



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

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by Tim Smith

### **Introduction**

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I consider it a daunting task to teach the existence of human bondage (slavery) in the United States to eighth-grade junior high school students. While I believe it is critical to examine slavery in the United States from multiple cultural and historical perspectives, my students do not. For the most part, my students go straight to the point that slavery was, and is, socially and morally abhorrent, and that is that. While I agree with their opinion, I need them to argue and validate their claims in a more substantial way. I need them to prove the facts regarding the complex nature of the issue. For them to grasp the division within the United States, more is required, much more than from a textbook alone. My students need to grasp how the divergent beliefs that slavery was either just or unjust depended mostly upon points of view or points on a map. An expanded methodology is necessary due to the complexity of the slavery issue. Selections from two premiere abolition narratives, the highly successful *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself in 1845* and the blockbuster *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly* by Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1853 form the basis for this curriculum unit. They offer a foundation for my students' understanding of the issue of slavery in America.

### **Background**

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I teach U. S. History to young students who range from 13 to 16 years of age. A percentage of these will be repeating the 8th grade due to failing grades. The basic demographic breakdown for these students is 35% African-American, 26% Hispanic, 21% white. Like students in other low-income schools and poverty-laced school districts, many of my students are part of single-parent households with limited income. Many of my students must also care for younger siblings, a duty that takes away their ability to focus on homework or what they learned at school during the day. A small number of my students are involved in gang activities. All of these issues make school a refuge, a safe place to interact with friends outside of their complicated living conditions, not a place to focus on learning.

Complicating learning even further, the vast majority of my students who can read are limited in their comprehension, with many reading at four to five grade levels below 8th grade. To fulfill state mandates for U. S. History, I must introduce my struggling reading students to complex historical and informational texts. It is a genuine struggle to engage and reach my students with the necessary information they need to complete the state requirements.

## Rationale

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I contend that a closer examination of content can include non-fiction and fiction texts along with the necessary historical information that provides their context for study. I believe my students will engage in the discussion to a much greater degree than they do now. I believe their increased engagement will also answer the question posed in my 2016 Yale National Initiative Intensive Session Seminar Topic: Why Literature Matters. I believe literature matters in regards to engagement and instruction in my U.S. History classroom. Why literature? Even though I am not required to do so as part of my curriculum, I feel it is imperative that I offer additional access to narrative works to my students. I also want to convince my Language Arts colleagues that we can work across our curriculum to immerse our students in texts that teach them critical learning skills.

The examination of how and why differing geographical, political, economic, and cultural attitudes toward slavery did or did not change over time is critical as well. Each aspect was a key ingredient in leading the country to the cataclysmic event known as the American Civil War. The subsequent abolition of slavery in the United States depended on human action. These actions were not only peaceful in the form of abolitionist newspapers and speeches, but eventually resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of American lives during the Civil War.

Understanding the big picture regarding slavery in the United States takes time, developing over and through several units of study. Even with this methodology, my experience has been that my students still have a difficult time understanding why slavery existed in America. The examination of historical content over why slavery existed in the United States only leads to further questioning by my students, a response that is an excellent thing. Questions like: Why did the framers of the U.S. Constitution allow slavery to continue, especially after Thomas Jefferson stated in the Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal." Students also ask questions like: "How did it end?" "What caused the eventual end to slavery?" "Who participated in that cause?" Such questions quickly link to Oklahoma state literacy standards focusing on the citation of textual evidence, an author's point of view, distinguishing between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

To answer the questions posed above, and to engage and instruct my class on the nature of slavery in America, I feel my students need to understand the complexity of the slavery issue in the United States. They need literature, not only informational text. My students need to engage in both informational and narrative texts to understand the depth of American history. The study of U. S. History need not be a memorization of names, dates, places, and events. Or a dry explanation of history. I feel my argument for including slave narratives in U. S. History classes is compelling. If the slave narrative is considered to be literature, which I feel it is, then the first-person accounts of slavery only add to the study of U.S. history by offering a primary source within several units of content study. The personal account of slavery concretely describes how the life

of the slave weaves itself into the fabric of American history.

That is my plan with this curriculum unit. Students need to connect each seemingly independent historical event critically within the full American story. The use of slave narrative is not only the story of the Abolition Movement. Their story connects vividly throughout the historical examination of our nation, from the past to the present. It is my hope that my students will connect it with their future as well.

