



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2008 Volume II: American Voices: Listening to Fiction, Poetry, and Prose

The Role of Rhetoric in the Abolition Movement: A Study of Voice and Power in Narrative, Speech, and Letters

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Objectives

When reading *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, one cannot escape the authority of voice projected on the page. If voice is power, Douglass's narrative is one of the most powerful texts in American literature, emancipating the silenced voices of his fellow slaves, while enabling future African Americans to lend their voices to change. In this autobiography, his voice represents hope for his fellow slaves and acts as a platform for social justice and change that is echoed in the power of speeches from the Civil Rights Movement and the presidential election of 2008. ¹

This unit incorporates reading and writing and the study of voice. Throughout the unit students will examine the components of an autobiography, but will focus mainly on the concept of voice, as a writing skill, and as a metaphor for emancipation. Since voice is such an abstract concept, it will be studied within certain parameters. My overarching goal for this unit is help students develop their voice in writing by examining rhetorical devices in persuasive writing. Students will study voice in various non-fiction texts (narratives, letters and speeches), as well as poems. Too often, when students write persuasively, they include a lot of their opinion and little else. By exposing them to different forms of rhetoric, students will understand the craft of writing persuasively: include fact and philosophy, establish credibility, develop personality on the page, and build rapport with an audience. By reading many different texts and examining the voice of each, students will be able to develop their voice in writing. The cumulative assessment will be to write a brief narrative, letter and speech employing rhetorical devices studied in the unit in their own voice.

Interdisciplinary units are very common in middle school Language Arts and Social Studies classrooms. It would be impossible to teach the *Narrative* without delving into the history of slavery in America; students are always pining for historical information that reaches beyond the text we read in class. This unit affords me a great opportunity to collaborate with the eighth grade Social Studies teacher to create meaningful activities and to exchange resources. I am fortunate to teach across the hall from the eighth grade Social Studies teacher and plan with her on a regular basis; I have access to maps, history textbooks and primary documents that enhance the content of my unit. Interdisciplinary units are so important in middle school language arts classes because they allow students to explore different works of literature beyond the standard language arts textbook. All of my interdisciplinary units cover some math, science, social studies, and art (visual, performing

or musical) so students can hone in on their area of expertise or interest. Sometimes this poses a problem; I have a difficult time incorporating a lot of math in my units because I do not excel in math. Bar graphs, pie charts and percentages are usually as far as I can delve on my own. In the future, one I would like to find ways to collaborate with the math teachers at my school to enhance the math content in my units. I have found that students really appreciate and succeed in units that go beyond the walls of the classroom. They know that their teachers work together to create meaningful units and lessons, and their level of participation increases when they recognize this.

The reason I use *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in my eighth grade language arts class is threefold; to introduce narrative writing, focusing on the significance of *when* the book was published; to discuss the dehumanizing effects of slavery; and to provide a deeper understanding of voice as power, enabling students to develop their own voice in writing and perhaps even develop a deeper appreciation for their education. My students are always taken by Douglass's extensive vocabulary and long, descriptive sentences, amazed at how he taught himself how to read and write, a crime punishable by death, and amazed that he was only twenty-seven years old when he published this autobiography. One goal for this unit is to have students understand the role of Douglass's voice in his *Narrative* within the context of the Abolition Movement. Douglass was an escaped slave who enlightened himself to the realities of slavery by teaching himself to read and write, in turn, creating a vehicle for his inevitable escape. It is important that my students understand the power of Douglass's autobiography; it was published in 1845, seven years after Douglass's escape from slavery and, more daringly, twenty years *before* the end of slavery. Since this unit is so heavily laden with historical information I need to keep in mind my overarching goal by focusing mainly on how voice is developed in writing. I want my students to begin developing their own voice in writing and analyze the different techniques employed in analyzing voice in speeches, letters and narrative.

As students read various texts in this unit I want them to pay attention to the role of the storyteller in each text. One of my goals for the unit is for my students to be able to understand how their voice can tell a story and can act as a catalyst for change. The *Narrative* takes the reader on a physical and psychological journey of slavery through the eyes of the leader in abolitionist rhetoric. His combination of personal circumstances and public awareness as well as his use of both fact and philosophy truly make this *Narrative* different from any other narrative text read in my eighth grade classroom, unique in the context of American Literature. By incorporating letters by Douglass to fellow abolitionists and a former slave master, as well as several of his speeches given overseas, students will be able to see how his formative role as a slave helped shape his role as storyteller, abolitionist and orator. I want my students to understand the significance and impact Frederick Douglass's voice has had on the marginalized or oppressed, whose voices were often unheard as well as the connections between public rhetoric and power, authority, and social change. ²

When I have taught the unit on Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* in the past, I focused on the components of non-fiction text, chronological order, internal/external conflicts and theme. These objectives are prescribed for First Quarter lessons by the *Pacing and Alignment Guide* for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. However, for this unit, while working within the parameters of the *Pacing and Alignment Guide* I am going to focus the unit around the voices heard in Douglass's *Narrative*, studying speeches and letters in order to examine the differences in voice between the written word and the spoken word with an emphasis on rhetoric. My rationale for having the students examine three different types of texts centered on the common theme of abolition, or social justice for slaves, is to enable them to compare and contrast the rhetorical devices used within each text. I estimate the unit will take approximately nine weeks to teach; I see each language arts class every-other day because I teach at a magnet arts school. A traditional middle school schedule includes seeing each class everyday; if that is the case, adjust your teaching time to approximately four or five weeks.

