

Frederick Douglass Printable Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Frederick Douglass was born near Hillsboro, Maryland, in February of 1818. He was born into slavery and was separated from his mother when he was a baby. At the age of 12, Frederick began receiving reading lessons from the wife of his “master,” even though it was illegal to teach slaves to read.

Douglass was soon sent away to another slave owner named Mr. Freeman. Mr. Freeman allowed Frederick to teach other slaves to read. Frederick taught over 40 slaves how to read passages from the New Testament. Other slave owners, however, became angry and destroyed the “congregation” in which Frederick taught. Four years later, in 1837, Frederick married a free black woman named Anne Murray. They would have five children. He gained his own freedom by escaping from captivity by dressing as a sailor and boarding a train at Havre de Grace, Maryland, near Baltimore. By the time he reached New York City he was a free man (though not officially a free man). Douglass continued to Massachusetts and soon joined the abolitionist cause. Inspired by the famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Douglass became a prominent anti-slavery speaker and writer.

In 1845, Douglass authored *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, an autobiography. The book was a critical success and became an instant best seller. The book was translated into three languages, and Douglass was invited to tour Ireland and Great Britain. Douglass spent two years in Europe lecturing on the horrors of slavery. Douglass became a popular figure in Great Britain, where his lectures were “standing room only.” The people of Great Britain, roused by Douglass’s speeches, raised money on his behalf to pay his “owner,” Hugh Auld, for his official freedom. Auld was paid 700 pounds by the people of Great Britain and Douglass was officially a free man in America.

When he returned to America, Douglass published *The North Star* and four other abolitionist newspapers under the motto “Right is of no Sex — Truth is of no Color — God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren.” He advocated equal education for black children, who received virtually no funding for education. As his reputation grew, Douglass became an advisor to Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. Douglass led a growing movement that caused a split in the Abolitionist movement. Douglass and others believed the US Constitution was an anti-slavery document, while William Lloyd Garrison believed it was a pro-slavery document. In addition, Garrison believed that *The North Star* was competing for readers with his own newspaper, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.

By the time of the start of the Civil War, Douglass was one of the nation’s most prominent black men. Later, *The North Star* was merged with other newspapers and was called the *Frederick Douglass Paper*. Douglass believed the primary cause of the Civil War was to liberate the slaves. After Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Douglass continued in the fight for the rights of the freed slaves.

Following the war, Douglass was made president of the Freedmen's Bureau Savings Bank. Frederick's wife, Anne Murray, died in 1881, but he remarried Helen Pitts, a white abolitionist, in 1884. In 1895, Douglass died of a heart attack at his home in Washington.

- 1. Why was Mr. Freeman significant in Frederick's life?**
 - A. Mr. Freeman gave Frederick his freedom
 - B. Mr. Freeman introduced Frederick to Anne Murray
 - C. Mr. Freeman sent him to England
 - D. Mr. Freeman allowed Frederick to teach other slaves to read

- 2. Which of the following best describes the relationship between Frederick and William Lloyd Garrison?**
 - A. They were great supporters of each other throughout their lives
 - B. Although they fought for the same cause, they had major differences
 - C. Although they fought for different causes, they had much that brought them together
 - D. Throughout his life, Frederick was unimpressed with Garrison

- 3. How did Frederick officially become a free man?**
 - A. He escaped to New York
 - B. He wrote an important, best-selling book
 - C. He joined the abolitionist cause with William Lloyd Garrison
 - D. Some of his supporters in England paid for his freedom

- 4. Which was NOT true about Frederick Douglass?**
 - A. He believed the U.S. Constitution was pro-slavery
 - B. He was advisor to two presidents
 - C. He published the anti-slavery newspaper *The North Star*
 - D. His ideas were partly responsible for a split in the Abolitionist movement

- 5. Which of the following could be answered with "ending slavery?"**
 - A. What did Frederick Douglass lecture about in England?
 - B. What did Frederick Douglass try to accomplish after the Civil War?
 - C. What did Frederick Douglass believe was the purpose of the Civil War?
 - D. What was Frederick's most personal accomplishment?

- 6. Which of the following is the best translation of Frederick's motto?**

Right is of no Sex — Truth is of no Color — God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren

- A. All people, regardless of color are related under God
- B. All people, regardless of whether or not they were slaves, are related under God
- C. All people, regardless of their color, or, whether they are men or women, are

related under God

D. All people, regardless of color, or, whether they are men or women must believe in God