## Objectives

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My first objective is to help my students understand that what they are studying is relevant to their lives and then introduce them to the idea that previously lived lives can teach them how to live life in the present. To convince my students that the past, their present, and their future connect through the study of U.S. History is essential. I think adding a layer of instruction using key literary texts is critical for them to gain a greater understanding of the issue.

Using selected readings from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Life Among the Lowly* by Harriet Beecher Stowe will offer my students an opportunity to gain an understanding of primary and secondary sources as both could be considered primary sources. The readings will also give them the background they need to understand the movement toward ending slavery in the United States.

My second objective is to compare and contrast both works in the context of the period they were printed. I will evaluate how they were both received by the public. Were these works of literature held to different standards because they dealt with the issue of slavery? If so, why?

## Historical Content

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### Slavery in America during the early 1800's

The silent voice of the slave roars in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass. Entitled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* and published in 1846, his work of literature places his name and life in the forefront of the Abolitionist cause. Six years later a female writer named Harriet Beecher Stowe will spread the Abolitionist message throughout the United States and around the world with her fictional tale concerning the horrors of slavery.

These two works hold significant places in the movement to abolish slavery. The sales of the two reach best-seller proportions and educate a critical mass of complacent citizens about the horrors of slavery. As in most things, timing is everything. To understand why literature matters in the fight to end slavery, a necessarily brief examination of key events will take place in this section of my curriculum unit. It will examine the ingenious method created to help slaves escape slavery called the "Underground Railroad." The section will also explore the South's desire to expand slavery after the Mexican-American War in 1848 and how an inflamed sectional view of individual and state constitutional rights ignites a firestorm of agitation in both the

North and the South. In response, the creation of a new political party takes place, leading to the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. Finally, and most significantly, the historical content section will explore how the abolitionist cause explodes in righteous indignation after the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Fugitive Slave Act plays perhaps the critical role in Harriet Beecher Stowe's creation and publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, inciting her to combine her tragic circumstance with those of a fugitive slave.

In the North, the book galvanizes support against the act and for abolition. In the South, cries of lies and deceit concerning the actual nature of slavery is loudly heard. On the horizon, dark clouds form, and literature will play a crucial role in the gathering storm. The U.S. Constitution ended the importation of slaves in 1808. While the northern states saw slavery dissolve over the course of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the South things were much different. In fact, things had become worse due to the use of Eli Whitney's invention. Short for the cotton engine, Whitney's "cotton gin" made the process of removing seeds from raw cotton much easier and faster than it had been and it increased yield. As the demand for cotton grows, the crop is essential to the southern economy. The South is prospering greatly from cotton, so the demand for slaves is increasing as well. So is the demand for more land. The South's unyielding appetite for land will play a critical role in the growth in sectional tensions between both North and South.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Movement to End Slavery Starts in the North**

In 1821, Quaker Benjamin Lundy founded a newspaper in Ohio in called the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. In it, he stated that " "I heard the wail of the captive, I felt his pang of distress, and the iron entered my soul."<sup>2</sup> By the end of the decade, the abolitionist movement was a complete departure from the anti-slavery position of advocating a gradual end to slavery. Abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison came to the conclusion that his soul was in danger by accepting "gradualism." Garrison forcefully states "I am in earnest, I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard!" regarding immediate emancipation for those enslaved. Along with his partner Isaac Knapp, Garrison starts printing the abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, on January 1, 1831. Abolitionist newspapers and speeches against slavery were the main avenues for proclaiming the goals of the movement. As a result, the American Anti-Slavery Society, started in 1832, grew to over 1,000 local branches by 1838.<sup>3</sup>

The abolitionist movement follows Garrison's lead and finds acceptance in the North. In the South, however, abolitionists are demonized. Newspapers and speeches by leading abolitionists begin the march toward emancipation. By the 1840's millions of Americans will read about the evils of slavery.

### **In the East: The Underground Railroad**

The "Underground Railroad" establishes secret routes for slaves to escape from the slave-holding South into the North, where abolitionists would assist and protect the fugitives. The Underground Railroad creates secret codes for the administration of the escape routes, times for flight and the location of "safe houses." Utilizing railroad terminology such as "conductor," "station," and "cargo," escaping slaves have an established passage to freedom. The Underground Railroad helps thousands of slaves escape and creates a significant amount of anger and anxiety in slave owners. The success of the Underground Railroad is one of the reasons the South pushes for more stringent laws dealing with escaping slaves in the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.<sup>4</sup>

### **In the West: Manifest Destiny**

In 1846, a border war broke out between Mexico and the United States after the annexation of Texas in 1845.

