

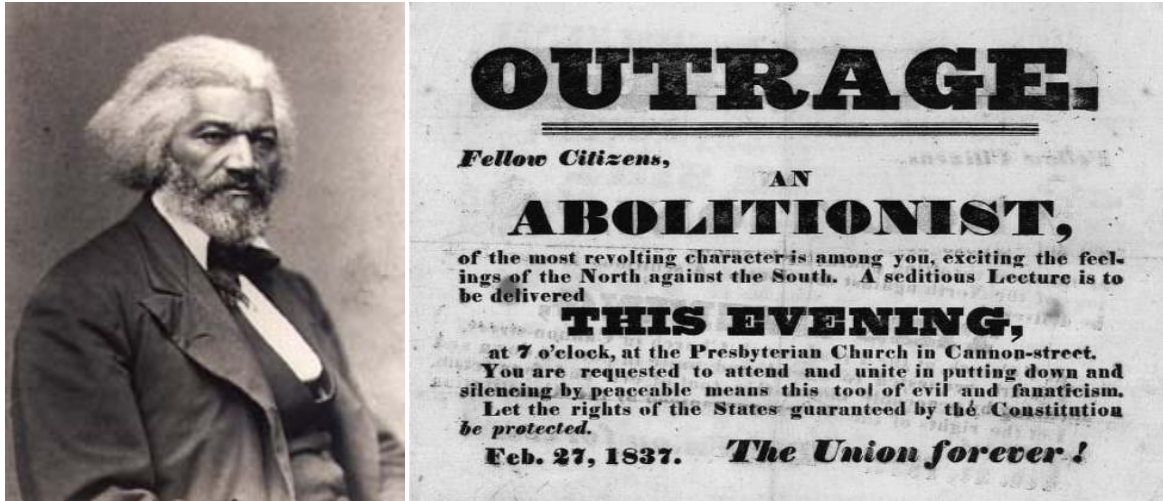
Frederick Douglass and the Constitution: An Evolving Understanding of Rights in America

Curriculum Unit – Todd Maguire, Masconomet Regional Schools

October 2011

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Overview:

The purpose of this unit is to introduce high school level students to life and plight of Frederick Douglass juxtaposed with rights and privileges afforded citizens in our Constitution. The unit will introduce students to the life of Douglass through his own narrative and trace his evolving views of the Constitution throughout his life. The culmination piece will be a discussion through Socratic Method for students on whether the Constitution was in fact a pro-slavery or anti-slavery document.

Objectives of the Unit:

- Introduce students to the life and plight of a notable slave, Frederick Douglass
- Identify how Douglass' experiences impacted his views on rights
- Mimic the emotions and realities of illiteracy
- Engage in reading, writing and argument development through scholarly readings/articles
- Engage in Socratic dialogue
- Formulate an argument on the Constitution's position as a pro slavery or anti slavery document

Unit length: One week

Audience: High School - Grades 9 through 12

Day One: Prior Knowledge

Learning Standards

USI.29

Describe the rapid growth of slavery in the South after 1800 and analyze slave life and resistance on plantations and farms across the South, as well as the impact of the cotton gin on the economics of slavery and Southern agriculture

USI.31

Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism

Assigned reading – *The Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

KWL Chart – Before reading fill in the first column. After reading, fill in the second. At the end of the unit, fill in the third and final column.

	What do You Know?	Need to Know?	Learned?
Childhood			
Family			
Education			
Political Views			
Work			
Changing Views			
Legacy			

Lesson Two: Simulation

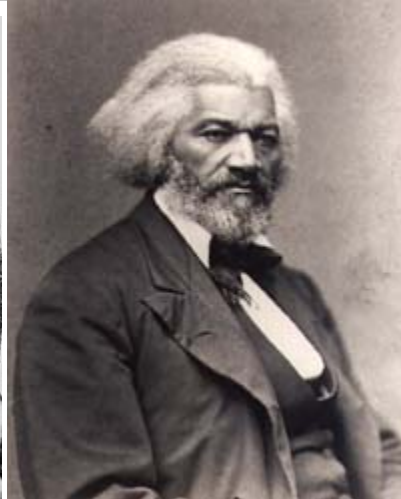
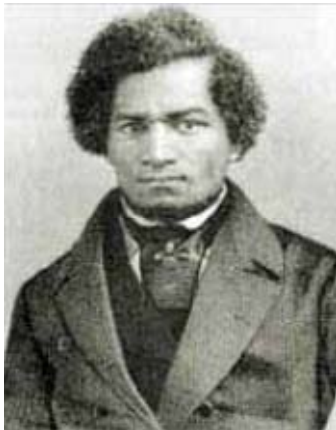
Learning Standards – Skill Development

Simulating the Inability to Read

Students should complete at the beginning of class. Do not include any recognizable words on the assignment. Based on their reading of the narrative, they should try to decipher the meaning of the text, the date and its message based on what is written and the images below.

Kamistu 4, 2010

Erevpr! Plrsdr yslrile upi drsyderaoj smfpw. Ot vpl okryryjrg poeo mhestp? Ef ki, ytper mis maeu ti e pwmxe ie utwqmlld pejrt kin heaty uemi pwc ikedzju plqa byeij mza: (archived from Consortium for Education)



Students will then write down their emotions associated with the activity. At the end of the simulation, the class will discuss their feelings as a larger group.

Lesson Three: Reading for Meaning and Article Review and Analysis

FACT vs. OPINION – Students will read Douglass’ Speech “What to the Slave is the 4th of July” and use the graphic organizer below to identify his main points and views.

Excerpt from “What to the Slave is the 4th of July”

Speech by Frederick Douglass

Delivered on July 5, 1852, at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, N.Y.

