

Name _____

Date _____



Frederick Douglass

An abolitionist, I was born into slavery.
Frederick Bailey was the name that they gave me.
My early years were filled with pain and strife,
But I became Frederick Douglass—got a new chance at life.
Born around 1818, somewhere out in Maryland,
Separated from my mom as an infant, raised by my grandparents.
Couldn't read, couldn't write—they wouldn't teach us that.
Literacy for Black people was illegal—facts.
Not even that could stop the knowledge I was seeking.
Taught myself how to read and write and did it all in secret.
At age 16, I stood up to my enslavers.
I spoke up for myself; they didn't like that behavior,
Had to protect myself. One enslaver attacked.
And me being who I was, I finally fought back,
Vowing to be free one day and run away.
In my heart, I just knew I had to plan an escape.
But not enough time to do it—things got really hard.
At 20 years old, they sent me to work in the shipyards.
That's where I met my future wife, Anna Murray.
She was like, "Fredrick, we gon' get you out here. Don't you worry.
Big city like Baltimore with people in a hurry.
We can do this by train, or we can do this by ferry."
So disguised as a sailor, I chose the train.
Finally making my escape in 1838—whooo!
Close call. It took Anna's help to do it.
We headed north, where we settled down in Massachusetts.
We hold these truths to be self-evident

That all men are created equal.
But I have to disagree—
Just look at all these enslaved people.
We hold these truths to be self-evident
That all men are created equal.
But I have to disagree
Until we're all equal.
In Massachusetts, I met this group; they had a movement:
Abolitionists who made demands to try to make improvements
About the horrors of slavery. I gave them first-hand accounts.
Plus, I wrote a few speeches to help the people out.
A dear friend, Mr. William Lloyd Garrison,
A prominent publisher and an abolitionist,
Offered his help. We got the whole world listening.
We soldiered on, and the movement steady strengthened.
Then in 1845, my first book was published:
A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.
I wrote more speeches, books, you name it.
In 1847, started publishing my own paper,
The North Star; this one made me quite famous.
So during the Civil War, I worked with Abraham Lincoln.
We had the nation thinking, "How about emancipation?"
Even when the war had ended, I kept on advocating
For social justice, civil rights, a better life
Up until my death in 1895.
Throughout it all, I'm still an inspiration—
Story of a man who helped to change this nation!
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