It was not until I began writing this unit that I thought of how closely the topic of voice as power related to some of my students. I teach at Northwest School of the Arts, a magnet arts school in Charlotte, North Carolina. Northwest has a very diverse student body, as it houses middle and high school students from across Mecklenburg County. It acts as a safe haven for the many openly gay and lesbian students who attend the school, who might otherwise feel uncomfortable at their home school (the school they would be assigned to if they did not choose to go to Northwest). The open-minded atmosphere in the halls of the school allow for open discussions about sexuality and social issues within the classroom. Later in this unit I will discuss how Frederick Douglass began many of his speeches by downplaying his abilities in order to placate his white audience. I began to wonder how many times my students, of any color, religion, or sexual orientation, have had to suppress their true identities to be accepted by their peers. My hope for this unit is to open a dialogue on how Douglass's struggles as a marginalized member of nineteenth-century American society are closely related to the struggles faced by Americans in today's society.

The *power* of voice. Dr. Burkhard Henke, a German professor at Davidson University, revealed to me what I consider very valuable information for my unit and my students. The German word *mündige* literally means "of mouth," but in the court of law it means "of age," that is, one who is able to speak for himself; one who "has mouth" has the power to represent himself in society. Similarly, the English word *emancipation* means "out of man's hand"; it is a legal term meaning that the freed slave has been released from the master's hand or control. ³ After Douglass escaped he began penning public letters to Thomas Auld, his former master, which symbolized his freedom from the hands of slavery. Following his escape, his voice became his power; he used his voice to persuade others to fight against the institution of slavery. In contrast, *unmündige*, means someone else is doing the thinking, a concept Douglass explored thoroughly in his years as an Abolitionist and an orator. Voice and power are synonymous. Frederick Douglass's role as a slave made him "under age," or voiceless in the court of American society. He could not become "of age," or have a power until he emancipated himself from the galling *hands* of slavery. This concept reminds me of the struggles adolescents face on a daily basis. Adolescents are always trying to act older, whether it is defying their parents' orders to be home at a certain time, or mimicking the actions of older peers at school. They are not "of age" in society until they are eighteen years old, four or five years older than they are when I teach them. However, to an adolescent, being younger than eighteen does not mean that they do not have voices or that their voices do not matter. The goal of this unit is to help them develop their voices so they can be heard loud and strong in the classroom, at home, and in society.

Background Information

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave is an autobiographical account of a slave published in 1845, twenty years before the end of the Civil War and emancipation for all slaves. Douglass was the son of Harriet Bailey and his master, Captain Anthony. He spent the first seven years of his life in Maryland, living on Colonel Lloyd's plantation. This is where he first witnessed the atrocities of slavery. From a closet, he watched his Aunt Hester get stripped from the waist up, her arms tied above her as an overseer beat her until the blood ran down her back. This was the first of many horrifying scenes Douglass would face in his twenty-one years as a slave. The book takes the reader on his physical journey through the Baltimore area, to St. Michael's shipyard, and to his work as a field hand while simultaneously providing the reader with his philosophical analysis of slavery. The book ends with his escape to New York, of which he left out most

details so he would not hurt the chances of other slaves from escaping similarly. The reader learns of his marriage to Anna Murray and the beginning of his long career as an orator.

The Roots of Racism

Before the students read *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, they will read an excerpt from *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment and Abolition* which summarizes, very concisely, some of the religious and scientific thinking that led to the institution of slavery and the perpetuation of racism and stereotyping upon slaves. I am including this excerpt because every year I teach this book my students ask me what Douglass means when he says, "...God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is not right." ⁴ In order to explain this I usually give a brief oral explanation. Through my research for this unit, I found a great excerpt from the above-mentioned book that will be used as another reading component for this unit. The scientific argument described those of African descent as inferior to whites in reason, imagination, and creativity; incapable of deep emotions of love and mourning, inherently lazy and hot-tempered. ⁵ This information is necessary for the study of rhetorical devices that will be discussed later in this unit, mainly Douglass's need to downplay his abilities at the beginning of his speeches. (See discussion/journal questions under the heading *Rhetoric*.) In terms of the religious argument, the Scripture was misinterpreted by whites, leading to the enslavement of Africans. "A commonly cited biblical argument involved Noah's curse on Canaan, the descendants of his son Ham, whom proslavery writers maintained were Africans." ⁶ Samuel Cartwright, a Louisiana doctor, argued that Africans shared the physical and mental characteristics of Canaan, therefore making those of African descent cursed to serve the whites, "the progeny of Ham's brother Japheth."