Many in Congress consider the war to be a “land grab,” including a young representative from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln. The people support President James K. Polk’s declaration of war. As a result, the United States gains significant territory after the Treaty of Hidalgo and the Mexican Cession of territory that encompasses much of the current states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California. In the Pacific Northwest, Britain signs over land that will become Oregon and Washington. “Manifest Destiny” or the irresistible expansion of the United States from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean is achieved. The acquisition of the vast new territory begs two major questions: What to do with the land, and would the new territories be slave or free?

### **The Compromise of 1850**

Representative David Wilmot of Pennsylvania offers a plan to keep slavery out of the new western territories. Called the Wilmot Proviso, the plan faces stiff opposition in the south, increasing sectional tension. Southerner John C. Calhoun offers his plan, arguing that all the newly acquired territories should be open to slavery. The clash among anti-slavery proponents (slavery ended over time, possibly even relocating slaves to Africa) Abolitionists (slavery ended immediately) and the Slave Power (politically powerful class in the South determined to keep and expand slavery in the United States) is reaching unprecedented levels. Secessionists in the South start calling for slave-holding states to leave the Union. To stop the movement to split the Union the Compromise of 1850 passes to keep the South placated. Abolitionists are horrified at what this means for their cause. (16:1)

Under the terms of the compromise, California will enter the United States as a free state, keeping the balance of power between Free and Slave States in the Senate. All other new territories formed from the Compromise are open to slavery. For the Abolitionist cause, this isn’t the worst part. The new Fugitive Slave Act makes it a penalty, punishable by fine or incarceration, for any citizen of the United States, to fail to assist in the capture of a fugitive slave! All the work, all the toil, trying to end slavery immediately in the United States has just been made insignificant, or so it seems.

### **Why Literature Matters: Is it true? Telling the Slaves' Story**

I would argue that it makes perfect sense for the Abolitionist Movement to enlist former slaves to speak for it, either through speech or the written word. Limited education stood in the way, however. But it was not impossible for slaves to overcome this limitation. From the PBS series “Slavery and the Making of America” explains “During the nineteenth century, former slaves published narratives detailing their experiences in bondage. Although some of these were dictated, others were written by ex-slaves. With these narratives, blacks had found a way to generate support for abolitionism, especially among their large Northern readership.”<sup>5</sup> If slave narratives serve as “authentic first person accounts of the conditions of slavery,” then, of course, they found their following within the abolition movement.<sup>6</sup> A critical question for Abolitionists then was can slave-narratives reach a broader audience? Will the narratives be flexible enough to convince readers of the evils of slavery without losing validity?

However, it is critical for the teacher to choose a slave narrative wisely. According to James Olney’s essay “I Was Born’: Slave Narratives as Autobiography and as Literature,” there are dozens from which to choose.<sup>7</sup> Olney also argues that along with the number, there is also the problem of the sheer repetition of the structure of the slave narrative or what Olney calls the “convention” embedded within the slave narrative.<sup>8</sup> Olney cites Douglass’ *Narrative* as not only the best representative of the slave narrative “convention,” but also as one “transcending” the model as well. Follow the “conventions,” Olney infers, and the slave author is

telling the truth. Go outside the prescribed outline and use descriptive language or imagination and then slave narrative could be said to be a lie. Make the slave narrative a lie, and the whole foundation that rests on the credibility of the former slave falls apart. If the foundation falls apart, then I would argue that the Abolition Movement disintegrates as well. When the Abolition Movement started using slave narratives to support its argument to end slavery immediately, it started walking a fine line. Luckily for the Abolition Movement, it had Frederick Douglass.

The critical event for Douglass, Olney emphasizes, is the role of literacy in his life. Like all things in life for a slave, learning to read did not come easily for Douglass, as was the case for many slaves. Again, as “Slavery and the Making of America”:

In both the pre-abolition North and the antebellum South, labor demands made it difficult for slave children to engage in extensive learning or to attend school consistently. Also, white teachers usually offered restricted curricula deemed appropriate for slaves. Despite such impediments, enslaved people and free blacks demonstrated their determination and ability to learn as well as an understanding of the opportunities opened up by education.

Indeed. Frederick Douglass understands the role literacy will play in his life. The desire to learn how to read consumes Douglass. The tragic irony for Douglass is once he does learn how to read, he is enslaved in both body and soul. His ability to think and reason about his condition torments him. His desire for freedom, for the capacity to rise above being a “beast of burden,”<sup>9</sup> leads him to escape his bondage.

