



## **Frederick Douglass and Harriett Beecher Stowe: Two Sides to the Abolitionist Narrative**

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For most of the students in my U.S. History class, the present is trouble enough. Why they have to study the past makes no sense to them. Teaching about the people, places, and significant events of America's past, therefore, is a difficult task. Many of my students also read well below grade level, so you have a toxic mix of disinterest and limited comprehension.

This unit combines literature with historical content in a way that is a compelling motivator for students. The unit focuses on the unique character of the slave narrative as literature. So doing will also help students gain a greater understanding of the complexities of the issue of slavery. They will experience the emotions first hand through selections from both autobiography and fiction: Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of a Slave* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, respectively.

Written to help bridge the comprehension gap of struggling students and offer Language Arts and U.S. History teachers the opportunity to combine their subjects to increase exposure to both, the unit synthesizes literature with history to enhance the study of the disciplines significantly.

(Developed for U. S. History, grade 8; recommended for Language Arts, grade 8)

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