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Chapter I of Douglass's *Narrative*, discusses the implications of the new class of mixed-blood slaves, an outcome of the rape of slave women by their masters. Douglass is trying to illustrate that this class of slaves, of which he is included, is a "very different-looking" class of people from those brought to America from Africa. Therefore, the religious argument "that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right," cannot hold true. ⁸ Students will read this passage from Chapter I and pages 25-26 from Bacon's book and will then discuss with a partner the connections between the religious argument and Douglass's rhetoric about the new class of slaves. *What "facts" were stated in Cartwright's argument? Why does Douglass argue that the "facts" cannot be true? What is Douglass's philosophy on the religious aspect of pro-slavery rhetoric?* Instead of just giving notes on the historical information, students can also compare the misinterpretation of the Scripture noted above to the episode in Chapter IX of the *Narrative* when Thomas Auld, his master, whipped a slave woman until the blood dripped, and quoted the Scripture in justification of his action: "He that knoweth his Master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." ⁹ I usually use this example to teach a mini-lesson on literal versus figurative analysis of text; the information in Bacon's book will serve as a great supplement to this discussion.

Rhetoric

Voice is a very abstract concept and I believe it will be difficult for my students to understand Frederick Douglass's use of voice and rhetoric if I do not first introduce several key vocabulary words and concepts that are probably unfamiliar to them.

When teaching students persuasive writing, I focus on the differences between fact and opinion, the use of facts to support one's opinion, and the relationship developed between the writer and the audience, focusing on how to effectively create a call to action for the reader. Students often write about how much they want to

see change occur and why they feel change is necessary, but lack the ability to add fact or philosophy to their writing to make it truly persuasive. Rhetoric, simply speaking, is the ability to make a strong argument by presenting facts and opinions as persuasively as possible. Douglass's *Narrative* demonstrates the rhetorical power of stories, imagery, and metaphors, a technique mirrored in his letters and speeches. Student will be able to use the types of persuasive techniques read or heard in this unit to foster the development of their own voice in writing.

My goal is that students will be able to identify different rhetorical strategies in texts studied in this unit, specifically, combining fact with philosophy and developing trust, or credibility with an audience in an effort to increase their skills in persuasive writing. To introduce rhetoric, I will ask students to read the first paragraph of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and ask them which words, phrases, or sentences persuade the reader to disagree with the dehumanization of slavery upon the slave. In this passage, Douglass employs a rhetorical strategy used during the Abolition Movement. I will call attention to the sentences about his age: "I have no accurate knowledge of my age...I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived the same privilege." ¹⁰ Here, Douglass combined a personal experience with his philosophy; he tells the reader he was deprived of knowing his birth date and then goes on to express his dissatisfaction of this form of dehumanization in the institution of slavery. Students will be asked: *Why is it important to combine fact and philosophy, or opinion, in a persuasive speech? Is one component effective without the other? Why or why not?* As an orator, Douglass faced the complications of being asked by white abolitionists to speak about his experiences as a slave while also being told to leave out his philosophy about the institution of slavery; although the white men were abolitionists, they were still guided by their own prejudices. As a former slave, Douglass was to speak only as a storyteller who experienced first-hand the ills of slavery. Although Douglass was a respected orator in the Abolition Movement, society still viewed him as intellectually inferior to whites. Therefore, it was deemed inappropriate for a former slave to share his *philosophy* about the institution of slavery - his role was to simply provide the facts of his experience, leaving the *philosophy* of slavery to his fellow white abolitionists.

Students will need to develop trust with their audience. *Why should the audience trust you? Why are you a credible source?* In a speech delivered in 1843, Douglass begins, "I have myself been a slave, and I do not expect to awaken such an interest in the minds of this intellectual assembly, as those have done who spoke before me." ¹¹ In order to gain someone's trust, a commonality must be established between the two parties. The white audiences Douglass had to address might have asked themselves, *Why should I trust you, a former slave?* By deferring to his white audience, he was using a "nineteenth-century oratorical convention" that was used to "establish rapport with his audiences." ¹² African American rhetors constantly had to overcome the stereotype that they were inferior to whites intellectually and as orators. By deferring to their audience's expectations of their inferiority, they actually granted themselves rhetorical authority; rapport was established. This strategy allows marginalized rhetors to negotiate the obstacles imposed upon them by using the rhetoric of an "inferior" addressing a "superior." Douglass challenges his audience to look beyond this hierarchy in nineteenth-century America and pressed his audience to grant him authority to persuade. ¹³

For the texts mentioned above I will have students create a T-chart; one column will record all facts stated by Douglass and the other column will list his philosophies, or ideas. Students will be asked to highlight words that reveal his philosophy. I do a very similar activity to elicit from them the difference between fact and opinion in non-fiction text by asking them to highlight opinion, or persuasive words in a non-fiction text. The highlighter will become a key player in your unit as students begin to search for rhetorical devices in

Douglass's texts.

