

Name: _____ Period: ____ Date: _____

Reading Questions: Chapters 1 - 5

Important Definitions and People:

Monger – someone who deals in a specific product/service. In the Narrative, a flesh-monger is one who deals or trades slaves.	Ham – In the bible, Ham’s descendants were cursed by Noah (Ham’s father) to be slaves. Many Southerners claimed Africans to be the descendants of Ham.
Cudgel – a short but thick stick	Cowskin – whip made out of cowhide
Overseer – the one in charge of the daily work of the slaves; often under pressure of the master to produce crops; rarely employed for long	Plantation – an agricultural estate usually worked by resident labor (Webster). At the time of Douglass’ narrative, many relied on slave labor.

Motifs to Examine: Identity; Family, Whipping/The Lash/Cowskin/Cudgel, Overseers, Songs, Tar, Hunger, Cold, Boats/Sailing, City versus Country

Chapter 1:

- 1) Examine Douglass’ writing for diction connected to animals. What is the purpose of this word choice?
- 2) How does one’s name and birthday contribute to one’s sense of self? Identity? What is the purpose of the slaveholders’ denial of these basic pieces of knowledge, and why does Douglass start his narrative with these details?
- 3) What does Douglass assume his audience values when it comes to family? How does he appeal to these specific values (pathos)?
- 4) How does Douglass expose the moral corruption of his master in this section?
- 5) Douglass knew that much of his audience was religious. How do the details Douglass provides in this chapter regarding his masters conflict with common religious values?
- 6) Examine Douglass’ word choice of “human flesh-monger” for those who sell slaves. What is the effect of this word choice, and how does it contribute to the characterization of the slave system in the South?
- 7) How does Douglass dispel religious justifications for slavery in this chapter? Examine his reference to the curse on Ham? See the definition of Ham in the chart at the top of this page.
- 8) Point to at least one piece of imagery Douglass provides that you find particularly powerful. Embed the quote, then note the impact and effect of this imagery. Consider audience in your response.
- 9) How does Douglass characterize Mr. Plummer? And how does this characterization contribute to his purpose?
- 10) Douglass starts his narrative detailing particular events from his childhood. Why did he choose these events to start his narrative? What do they help establish? Introduce?
- 11) What are ways in which slaveholders keep slaves ignorant? What do they keep them ignorant of? How does Douglass’ detailing of these methods contribute to his purpose?



“Am I Not a Man and a Brother”: Engraving by Josiah Wedgewood, 1787, created for the abolitionist cause.

12) How does Douglass use parallel structure and repetition for effect? For his purpose(s)? (see anaphora, parallel structure, and antithesis definitions and examples)

Chapter 2:

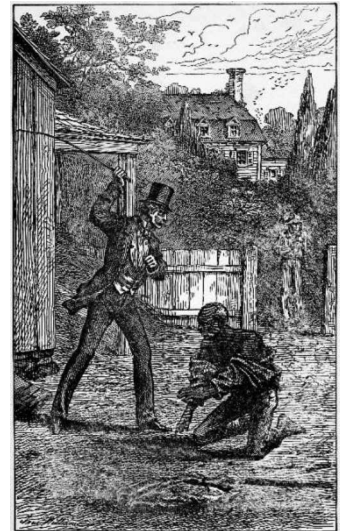
- 1) What kinds of hierarchies and “privileges” exist on the plantation? What might Douglass be trying to accomplish through descriptions of these hierarchies?
- 2) Examine the details Douglass provides of the slaveholders and their family. Pick a few you find meaningful. What might be the purpose of these details?
- 3) Why does Douglass go into such detail regarding the slaveholders, the amount of slaves, and how the plantation is organized and functions?
- 4) What types of logos does Douglass provide in this chapter? Consider the slaves’ allowances, clothing, and living conditions. What is the effect of such logos?
- 5) What assumptions does Douglass make about what his audience values in this chapter? How does he try to appeal to these values?
- 6) How does Douglass convey the cruelty and inhumane of treatment of slaves in this chapter? What might Douglass be trying to accomplish through his descriptions of such cruelty and inhumane treatment?
- 7) Examine the actions of Mr. Severe and Mr. Hopkins. If Douglass is appealing to a religious audience, how do Douglass’ descriptions of his actions appeal to the religious audience?
- 8) What do you think is the significance of the Great House Farm and Douglass’ attention to this place and the slaves’ attitudes towards it?
- 9) How does Douglass dispel any myths or romanticized versions of slavery in this chapter?
- 10) Douglass shifts to describing his feelings while writing about the songs slaves sang on the farm. What is the effect of this description and shift?
- 11) How does the comparison to a man on a desolate island at the end of this chapter express one of Douglass’ purposes? What’s the effect of this comparison?



