

# Using the Reader Response Method to Study Frederick Douglass

Tracy Ware

Grade Level: 7<sup>th</sup> grade

Illinois Core Area: Reading/ Language Arts

## ILLINOIS STANDARDS

**1.B.3b** -- Identify text structure and create a visual representation (e.g., graphic organizer, outline, drawing) to use while reading.

**1.B.3c** -- Continuously check and clarify for understanding (e.g., *in addition to previous skills* , draw comparisons to other readings).

**1.B.3d** -- Read age-appropriate material with fluency and accuracy.

**1.C.3a** -- Use information to form, explain and support questions and predictions.

**1.C.3f** -- Interpret tables that display textual information and data in visual formats.

**2.B.3b** -- Compare and contrast common literary themes across various societies and eras.

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.1](#) --Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.2](#) --Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.3](#) -- Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7](#) -- Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

## NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound–letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
4. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

#### **OBJECTIVES: The Student will**

- Read with understanding
- Answer reading response questions
- Apply comprehension strategies and skills
- Show their personal connections to a piece of literature by keeping a journal and show their personal connections to a piece of literature.
- Be aware that Frederick Douglass documented many instances of racial prejudice and violence in his papers and that some of the materials in this online historical collection contain language or negative stereotypes that may be offensive.

#### **OVERVIEW**

Frederick Douglass (1818-95) was a prominent American abolitionist, outspoken antislavery lecturer, writer, and publisher. Born a slave, Douglass escaped at age 20 and went on to become a world-renowned anti-slavery activist. His three autobiographies are considered important works of the slave narrative tradition as well as classics of American autobiography. Douglass' work as a reformer ranged from his abolitionist activities in the early 1840s to his attacks on Jim Crow and lynching in the 1890s. For 16 years he edited an influential black newspaper and achieved international fame as an inspiring and persuasive speaker and writer.

Frederick Douglass escaped from slavery in 1838 . [\*The Frederick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress\*](#) includes many of Douglass' speeches and letters, along with articles from two abolitionist papers that he edited and published— *The North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper* .

## Materials:

- I pad for (Internet)
- Journal Notebook
- Pen/ Pencil

## Procedure:

- Durations: five 60 min. sessions
- Opening:
- **Session 1**
- Have students look on Library of Congress website and read aDraft of Douglass' autobiography,— [\*The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave \(1849 edition\)\*](#)
- After reading answer the following questions in journal notebook.
  - Which parts stand out? Why?
  - What did you picture in your mind as the story was read?
  - Was there anything that you did not like about the story?
  - Was there anything that surprised you about the story?
  - What was the main feeling?
  - What was the best sentence?
  - Was there anything that was relatable to your life?
  - Have you ever read a similar story?
  - For homework assignment, student will obtain information about their family to create a family tree.

*The Frederick Douglass Papers* and the complete online autobiographies enhance the study of pivotal periods in U.S. history from the antebellum era through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the post-Reconstruction era.

## Session 2 –Respond to the autobiography

- Students respond to the autobiography. They meet in there literature circle. Discuss what obstacles Fredrick Douglas had to face, what it must have been like to live as an African American during the time of slavery. They share their answers to the questions, by making connections to their own lives.

## Session 3—Timeline

- Use the [Frederick Douglass Timeline](#) to examine the influences that shaped Douglass' life. Identify five events that they believe were particularly important in shaping later events in his life.

- The student will then make a personal timeline, and write in their journal notebooks how two important events have shaped their lives thus far.

#### **Session 4- --Historical Analysis and Interpretation: Comparing the Perspectives of John C. Calhoun and Frederick Douglass**

John C. Calhoun was a politician from South Carolina, one of the leading defenders of the institution of slavery. While many apologists for slavery referred to it as a “necessary evil,” Calhoun, in an 1837 speech in the U.S. Senate, termed it a “positive good.” Given this position, what hypothesis would you make about Frederick Douglass’ opinion of Calhoun?

Calhoun held a number of high offices in the U.S. government; at the time of the Mexican-American War, Calhoun was a member of the U.S. Senate. In the January 14, 1848, edition of *The North Star*, Douglass reported on [a speech by Senator John C. Calhoun](#) in which the South Carolina senator voiced opposition to the continuation of the Mexican War because the defeat of Mexico would result in “the incorporation of her people with those of the United States, would be a death-blow to our ‘free institutions.”

- Have students read a speech by Senator John C. Calhoun and answer the following questions.
  - Any questions for the author?
  - What was the author trying to say?
  - How would you change the story?
  - What are some special words that were used?
  - How would you evaluate this story?

#### **Session 5--Chronological Thinking: Reading a Family Tree**

A family tree is a graphic used to show a person’s genealogy—his or her family history. But a family tree is also a timeline of family life. While it is not as linear as a timeline, a family tree, when read from top to bottom and left to right, does provide a sense of the events in a family’s history.

Reading from top to bottom and left to right, examine the [Frederick Douglass Family Tree](#) .

- Have students make family tree of their family. After completion they will share their information with the class.

#### **STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS**

- This lesson can be evaluated by the students. Using the [Self-Reflection](#) assessment handout, ask students to compile a reflective assessment,

what they enjoyed, what they found difficult, and what the teacher can do differently next time.

- Teacher will evaluate by keeping anecdotal records of students' participation.

### **Self-Reflection**

*When you complete this lesson, reflect by answering the statements below:*

**What I enjoyed** write about what you liked most about this lesson

**What I found difficult** write about any part of this lesson you found hard to do

**What really worked** write about any part that you thought worked well

**Next time** write about what should be done differently next time