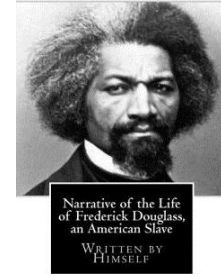


Name \_\_\_\_\_ Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: American Slave

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Intro to NotLoFD – Close Reading Excerpt 3 (of 5)

NotLoFD Chapter 6



### **From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, excerpts from Chapter 6**

**Background:** Frederick Douglass leaves the plantation, happily, and is sent to live with Hugh and Sophia Auld in Baltimore. They want him to be a caretaker for their young son. Living in the city is much different from living on the plantation, and Douglass is astounded at the kind treatment he receives from Mrs. Auld, who has never owned slaves.

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
<p>1. My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the <b>blighting</b> and <b>dehumanizing</b> effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her.</p> <p><b>blighting</b>—<i>damaging</i></p> <p><b>dehumanizing</b>—<i>to treat someone very badly</i></p>	<p>1. <b>Underline words or phrases that describe Mrs. Auld (the mistress).</b></p>	<p>1. <b>What is his mistress (Mrs. Auld) like?</b></p> <p>2. <b>What poetic tool(s) does Douglass use to reinforce her personality?</b></p> <p>Reminder of poetic tools: repetition, figurative language such as: imagery, sensory language/vivid description, mood/tone, similes, metaphors</p>

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
<p>She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The <b><u>crouching servility</u></b>, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it <b><u>impudent</u></b> or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The <b><u>meanest</u></b> slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.</p> <p><b>crouching servility</b>—<i>being extremely submissive, bowing before someone</i></p> <p><b>impudent</b>—<i>disrespectful</i></p> <p><b>meanest</b>—<i>lowest class</i></p>	<p><b>2. How did she act toward slaves?</b></p>	<p><b>3. Why does Douglass use the word “heavenly” to describe Mrs. Auld? How does this help the reader understand how enslaved people feel around her?</b></p>

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
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<p>2. But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon <b>commenced</b> its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet <b>accord</b>, changed to one of harsh and horrid <b>discord</b>; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.</p> <p><b>commenced</b>—<i>began</i></p> <p><b>discord</b> – <i>out of harmony; horrible sounding</i></p> <p><b>accord</b> – <i>in harmony</i></p>	<p>3. What is the <i>fatal poison of irresponsible power</i>?</p>	<p>4. What happens to Mrs. Auld?</p>
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<b>Text</b>	<b>Second Read Questions</b>	<b>Third Read Questions</b>
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3. Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave.

**4. What does Mr. Auld tell his wife about teaching a slave to read?**

**5. Why would teaching a slave to read make him "unfit"?**

**5. What does Mr. Auld's advice teach Douglass?**

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
<p>He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy.” <i>These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought.</i> It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man’s power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, <i>I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom.</i></p>		

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
<p>4. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. <i>What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.</i></p>	<p><b>6. What does Douglass resolve to do?</b></p>	<p><b>10. Douglass uses <u>juxtaposition</u> to compare his decision to Mr. Auld's decision to forbid him to read. How does this help illustrate how committed he is to learning to read?</b></p> <p>Reminder of poetic tools: repetition, figurative language such as: imagery, sensory language/vivid description, mood/tone, similes, metaphors,</p>

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
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5. My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere **chattel**, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as **injurious** to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. *She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach.*

**chattel**—*tangible property that can be moved*  
**injurious**—doing harm

7. How does Mrs. Auld treat Douglass after her husband tells her Douglass mustn't learn to read?

11. Compare Mrs. Auld before and after she owned slaves.

Before	After

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
<p>Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the <i>tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness.</i></p> <p>The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practice her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better.</p>		