Slaves on a plantation in the South

Chapter 3

- 1) Consider the significance of the garden on Colonel Lloyd’s farm. What might be the symbolism of this garden? What might it be an allusion to in the Bible?
- 2) Compare and contrast Colonel Lloyd’s attitude and treatment towards his horse versus his attitude and treatment towards his slaves. What is the purpose of this comparison?
- 3) “. . . too much . . .”
- 4) Analyze the significance of Old Barney’s age and his treatment in this chapter. Consider audience, strategy, and purpose.
- 5) Colonel Lloyd’s sons contribute to the cruel treatment of slaves. What is Douglass arguing about the slave system through his descriptions of Colonel Lloyd and his sons? Point to evidence.



Old Barney: Image from
*The Life and Times of
Frederick Douglass*

- 6) How does Douglass expose the flaws in believing a slave when he or she gives positive accounts of their masters? How might this contribute to his overall purpose (keep his audience in mind here)?
- 7) At times, Douglass shifts point of view, moving from retelling other slaves' experiences to recounting and reflecting on his own experiences and feelings. What is the effect and/or purpose of these shifts?
- 8) What is the effect of Douglass' descriptions of the rivalry slaves hold over their masters? What do these descriptions express about the slave's experience and situation?

Chapter 4

- 1) Explain the meaning of Douglass' statement regarding Mr. Gore: "He was just the man for such a place, and it was just the place for such a man."
- 2) How does Douglass use parallel structure to portray the injustices present on the farm? Point to specific evidence and analyze.
- 3) Examine the word choice Douglass uses while describing Mr. Gore. What kinds of words does he use? What are their effects?
- 4) Many whites viewed slaves as inferior, primitive beings. How does Douglass, through Mr. Gore, shift this perspective? What might this shift express about the slave system?
- 5) Demby takes a stand against the inhumane treatment on the farm but is quickly shot down. What does Demby's death express about the slave's situation and everyday experience?
- 6) How does Douglass express the fear slaves hold over their masters and the imposing character of Mr. Gore? How do his descriptions help justify the actions of Demby?
- 7) How do slaveholders and overseers justify their extreme actions against slaves? What are some of the fears these people have of slaves?
- 8) Boasting is a motif in Douglass' narrative – both with slaves and with masters. Find where boasting occurs and detail what you think might be the effect of the descriptions provided of boasting.
- 9) How does Douglass incorporate visual imagery to portray the extreme cruelty and injustice the slave system condones?
- 10) How does Douglass highlight the injustice the slave system allows? What kinds of appeals does he incorporate in order to move his audience towards disapproving of such injustice?



Demby: Image from *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*

Chapter 5

- 1) Douglass shifts to his own experience on the farm. Why wait until chapter 5 to go into detail regarding his experience?
- 2) Examine the descriptions and word choice Douglass provides of the food and living conditions he endured. Note some of these descriptions and word choice and their effect.
- 3) What might be the action of Douglass' washing before going to Baltimore signify?
- 4) What is the significance of Douglass' comparison of slaves to pigs when receiving food?
- 5) Why doesn't Douglass feel any sadness over leaving the farm? How do the details he provides of his leaving contribute to a purpose (or, what's the effect of these details)?
- 6) What is the significance of the proverb Douglass provides regarding his leaving of the farm?
- 7) Examine how Douglass describes Sophia Auld. What is the effect of this description?
- 8) Douglass notes how he might still be in slavery if not for providence or God. Examine his description in the last part of this chapter regarding this divine intervention. What does it express about the slaves' situation and his own?