uncle Tom's Cabin story, during which Uncle Tom refuses to beat another slave because of his Christian morals; " If you mean to kill me, kill me; but as to my raising my hand against anyone here, I never shall — I'll die first! " Uncle Tom's Christian faith gives him the power to refuse to conspire in the violence that was the essential base of the system.

Because Stowe elaborates on the discrimination of Uncle Tom in both race and religion, this strategy makes it possible to attract the Southern population as well as their white counterparts in the North by allowing white superiority and charity to indirectly reign throughout the novel. In a psychological context, Stowe intentionally creates characters that readers want to identify with and imitate like respectable, benevolent Mr. Bird or wise, angelic Eva. Her use of emotional engagement, religious revelation, and distinguished imagery create a personal companionship and attachment to the cast.

While both Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe are writing about the same issue, their impression of freedom came from entirely contrasting situations. The story of Uncle Tom's Cabin is a melodramatic illustration of the fundamental evils of slavery. Because Stowe never had to live in black skin in pre-Civil war America, her affections could only bring so much to the

story. Reversely, Douglass's personal narrative is a non-fictional, non-idealistic, highly expressive journey.

One could the taste of blood, feel the crack of the whip, and the surpassing joy when Douglass is finally able to be free at last. While Stowe's stereotypical characters stand out, Douglass' account personifies an uplifting African-American success story. Clearly, the written works of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe impacted the minds of numerous crowds during its time. Both have been recognized within society for their stories and journey to become who they finally came to be. Douglass came to escape slavery to eventually become the most influential black abolitionist in US history.

Stowe went on to become, as President Lincoln once told her, " the little lady who started this Great War. " Being the author of his own personal narrative, Frederick Douglass knew the experience of enslavement very well. The instilled images and emotions that he incorporates into his writings do a terrific job of grabbing the audience's attention substantially. Although Stowe may have written the most influential novel in American history, Stowe never had to worry about torture or hunger, both mental and physical. She was never in fear of being raped by her owner.

She was never made to feel like an animal or someone's possession. Frederick Douglass prevailed through all those experiences. But ultimately, both Stowe and Douglass use the same means to achieve a different end. Racial discrimination in all societies still continues to linger throughout the world and within America. Human trafficking is growing. And with abortion,

human lives are still inherently subject to the will of another. Making this prayer our own, may we never find ourselves battling on the wrong side of such basic issues of both good and evil.