When teaching my students about rhetoric, I will provide them with the simple definition mentioned earlier; once they can identify how it is used I will introduce them to the more complex ideas described above. My reason for identifying the connections between the speaker and the audience is to enhance their own persuasive writing - keeping in mind their relationship to their audience. This will be reinforced once they begin writing their persuasive speeches. I will keep this list of the characteristics of rhetoric on a poster in the front of the classroom so students can always refer to it when evaluating text and creating their own voice in writing activities. The previous example will lend itself to the instruction of a more detailed description of rhetoric. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes three means of persuasion: *pathos*, *logos*, and *ethos*. *Pathos* arouses an emotional response in the audience, *logos* is the logical formation of an argument, and *ethos* is the character of the speaker as portrayed in the speech itself (whether in the written word or in speech).¹⁴ My students will probably be able to understand the meaning of *pathos* most easily because it directly relates to them - creating the mood for the reader. My students have been predisposed to speakers such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Maya Angelou, whose voices clearly elicit strong emotional responses from their listeners. In Book II of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle analyzes persuasive techniques in greater detail by identifying *phronesis*, practical wisdom; *arête*, good moral character; and *eunoia*, goodwill toward the audience.¹⁵ *Persona* is another characteristic in rhetoric, meaning "theatrical mask," or more contemporarily, one's "role" in writing.¹⁶ *Persona* will be easy for my students to identify with because we do a lot of "persona" writing in poetry where students have to create a persona and write from his/her/its point of view. As a teacher I regularly incorporate the concepts of *pathos*, *logos*, *ethos* and *persona* in my lessons on how to enhance persuasive writing. Through my research for this seminar on voice, however, I have been able to think more clearly about how to approach these ideas in my classroom. Identifying and developing *pathos*, *logos*, and *ethos* in writing will become part of a pre-writing activity for a persuasive writing assignment; students can list their "qualifications" for each of the three techniques in order to make a deep connection to their specific audience.

Frederick Douglass examined the relationship between the written word, the reader and the subject when he posed the questions, "Why is it that all the reports of contentment and happiness among the slaves at the South come to us upon the authority of the slaveholders, or (what is equally significant), of slaveholders' friends? Why is it that we do not hear from slaves directly?"¹⁷ To begin discussion of why rhetoric, text, and speech were essential to the Abolition Movement, I will pose questions to my students as a warm-up journal: *What is the importance of narrative writing as a primary source? How can society insure an unbiased documentation of history?* In a letter to John T. Bartlett, Robert Frost states: "The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words."¹⁸ My seminar leader, Dr. Langdon Hammer, shared his interpretation of this concept during our seminar, stating: "In a sense, everything we read is behind a door; we can't see the people talking to us on the page."¹⁹

His suggestion resonated with me as I began to develop my unit on the voices of emancipation. The idea is that what we read on paper is always muffled, to a degree, because we are not hearing the words spoken to us. Some words are left up to our "imagining ear," another Frost metaphor, which allows us to bring our own experience to the words we hear on the page.²⁰ (I explain the mini-lesson on teaching the "imagining ear" in the Activities section of this unit). This rings so true for African American men during the Abolition Movement, whose voices were either silenced or edited by white men in power. The power of voice is described in an 1850 speech by Douglass in Rochester, New York: "There comes no *voice* from the enslaved, we are left to gather his feelings by imagining what ours would be, were our souls in his soul's stead."²¹ In a way, Douglass is referring to the "imagining ear" as he explains his frustration that the true story of slavery cannot be told

without the voices of those oppressed by slavery, not by the oppressors. If it were not for Douglass's *Narrative*, contributions by former slaves to *The Liberator* and other abolition propaganda, history would be interpreted only through the ear of slaveholders, altering the sounds of slavery.

Influences of Rhetoric

As the unit progresses, students will begin to analyze the people, events, and circumstances in their lives that influence them as writers. In developing voice, students will have to reflect on how they came to be the person they are today as well as contemplate what they see in their future. I will ask students: *What sounds, sights, tastes, smells have affected your life? What are your strengths? How can you use your strengths as a rhetorical device in developing your voice?* Frederick Douglass became a leading orator by listening to the sounds of slavery, the sounds of preachers, and the sounds of freedom. His rhetorical power emerges from the storytelling he was exposed to as a slave, a model for narration as a form of persuasion that does not depend on the white audience's perceptions of African American orators, but on the rhetorical traditions of African Americans.²² He was also influenced by African American and white preachers whose sermons helped create the dramatic voice and voice of authority so resonant in his speeches.

