

Voices of the Enslaved: Frederick Douglass's Narrative

Name: _____ Date: _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze a slave narrative excerpt for its emotional and historical impact and create a visual timeline of freedom-seeking events.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- excerpt on worksheet (provided)
- poster board or long strip of paper
- index cards (5-6)
- markers
- ruler
- tape or glue stick

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Read the excerpt below, adapted from Frederick Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845): "I was born, but of the exact date I have no accurate knowledge... I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it... The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege."
2. In the margin, write one sentence explaining what this passage reveals about how slavery denied enslaved people basic information about their own identity.
3. Using your ruler, draw a horizontal timeline across your poster board or paper strip spanning 1619 to 1865.
4. On five index cards, write and illustrate five key events in the fight against slavery (e.g., 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, 1831 Nat Turner's Rebellion, 1845 Douglass's Narrative published, 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation). Research each briefly if needed.
5. Tape or glue the index cards onto your timeline in correct chronological order.

QUESTIONS

1. What does not knowing his own birth date reveal about Douglass's experience under slavery?
 2. Why do you think Douglass chose to include this small, specific detail rather than only describing large, dramatic events?
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3. Which event on your timeline do you think had the biggest impact on ending slavery, and why?

4. How did the publication of narratives like Douglass's affect the movement to end slavery?
