

Frederick Douglass

February 1818 – February 20, 1895

Frederick Douglass was very well respected as an abolitionist (one who wanted to end slavery), an orator and a writer. He wrote many books and was appointed by President Benjamin Harrison to be the U.S. Minister Resident to Haiti. Even though he was born into slavery in the state of Maryland he became a well-educated person and speaker. In fact, there were many who couldn't believe that he was once a slave.

While on a slave plantation in Maryland, Frederick was separated from his parents and grandparents. He was taken to Baltimore to live with a family. Thankfully, a woman named Sophia Auld cared for Frederick at the age of 12. Sophia made sure that Frederick was fed and clothed properly and taught him the alphabet. However, some people at that time didn't think that slaves should be educated so Frederick had to learn to read and write in secret. Frederick believed education was important. He is quoted to have said, "knowledge is the pathway from slavery to freedom." Frederick would read anything that he could get his hands on. He would read newspapers, pamphlets and books. Eventually, he was hired to teach Sunday School where he would read the New Testament Bible to about 40 other slaves. This went on for some time until the slave owners noticed how well the students were learning and eventually shut it down. By the age of 20, Frederick fell in love with Anna-Murray who was a free slave in Baltimore. She provided money and clothing for Frederick to escape to New York, a free state. Anna went with him and they were married on September 15, 1838.

On April 14, 1876, Frederick Douglass gave the keynote speech at the unveiling of the Emancipation Memorial in Lincoln Park. There were many other achievements and honors that Frederick Douglass achieved. He leaves a legacy that as a former slave he overcame many challenges, and he should be an inspiration to us all.

"How Slavery Affected African American Families", National Humanities Center, 2011

"Biography – Early Life of Frederick Douglass Heritage, December 22, 2016

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave & Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Jacobs, H. and Appiah, K 2004)

Test Your Thinking Skills

1. According to the article what is the meaning of the word **abolitionist**?

- A. a person who is a slave
- B. a slave owner
- C. someone who wants to stop slavery
- D. an educated person and speaker

2. Which of the following is **NOT** true about Frederick Douglas?

- A. He was born into slavery
- B. He escaped to New York, which was a free state
- C. As a child he was separated from his parents and grandparents
- D. Frederick learned to read at a slave school in Maryland

3. Read the sentence below from the passage.

*He leaves a legacy that as a former slave he overcame many challenges and **he should be an inspiration to us all.***

What does the author mean by **he should be an inspiration to us all**. Choose the best answer.

- A. we should all care more about education
- B. we should rise above our challenges to make a difference
- C. we should try hard
- D. we can all learn to read

4. Frederick Douglas was quoted as saying, “knowledge is the pathway from slavery to freedom.” Please explain what you think Frederick Douglas meant by this statement.



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Test Your Thinking Skills Answer Sheet

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Answers may vary

Lack of knowledge holds us back from achieving all we could be. Learning new knowledge keeps us from being enslaved to our current life conditions. When we learn new things we are free to experience new opportunities.



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