My students will read his speech to the ships on the Chesapeake Bay in Chapter X. "You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave! I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. O God, save me! God deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave?"²³ When I read this passage (the above is only a small excerpt) I hear the voice of a preacher speaking as well as the voice of a parishioner questioning the existence or power of his God. The tone of this passage changes drastically from beginning to end; a very angry and hopeless tone in the beginning gives way to a hopeful and forgiving tone at the end. In order to assess the student's understanding of the change in tone of Douglass's voice, I will have them highlight the emotion words like *hottest hell, confined in bands of iron, turbid waters, misery* to support their answer. In reference to Frost's concept of the "imagining ear" I will ask students: *What voice(s) do you hear in this passage?* I hear a parishioner asking a preacher for guidance and advice on how to cope with the evils of slavery; they might hear the voice of the ship, the collective voice of the slaves, or just the voice of Douglass. In the past I have also asked students to create a "T" chart. One column lists his *realities* and the second lists his *dreams*. We reference this list as the book progresses and use it in our discussion of his physical versus psychological journey.

Letter Writing - Intimate and Public

A letter written by Frederick Douglass to Thomas Auld, his former slave master, was published in *The Liberator* on the ten year anniversary of his freedom. In this letter he alludes to at least six different events or circumstances in his *Narrative*; this will provide a great opportunity to have students read excerpts of both texts and compare/contrast his role as a writer, the audience to whom he was writing, the format, and tone. The intimate nature of a letter is challenged here because it was published in a newspaper. In both the *Narrative* and the letter to Thomas Auld, Douglass reveals the private details of his enslavement as well as expressing the public focus of the evils of slavery.²⁴ Students will be able to compare the ways in which this is accomplished in both texts. The letter provides insight into his role as an orator and can be used as a link to the lessons on his speeches that will be mentioned later in this unit.

In the following paragraphs, I am highlighting the six events that Douglass writes about in his letter to Thomas Auld. As we read the *Narrative* together in class, I will write these quotes on the board as they fit in the readings. The students will be asked to examine the difference in tone between the letter and the *Narrative* as

well as the use of private and public information in both texts. As an assessment, I will ask the students to write a brief narrative (one page long) about an emotional time in their life. When they finish the narrative they will be asked to write a letter to someone who was a part of the emotional event they wrote about in their narrative. Students will have to focus on their role as a writer - the more private, personal writing of a narrative versus the more direct, perhaps even confrontational tone of the letter. Below are the quotes from the letter that will be used in our discussion of the *Narrative*.

"...[Y]on bright sun beheld me a slave - a poor, degraded chattel - trembling at the sound of your voice, lamenting that I was a man, and wishing myself a brute." ²⁵ This quote will be coupled with a quote from the *Narrative*: "I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without remedy. I envied my fellow slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast." ²⁶

Regarding his realization of his circumstances as a young slave, he states in his letter, "I heard some of the old slaves talking of their parents having been sold from Africa by white men, and were sold here as slaves. The whole mystery was solved at once...made me for the first time acquainted with the fact, that there were free States as well as slave states. From that time, I resolved that I would some day run away." ²⁷ This quote from the *Narrative* best echoes that sentiment: "The readings of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery...The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers." ²⁸

"You remember when I used to make seven or eight, or even nine dollars a week in Baltimore, you would take every cent of it from me every Saturday night, saying that I belonged to you, and my earnings also." The part in the *Narrative* when he discusses "earning his time" is viewed as a climax to some of my students. This is when Douglass decides that he will attempt to run away again, leaving the reader assured that he will succeed this time because he is so much closer to free states.

In reference to his voice as an abolitionist, he speaks of it in a more humble manner in the *Narrative* than he does in the letter, where he speaks with great authority. "I intend to make use of you as a weapon with which to assail the system of slavery - as a means of concentrating public attention on the system, and deepening their horror of trafficking in the souls and bodies of men. I shall make use of you as a means of exposing the character of the American church and clergy - and as a means of bringing this guilty nation with yourself to repentance. ²⁹ The idea of using men is reversed here; Douglass was now using Thomas Auld to teach the world about the injustices of slavery. In this letter Douglass again addressed the private man and the public audience.

I think it will be interesting to compare the part of the *Narrative* (Chapter X) when Douglass and several other slaves try to escape, only to be caught by their master, to this excerpt from the letter. Students can see how angry Douglass feels toward Thomas Auld and how his voice differs from the voice they hear in the *Narrative*. "I remember the chain, the gag, the bloody whip...[you] caused this right hand, with which I am now penning this letter, to be closely tied to my left, and my person dragged like a beast in the market... for the alleged crime of intending to escape from your possession. At this moment, you are probably the guilty holder of at least three of my own dear sisters, and my only brother in bondage." ³⁰ Here, Douglass is not only commenting on his freedom, but the act of writing the letter is itself an affirmation of his emancipation. He is "out of man's hand," emancipated from Thomas Auld in the greatest sense of the word.

