

A glance on the life of frederick douglass

[History](#)



Marjorie N. Bandiola Carlson English 101W2 17 February A Glance on the life of Frederick Douglass: A Journey from Slavery to Freedom and Beyond The book, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, is an autobiography, explaining the journey of Frederick Douglass right from his birth as a slave to his struggle for freedom, and his existence as a free man. {This sentence could be changed to -explaining the extraordinary struggle of a slave who fought out his way to freedom.} In case you like this you may change it.} Through this book, Douglass wants to let the civilized and uninformed white population of the country know about the inhuman act of slavery. In elucidating his journey from slavery to freedom, he begins with his ignorance about his age and paternity. He knew his birthplace as Tuckahoe, Maryland. Like other slave children, he had hardly enough to eat and just a shirt to wear. He could not even get the cozy love of motherhood as he met her only four or five times, that to in the darkness of night. In his early introduction to the system of slavery he got to know that the slaves were getting meager food, meager clothing, only a blanket for bedding and lack of sleep. Slaves, irrespective of their age and sex, also got brutal whippings from their masters and overseers with or without any reason. He asserts that he was fortunate to have Mr. and Mrs. Auld as his masters, where he got early lessons on how to read and understand the reasons behind keeping the slaves illiterate. He decided to run away to freedom once he has learnt how to read and write. Amidst the hard work, he persistently worked towards learning how to read and write, without giving even the slightest of hint to his masters. With change of masters he learnt calking and clandestinely taught some fellow slaves how to read and write. Neither, the increase, nor, the decrease in the barbaric treatment by his various masters

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could discourage his plans for freedom. In the second attempt to run away to the north for freedom, he succeeded. Once free, he initially earned his living by, calking. Afterwards, he worked with other white abolitionists for the freedom of slaves. While explaining his journey from slavery to freedom, Douglass is lucid enough to explain the torturous treatment inflicted on the slaves. An agony can be best explained by the one who has gone through it. There lies the biggest strength of the book. Douglass did his job marvelously by painting a picture in the readers' mind. He shakes their heart. To illustrate the stark difference between slavery and freedom, he quotes his feelings on his freedom, " I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions."(Douglass 108). Indeed, there is no alternative to freedom for any human being. These slaves, that are discussed in the book were not just bonded, they were also deprived of the basic means of existence (i. e. food, cloth, rest and health). A human being was whipped for asking for sufficient food to eat when hungry, enough time to rest when sick or even looking in the eyes of his master; any civilized mind will be agonized with the thought. Except for the meager food and cloth, they were not paid at all for all their hard work. Over and above this, they were subjected to torture which the civilized society cannot compromise with. On the torture inflicted on a woman slave, he asserts, " The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest."(Douglass 21). There was no value to relationships. The slaveholders practiced adultery and made their own child their slave. On torture to children that were result of their adultery, Douglass mentions, " He must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked

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back.”(Douglass 19). All this can soften even the stone-hearted. Anyone who reads the book will despise the cruel system of slaveholding. Douglass has successfully communicated what the evil side of the civilized world looks like. As is mentioned in the preface by Mr. Garrison, he able to evoke the feeling of “ No compromise with slavery! No union with slaveholders!" The book, thus, achieved what it was meant for. Works Cited Douglass, Fredrick. The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave. Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845. Print.