### **Why Literature Matters: “A Silver Trump of Freedom Rouses the Soul ”<sup>10</sup>**

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself.*

In her 2003 Yale Teacher Initiative Curriculum Unit, Nicole Schubert states this about Frederick Douglass:

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.<sup>11</sup>

However, prejudice by Abolition leaders may not be what is limiting Douglass's oratory. It could also be their concern with audiences' acceptance of Douglass as a former slave. William Lloyd Garrison, in his introduction to the *Narrative*, states Douglass writes "without help and in his own hand."<sup>12</sup> While the belief that Douglass was indeed a former slave was important to the Abolitionist Movement, Douglass uses his *Narrative* to "convince Americans to dismantle slavery."<sup>13</sup>

*"The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and American Slave, Written by Himself"* sold over 4,500 copies in the first four months of publication, outstanding for a written work. As an autobiography, it is of significant value to the U.S. History classroom as it is a primary source document. If *Narrative* is real due to acceptance that Douglass's life was as he said it was, then what can one say about a work of fiction like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Is it real as well?

### **Why Literature Matters: "A Fair Representation of Slavery."<sup>14</sup>**

*Uncle Tom's Cabin: Or Life Among the Lowly* by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Frederick Douglass had survived the whip, the despair, the escape, and now was determined to forge ahead and finish the work of emancipation for all slaves. His *Narrative...Written by Himself*, an escaped and former slave had struck a significant chord within the Abolition Movement and throughout the North.

The nation, however, was changing quickly. Over the next seven years, the United States would go to war against Mexico, gaining vast new land in the west, especially the mineral-rich territory of California. Manifest Destiny is confirmed. However, the sectional differences between North and South would rise to new heights. Only the Compromise of 1850 could keep the country from splitting in two. But at a price, especially for slaves. The slave power seemingly had won, and the Abolition Movement apparently had lost. The Underground Railroad was losing steam due to the increased strength of the Fugitive Slave Act. Also, the Fugitive Slave Law "makes all a party to slavery, suspends due process, and threatens any who aided fugitive slaves with onerous fines and prison."<sup>15</sup> Something entirely unexpected and extraordinary happens when Harriet Beecher Stowe "picks up her pen [and] writes something that made the whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is."<sup>16</sup>

A work of literature, fiction at that, reverses the falling tide for the Abolition Movement and opens doors to a public that knew about the horrors of slavery from previous autobiographical and Abolitionist works but had lacked emotional ties to the plight of the enslaved. Would *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in the words of Stephen Railton, "help black slaves and please white readers?"<sup>17</sup> Just like the writing of slave narratives, however, Harriet Beecher Stowe must walk a line to offer a work that passes close inspection by a critical public. Is the work a "fair representation of slavery?"<sup>18</sup> Stowe has to work very hard to answer this question in the affirmative.

### **Overcoming Bias Against Fiction**

Fiction is considered to be "an inferior literary form" and even dangerous during mid-1800's America.<sup>19</sup> Fiction

is dangerous because it limits critical thinking skills, plays on emotions, and wastes time that could be devoted to “elevated or purposeful” reading.<sup>20</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe overcomes the bias against fiction, at least in popular opinion, by writing a work that offers the emotional as well as the religious focus necessary for widespread introspection on the subject of slavery. The impact of the work cannot be understated.

In her work *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and the Reading Revolution: Race, Literacy, Childhood, and Fiction, 1851-1911*, Barbara Hochman states:

In 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was not only a novel that represented slavery as a moral and political atrocity; it was also an unprecedented publishing phenomenon. White Northerners wept and could not put the book down; they neglected work and other obligations to finish it. Southerners often went to some lengths to obtain the novel, and read it surreptitiously. Abolitionists considered the tale a significant asset, while Southern reviews and anti-Tom narratives expressed outrage.<sup>21</sup>

Clearly, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* struck nerves within the public that previous slave narratives did not. Stowe, a female fiction writer, created a literary work that “was epic in scope, bold in subject, realistic in detail, and powerful in commitment to a humanitarian cause.”<sup>22</sup> With all the success, Stowe still found it necessary to compile a primary source work to differentiate fact from fiction in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In 1853 Stowe offered *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Presenting the Original Facts and Documents Upon Which the Story is Founded. Together with Collaborative Statements Verifying The Truth of the Work*. Stowe finds all this necessary to prove the work is accurate and acceptable on closer inspection. Like Olney’s description of the slave narrative outline, “the Key” must present “facts and documents” as well as “corroborative statements” to “prove” that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is an accurate portrayal of slavery. In fact, Katherine Kane in *Connecticut Explored* argues that *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* does more than prove that the basis of the work is accurate. She argues that her research points to the fact Abraham Lincoln visited the Library of Congress and “checked out *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* on June 18, 1862, and returned on July 29 of that same year.<sup>23</sup> Lincoln was writing the *Emancipation Proclamation* during that same period. Kane asks the question: Did *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* play a role in Lincoln’s writing of the *Emancipation Proclamation*? Her argument certainly is an intriguing one, and it offers another concrete example of “why literature matters.”