When I ask my students what part of the book stands out in their mind, many students reference the part

when his grandmother is cast to the woods to live the rest of her life alone, without anyone to care for her. This part upsets Douglass, and my students, because she has given her whole life to caring for the slave children, as well as the master's children, only to be tossed aside when she is no longer an able-bodied worker. In his letter, Douglass addresses Thomas Auld about this: "...my dear old grandmother, whom you turned out like an old horse, to die in the woods - is she still alive? Write and let me know all about them [his siblings too]. If my grandmother be still alive, she is of no service of you, for by this time she must be nearly eighty years old...send her to me at Rochester, or bring her to Philadelphia, and it shall be the crowning happiness of my life to take care of her in her old age." ³¹ The fact that Douglass was asking Auld to write back and to send his grandmother to him in New York is a bold move for a former escaped slave and it cannot be ignored. Remember that this letter was published in the *Liberator*, so imagine the embarrassment of Auld as he is almost being mocked and dared by Douglass as he asks Auld to send his grandmother to him.

Speech Delivery- The Abolitionist and Orator

This segment of the unit will focus on how to address different audiences in one's writing. Students have already examined rhetorical devices used in an autobiography and letters, and will now be able to analyze how voice may differ in another genre - speeches. Students will be asked: *In what ways is a speech different than an autobiography? How does a letter, either public or private, differ from a speech? Where is it easier to hide behind a "mask," in a narrative, letter, or speech?* My students are often interested in Douglass's role as a writer and an activist in the Abolition Movement, which is only briefly discussed in the last few sentences of the *Narrative*. This unit will enable them to follow his journey through the letter to Thomas Auld, which provides a great contrast to Douglass's own mild description of his new role as abolitionist and orator at the end of the book.

Douglass states in the *Narrative*: "I felt strongly urged to speak, and was at the same time much urged...It was a severe cross, and I took it up reluctantly. The truth was, I felt myself a slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down." ³² In order for Frederick Douglass to establish a rapport with his audience he had to address his place in society - a former slave amongst white abolitionists. I will ask students which characteristic of rhetoric was used here. They will be able to pinpoint ethos, as Douglass discusses his uneasiness in speaking to the white crown, lending to his credibility as the speaker. ³³ In order to build credibility as a reliable speaker, one must connect to his audience by building a trustworthy relationship. It is important to note to students that although Douglass stated, "I felt myself a slave," he is not viewing himself as inferior to his audience; he is actually using rhetoric to placate his white audience in order to connect with them. Douglass often opened his speeches by downplaying his ability, a common feature in the rhetoric of other African American abolition speakers of his time. ³⁴ This apparent "nonchalance or self-deprecation was a nineteenth-century oratorical convention to establish rapport with his audiences." ³⁵

Before I reveal the reason for his rhetoric stated above, I will ask my students: *What are some possible reasons why would former slaves, men who wanted to persuade others to believe that slavery is inhumane and unjust, portray themselves as inferior to their white audience?* This rhetorical strategy of downplaying one's intellect and skill to appease the audience's *expectations* of the speaker's inadequacy is an example of how African American orators had to essentially wear a mask to placate the prejudices of their white audience. To facilitate this discussion in class, I will ask students: *When have you had to wear a "mask"? In American society, past or present, what groups or individuals had to wear a "mask"? Why? How did that make you feel? How do you think Douglass felt when he had to wear a "mask?"*

Strategies

Think-Pair-Share- In my classroom the desks are paired together because it is extremely important for middle school students to work collaboratively. I have my students read, then I give them a few minutes to complete whatever activity accompanied their reading (journaling, cause/effect chart, fact/opinion chart, multiple-choice questions, short answers, etc.). After they finish their work independently they are required to exchange their answers with their partners. This provides students with the opportunity to share their answers with each other before we discuss them as a class. With all the activities I mentioned above (except the journaling), students can check to make sure they have the same answer. If one student has a different answer (especially to a multiple-choice question), they work together to figure out which one is correct by using evidence they find in the text to support their answer.

RAFT Writing-³⁶ RAFT writing helps students understand their role as a writer, the audience they must address, and provides various forms of writing to assess their knowledge of the content taught in class. The acronym is as follows: R - Role of the writer; A - Audience, to whom are your writing?; F - Format - what form will the writing take?; T - What is the subject of this piece?