Fellow citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that the dumb might eloquently speak and the "lame man leap as a hart."

But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence bequeathed by your fathers is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me by asking me to speak today? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn that it is dangerous to copy the example of nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrevocable ruin! I can today take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people. Fellow citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! Whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, "may my right hand cleave to the roof of my mouth"! To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My

subject, then, fellow citizens, is American slavery. I shall see this day and its popular characteristics from the slave's point of view. Standing there identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine. I do not hesitate to declare with all my soul that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this Fourth of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the Constitution and the Bible which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery-the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate, I will not excuse"; I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, shall not confess to be right and just....

Speech ANALYSIS:

POINTS/FACTS STATED in ARTICLE	MY OPINION on STATED POINTS/FACTS

Lesson Four: Political Cartoon Analysis
Perspectives of Then and Now

As we analyze many political cartoons this year, it is important to follow the following steps to understand the meaning and significance of each.

1. What's the title? Any significant dates? Any words?
2. What do you see?
3. Any metaphors or comparisons?
4. Any exaggerations or caricatures?
5. Are there any positive and/or negative messages conveyed?
6. What is the meaning of the cartoon and/or its overall message? Is there a bias?

Title/Dates	See?	Metaphors?	Exaggerations	+/-	Meaning/Bias

1.



2.



Lesson Five: Perspectives and Opinions

Directions: Using Robert Cohen’s article, *“Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass”*, show how Frederick Douglass’ view towards the U.S. Constitution changed. Cite specific passages within the article in the chart below as you fill in the essential information.

Frederick Douglass’ Changing View Toward the U.S. Constitution

Initial View	Changed View	Evidence from Text

Final Assessment – Socratic Seminar

Essential Question: Was the United States Constitution a pro-slavery or anti-slavery document?

Using your articles, notes, readings and resources, prepare for a class discussion answering the EQ. You must choose a side and bring evidence from your sources for support.

Constitution

Directions – Answer the Essential Question in the columns below – you may bullet your responses.

PRO Slavery

ANTI Slavery

Evidence	Evidence

ASSESSMENT: 3 rubrics – ground rules, group and individual assessment

MAGUIRE'S SOCRATIC SEMINAR/WHOLECLASS DISCUSSION RUBRIC

- ADVANCED (A) - Expectations Met and Exceeded
PROFICIENT (B) - Expectations Met
BASIC (C) - Attempt Made to Meet Expectations
NOVICE (NC) - No clear Attempt Made

CRITERIA FOR THE WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION:

- _____ Every student participates in the discussion
_____ Comments are thoughtful, insightful and reflective
_____ Students respond respectfully to others' remarks
_____ Comments provoke other questions and comments from group
_____ Students make clear reference to text and connect to other texts
_____ Students' demeanor and behavior shows respect and attentiveness
_____ Responses to others are based on their comments/questions
_____ Class works together to discuss and debate the EQ
_____ Air time is distributed equally amongst all students
_____ Students converse directly with each other- no facilitator needed

WHAT WENT WELL:

AREAS TO IMPROVE:

CLASS _____

GRADE _____

Text-Based Seminar Guideline

Purpose: Enlargement of understanding of a text, not the achievement of some particular understanding.

Ground Rules:

- Listen actively.
- Build on what others say.
- Don't step on other's talk. Silences and pauses are OK.
- Converse directly—there is no need to go through the facilitator.
- Let the conversation flow as much as possible without raising hands or using a speaker's list.
- Expose/suspend your assumptions.
- Emphasize clarification, amplification, implications of ideas.
- Refer to the text; challenge others to go to the text.
- Watch your own air time—both in terms of how often you speak, and in terms of how much you say when you speak.

Maguire's Socratic Seminar/Graded Discussion Rubric

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| - Participation | -Quality of comments | -Active listening |
| -DRT (direct reference to text) | | -Prepared for discussion |

ADVANCED (A)

- ___ Comments are timely and appropriate; not simply a quantity of remarks
- ___ Comments are thoughtful, reflective and insightful. Student responds respectfully to others' remarks. Student provokes and challenges other members of the group.
- ___ Student makes clear reference to text(s) for support of his/her argument and is able to connect previous readings and texts in support of his/her argument.
- ___ Student's posture, demeanor and behavior clearly show respect to others. Responses to others are based on their comments and show you are attentive.
- ___ Student has the appropriate TYPED T-Notes and text references, and is prepared at the beginning of the discussion.

PROFICIENT (B)

- ___ Student volunteers comments without being asked. Most are appropriate, thoughtful and reflective.
- ___ Comments indicate the student has given some thought to the EQ or text being discussed. Student is able to build on what others have said and questions others.
- ___ Discussion indicates that the student has read the texts involved, but comments lack a specific, critical eye for insight.
- ___ Student listens to others most of the time, but clearly spends some time building his/her own argument—losing some continuity of the discussion.

BASIC (C)

- ___ Student participates minimally and only responds to direct questions and/or challenges from group members
- ___ Comments simply restate a question or point previously raised and do not add anything new to the discussion to provoke questions and/or responses.
- ___ Student has clearly NOT read the text(s) being discussed and cannot directly relate any text references to his/her arguments for support.
- ___ Student seems to "drift" in and out of the discussion, listening to some remarks and ignoring others—student may be daydreaming.

NOVICE (NC)

- ___ Student does not participate in the discussion and/or makes negative/disruptive remarks.
- ___ Comments are inappropriate or off the topic being discussed.
- ___ Student is unable to refer to any text for support of his/her argument.
- ___ Student is not paying attention, talking to neighbors and/or not involved in the group discussion.
- ___ Student is not prepared for the discussion. T-Notes are not present and/or not typed.

COMMENTS:

GRADE: _____

WORK CITED

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