## Conclusion

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Literature matters but irony abounds in the publication of these two works. An autobiographical work on the horrors of slavery must not use “descriptive language or imagination” or the work “is a lie.” A work of fiction necessarily uses “imagination” and must prove that the words in the work are “facts,” or the work is a “lie.” These two great works of literature passed initial inspection during their time so that they could greatly impact social, political, and military outcomes leading to the abolition of slavery.



For the benefit of our students, the ability to differentiate between fact and fiction or primary and secondary sources, are essential and necessary skills. Making a claim and backing it up with evidence are also core competencies, whether we use the term “Common Core” or not. As a teacher in a U.S. History classroom, I use literature to buttress my curriculum by finding it necessary, beneficial, and personally for me, incredibly rewarding.

## Classroom Activities

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### Time Line

Students will create a historical timeline showing the significant dates and events briefly summarized in the Historical Content Section. They will use the timeline to analyze events from 1820-1853 to grasp the significance of those events within the Abolition Movement.

### Venn and Compare/Contrast Diagrams

To compare and contrast selections of the focus narratives, students will use various graphic organizers such as Venn and Compare/Contrast diagrams. Utilization of the graphic organizers will assist in the differentiation of information for struggling readers and English Language Learners (ELL). Also, a good number of my students are several Lexiles below grade level in reading, so graphic organizers work particularly well for them.

## Teaching Strategies

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The reading challenges increase considerably when Oklahoma State Standards require my struggling students to read and comprehend the meaning of historical texts like the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, George Washington’s Farewell Address, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address. My students also examine the differences between primary and secondary source material. They have to determine the central ideas or information of the sources, accurately summarize the source distinct from their prior interpretation or opinion, and then I require a cited five-paragraph argumentative essay to display the understanding of the material. To do this, they will need some help in analyzing the text.

### Teaching Literacy through History<sup>24</sup>

One strategy I use is the Gilder-Lehrman Institute for American History “Teaching Literacy Through History” program that helps students comprehend complex texts. The Gilder-Lehrman Institute acted proactively when Common Core standards started being the norm and created a program that would assist social studies teachers with teaching literacy through their history instruction. The TLH program strategy allows me “chunk” or segment reading selections to help my struggling readers. The Gilder-Lehrman Institute offers free associate membership for participating schools. An associate member can access the full range of “TLTH”

strategies and other extremely valuable sources of history and literacy instruction. The last critical step is citing the texts in the appropriate manner.

### **The DBQ Project.**<sup>25</sup>

DBQ stands for “Document-Based Question” which bases a question on selected texts or documents. The DBQ Project offers a five paragraph essay writing strategy that contains graphic organizers and primary and secondary sources on U. S. History topics and essential questions that work for both elementary and secondary classrooms. Their use of graphic organizers works well for both “on level” and struggling readers.

## **Resources**

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1. Slave Narrative Convention Outline by James Olney<sup>26</sup>

“The conventions for slave narratives were so early and so firmly established that one can imagine a sort of master outline drawn from the great narratives and guiding the lesser ones.

2. Baily, Tim. “Teaching with Documents: Using Primary Sources in the Classroom,” *Teaching Literacy through History*. Gilder-Lehman Institute of American History. 2016

3. Brady, Charles, and Philip Roden. *Mini-Q's in American History. Vol 1* 2013.

## **Appendix**

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### **“The Auction Block” Excerpts**