I will create a 4-column worksheet (see Appendix I). In the R column I will list 6 names from the *Narrative* (Frederick Douglass, Aunt Hester, Captain Anthony, Harriet Bailey, Mr. Plummer, Lloyd's Ned - all names are from Chapter I). In the A column, I will list the different audiences for whom the piece may be written (a family member, slave master, overseer, fellow slave, mother to son, son to mother, themselves). The F column will contain the different forms of writing they can produce (complaint, confession, eulogy, journal, letter, pamphlet, photo essay, sermon, speech, wanted poster, poem, wedding vows, Bill of Sale, narrative, song - just to name a few). The fourth column will contain a list of topics students can select (sundering of slave baby and mother, whippings, slave "laws" such as not teaching a slave to read or write, depriving them of knowledge of their age, internal conflicts surrounding rape of slave women, effects of slavery on children, etc.). The great part of this activity is that the students will be able to select one choice from each column. They have to take into consideration what form will best suit the names listed in the first column. The students will then have to complete a writing assignment of their choice. By using this activity, I will be able to assess their understanding of the content as well as begin teaching them about voice.

Double-Journal Entry - For this activity, students will create a "T" chart in their notebooks. In the first column they will write "Quote" and in the second column "Journal Response." In the first column, I will write on the board a quote from the text we are reading that day, or that we read the day before. This could be used as a warm-up activity, or as a formative assessment of their classwork. They will copy the quote down in the first column, and underneath it they re-write the quote in their own words. If they have trouble understanding the language of the quote the activity will be useless. I will walk around the room to make sure all their "translations" are correct so their second task is not done incorrectly. Next, students will write a response to the quote. Sometimes I will write a question on the board to help them begin their journal, but as the unit progresses, they will be capable of coming up with their responses without the guidance of my prompts.

Activities

1) This writing assignment will serve as one of the culminating activities of the unit. Students will have to write a speech on a topic that they feel passionately about. They will have to employ the rhetorical strategies taught throughout the unit. For example, they must use rhetorical devices that demonstrate credibility as well as personality - *ethos, pathos, logos and persona*. The goal of this assignment is to see how well the students can develop their own voice in writing.

2) We will read and study "Negro Speaks of Rivers," a poem by Langston Hughes. This poem takes the reader on a journey throughout time through a collective voice "speaker." I will begin this activity by teaching a mini lesson on the "imagining ear" mini-lesson. To introduce the "imagining ear" I will again refer to Dr. Hammer's suggestion that everything we read is behind a door. Students will read:

One-two-three-go!

No good! Come back - come back.

Haslam go down there and make those kids get out

of the track. ³⁷

After reading this short dialogue I will ask how many voices the students hear, and whose they are. One? Two? Three? Since the students are seeing the actions surrounding the dialogue and simply reading the words from the page they have to imagine what the words sound like. Some students may hear a coach yelling at his runners. Others might hear a coach, runners and a mother shouting for her kids to return home. This activity will help students recognize how what we hear and what we read can be interpreted very differently. When they read "Negro Speaks of Rivers" I want them to concentrate on the voices they hear in the poem. Students will be introduced to the collective voice in this poem. I will ask the students: *What physical/psychological journey has the speaker gone on? What voices do you hear in this poem?* Students will then write a poem in which they can explore getting the reader to use his "imagining ear" when reading it aloud. Students may use a collective voice or an individual voice as their speaker.

3) Students will compare and contrast Douglass's speech delivered in 1852 in Rochester, NY regarding the hypocrisy of America's celebration of July 4th to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Students will create a Venn Diagram and will work collaboratively with a partner to record the similarities and differences of the two speeches. Students will be guided to focus on tone, rhetorical strategies, and content. The in-class extension of the activity will be to create a poster that represents the sentiments of both speeches, highlighting the differences of both orators as well as the similar calls-to-action delivered.

Bibliography

Teacher Resources

Bacon, Jacqueline. *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002.

This is a very comprehensive guide to the role of rhetoric in the Abolition Movement. There was so much information in this book I had a difficult time picking and choosing just which facts to include in my unit without overwhelming my students. I will definitely use this book in the future and recommend it to any U.S. History teacher.

Documenting the American South. "Frederick Douglass: 1818-1895. The University Library: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/bio.html> (accessed July 8, 2008).

This website provides information about Douglass's influence on the Abolition Movement in basic terms. It is an easy read and could possibly be supplemented as a student reading assignment.

Elbow, Peter, ed. *Landmark Essays on Voice and Writing*. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1994.

Of all the research I did for this unit, this book was the most difficult and most rewarding to read. Not only did it help me write my unit, it also taught me how to approach teaching the very abstract concept of voice in a concrete way. Many of the activities listed throughout the unit are based on the essays in this book.

Frost, Robert. *Collected Poems, Prose and Plays*. NY: Library of America, 1995.

This passage proved to be very enlightening in the development of my unit. I highly recommend Frost's passage "The Imagining Ear" in this collection of writing to any English teacher. It will provide you and your students with a deeper understanding of how to think about voice.

