

The autobiography of benjamin franklin and narrative assignment

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The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass BY MEEKNESS Shaken Sanders 12/14/15 Two uniquely American life stories: The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass Although Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass began their lives on the opposite sides of the black-white divide in America, their personal narratives contain many parallel features.

Both suffered a kind of slavery?? indentured servitude to his brother in the case of Franklin and actual slavery in the south in the case Of Douglass?? and both later rose to reorient heights as authors and self-made men. Both men held work in high esteem. Franklin saw his thrift and industry as the reason for his success. Douglass criticized slavery because it eroded the ability to work hard and to make a profit off of one's own labor. Both men are shown chafing at the restrictions placed upon them while they were young.

Douglass longed to learn how to read and while literacy was not denied to Franklin, the young Franklin had to conceal his authorship of the editorials he published in his brother's newspaper. Similarly, Douglass had to conceal his urge to learn how o read as a slave. As a young boy, he was fortunate enough to be taught the alphabet and he kept this knowledge within him even in the face of very trying conditions as he was determined to escape the confines of slavery. Both men, in different ways, illustrate a common yearning for freedom.

To establish themselves professionally, both men had to leave their place of origin. Even within America they functioned as ' immigrants. ' Franklin fled from his brother to Philadelphia. Franklin began his own print shop and his

industry and sobriety was in stark contrast with his first associate, who likes to drink. Douglass, of course must leave the enslaved south and head north. In this sense both men function as 'self-made' or enterprising men, deliberately wresting themselves out of their challenging personal circumstances to pursue a new life.

However, because Douglass was located in an openly hostile county, his personal trajectory was slightly different than that of Franklin. Franklin took a relatively positive view of America: he was able to escape his brother relatively easily and is not pursued. He was able to begin his printing shop and later start a newspaper and almanac successfully, because of his own efforts. This affirmed in his eyes the value of frugality, pluck, and optimism. Douglass, in contrast, constantly had to fight those who enslaved him to retain his dignity.

In the various situations in which he occupied over the course of his life as a slave he was repeatedly beaten. Franklin's Autobiography celebrates the value of American concepts such as enterprise and freedom, including freedom from indentured slavery but also the British crown. One of the reasons the colonists wished to free themselves from British rule was because they viewed England as inhibiting commerce and financially exploiting them. American optimism is also demonstrated in Franklin's attempt to set up a program in which he might perfect himself.

Douglass too tried to better himself, but unlike Franklin, his obstacles were mainly external rather than internal. Douglass clearly wished to show himself as a man wishing to participate in the American experience of freedom who

was continually thwarted from doing so. His work was primarily intended to illustrate to whites the humanity of black slaves and the unnaturalness of their condition by contrasting Douglass' innate desire for freedom with the evils produced by the institution.