Gibson, Donald B. "Reconciling Public and Private in Frederick Douglass's Narrative," *American Literature*, Vol. 57, No. 4: December, 1985. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2926352?seq=21> (accessed July 12, 2008)

This source was not one of the most useful websites I found; however, it provided some useful historical information necessary in teaching one type of rhetorical strategy used by Douglass.

Instructional Strategies Online. "What is Raft," Saskatoon Public Schools, 2004-2008. <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/raft/> (accessed July 12, 2008).

This website was extremely useful to me. It explained the RAFT writing process thoroughly and it also provided many worksheets that can be used in class. It can be used in any classroom because the writing options are so varied.

Student Resources

American Speeches: Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton. NY: Library of America, 2006. (Martin Luther King Jr.'s Address to the March on Washington, August 28, 1963.)

This book contains King's "I Have a Dream Speech." Although this speech is widely available on the internet, this book also contains several speeches from orators in the Abolition Movement such as Sojourner Truth and Abraham Lincoln. They are great examples of

different types of voice and showcase a realm of rhetorical strategies within the many speeches.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group, 1997.

This is the main focus of the unit. Each student will have a class set copy of the book to read during class. I recommend reading the book during class because of the difficult vocabulary.

Foner, Phillip. "Frederick Douglass, September 3, 1848, Letter to Thomas Auld," *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999. www.yale.edu/glc/archive/1121.htm (accessed July 6, 2008).

This website has a comprehensive collection of Douglass's speeches and letters. It includes the following documents used in my unit: the letter to Thomas Auld that was published in the *Liberator*; a letter to Thurlow Weed (who secured Douglass's passage aboard a ship to Britain); a letter to William White (an abolitionist); a speech delivered in Rochester, NY in 1852 regarding the hypocrisy of celebrating July 4th; a speech delivered in April 1846 in Britain regarding their involvement in the Abolition Movement; a speech delivered in October 1845 regarding his mission to Great Britain that will be compared to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech." There are many other primary documents accessible through this useful website.

Hughes, Langston. "Negro Speaks of Rivers."

This poem can be found by searching the title or author on the internet. I will give each student a copy of this poem. It is used in one of my activities listed at the end of the unit.

Materials

Class set of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*

Highlighters

Markers, colored pencils, crayons

DVD player

CD player

LCD projector (for audio recordings on the internet)

Sentence strips

Poster board/paper

Appendix I

RAFT Writing Assignment

R - Role of the writer

A - Audience

F - Format

T - Topic

Directions: Students select one from each column. This allows them to demonstrate their knowledge of the content as well as their understanding of the connection between speaker, audience and topic.

R	A	F	T
Frederick Douglass	Slave master	Wanted ad	Separation of mother and child
Aunt Hester	Overseer	Letter	Whippings
Demby	Parent/child or Child/parent	Eulogy	Dehumanization of slaves
Captain Anthony	Newspaper	Poem	Role of overseer
Colonel Lloyd	Slaves	Speech	Abolition

Notes

1. Documenting the American South. "Frederick Douglass: 1818-1895. ,(The University Library: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/bio.html> (accessed July 8, 2008).

2. Jacqueline Bacon. *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition*. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002): 9.

3. Dr. Burkhard Henke, Davidson College, July 2008

4. Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. (New York, NY: The Penguin Group, 1997): 22.

5. Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth*, 25.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Douglass, *Narrative*, 22.

9. Ibid, 66.

10. Ibid, 19.

11. Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth*, 65.

12. Ibid, 65.

13. Ibid, 66.
14. Peter Elbow. *Landmark Essays on Voice and Writing*. (Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1994): 86.
15. Elbow, *Landmark Essays*, 87.
16. Ibid, 90.
17. Bacon, *May the Humblest Stand Forth*, 1.
18. Robert Frost. *Collected Poems, Prose and Plays*. (NY: Library of America, 1995): 664.
19. Dr. Langdon Hammer, Yale University, July 2008.
20. Frost, *Collected Poems*, 687.
21. Bacon, *May the Humblest Stand Forth*, 1.
22. Ibid, 63.
23. Douglass, *Narrative*, 74.
24. Donald B. Gibson. "Reconciling Public and Private in Frederick Douglass's Narrative," *American Literature*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (December, 1985), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2926352?seq=21> (accessed July 12, 2008): 552.
25. Phillip Foner. "Frederick Douglass, September 3, 1848, Letter to Thomas Auld," *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999).
26. Douglass, *Narrative*, 53.
27. Foner, "Frederick Douglass."
28. Douglass, *Narrative*, 53.
29. Foner, "Frederick Douglass."
30. Foner, "Frederick Douglass."
31. Foner, "Frederick Douglass."
32. Douglass, *Narrative*, 117.
33. Elbow, *Landmark Essays*, 87.
34. Bacon, *May the Humblest Stand Forth*, 65.
35. Ibid.
36. *Instructional Strategies Online*. "What is Raft," (Saskatoon Public Schools, 2004-2008), <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/raft/> (accessed July 12, 2008).

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