... In a very short time after I went to live at Baltimore, my old m\*\*\*\*\* youngest son Richard died; and in about three years and six months after his death, my old m\*\*\*\*\*, Captain Anthony, died, leaving only his son, Andrew, and daughter, Lucretia, to share his estate. He died while on a visit to see his daughter at Hillsborough. Cut off thus unexpectedly, he left no will as to the disposal of his property. It was therefore necessary to have a valuation of the property, that it might be equally divided between Mrs. Lucretia and Master Andrew. I was immediately sent for, to be valued with the other property. Here again my feelings rose up in detestation of slavery. I had now a new conception of my degraded condition. Prior to this, I had become, if not insensible to my lot, at least partly so. I left Baltimore with a young heart overborne with sadness, and a soul full of apprehension. I took passage with Captain Rowe, in the schooner Wild Cat, and, after a sail of about twenty-four hours, I found myself near the place of my birth. I had now been absent from it almost, if not quite, five years. I, however, remembered the place very well. I was only about five years old when I left it, to go and live with my old master on Colonel Lloyd’s plantation; so that I was now between ten and eleven years old.

We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all

holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth, maids, and matrons had to undergo the same indelicate inspection. At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder. After the valuation, then came the division. I have no language to express the high excitement and deep anxiety which were felt among us poor slaves during this time. Our fate for life was now to be decided. We had no more voice in that decision than the brutes among whom we were ranked. A single word from the white men was enough, against all our wishes, prayers, and entreaties, to sunder forever the dearest friends, dearest kindred, and strongest ties known to human beings. In addition to the pain of separation, there was the horrid dread of falling into the hands of Master Andrew. He was known to us all as being a most cruel wretch, a common drunkard, who had, by his reckless mismanagement and profligate dissipation, already wasted a large portion of his father's property. We all felt that we might as well be sold at once to the Georgia traders, as to pass into his hands; for we knew that that would be our inevitable condition, a condition held by us all in the utmost horror and dread. I suffered more anxiety than most of my fellow-slaves. I had known what it was to be kindly treated; they had known nothing of the kind. They had seen little or nothing of the world. They were in very deed men and women of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Wisehouse. Kindle Edition. (pp. 39-40)

Beneath a splendid dome were men of all nations, moving to and fro, over the marble pave. On every side of the circular area were little tribunes, or stations, for the use of speakers and auctioneers. Two of these, on opposite sides of the area, were now occupied by brilliant and talented gentlemen, enthusiastically forcing up, in English and French commingled, the bids of connoisseurs in their various wares. A third one, on the other side, still unoccupied, was surrounded by a group, waiting the moment of sale to begin. And here we may recognize the St. Clare servants, Tom, Adolph, and others; and there, too, Susan and Emmeline, awaiting their turn with anxious and dejected faces... [Legree] stopped before Susan and Emmeline. He put out his heavy, dirty hand, and drew the girl towards him; passed it over her neck and bust, felt her arms, looked at her teeth, and then pushed her back against her mother, whose patient face showed the suffering she had been going through at every motion of the hideous stranger. The girl was frightened and began to cry. "Stop that, you minx!" said the salesman; "no whimpering here, the sale is going to begin." And accordingly, the sale was begun.

Adolph was knocked off, at a good sum, to the young gentlemen who had previously stated his intention of buying him; and the other servants of the St. Clare lot went to various bidders. "Now, up with you, boy! D'Ye hear?" said the auctioneer to Tom. Tom stepped upon the block, gave a few anxious looks round; all seemed mingled in a common, indistinct noise, the clatter of the salesman crying off his qualifications in French and English, the quick fire of French and English bids; and almost in a moment came the final thump of the hammer, and the clear ring on the last syllable of the word "dollars," as the auctioneer announced his price, and Tom was made over. He had a master! He was pushed from the block; the short, bullet-headed man seizing him roughly by the shoulder, pushed him to one side, saying, in a harsh voice, "Stand there, you!" Tom hardly realized anything; but still, the bidding went on, rattling, clattering, now French, now English. Down goes the hammer again, Susan is sold! She goes down from the block, stops, looks wistfully back, her daughter stretches her hands towards her. She looks with agony in the face of the man who has bought her, a respectable middle-aged man, of benevolent countenance. "O, M\*\*\*\*, please do buy my daughter!" "I'd like to, but I'm afraid I can't afford it!" said the gentleman, looking, with painful interest, as the young girl mounted the block, and looked around her with a frightened and timid glance.

The blood flushes painfully in her otherwise colorless cheek, her eye has a feverish fire, and her mother

groans to see that she looks more beautiful than she ever saw her before. The auctioneer sees his advantage, and expatiates volubly in mingled French and English, and bids rise in rapid succession. "I'll do anything in reason," said the benevolent-looking gentleman, pressing in and joining with the bids. In a few moments, they have run beyond his purse.

He is silent; the auctioneer grows warmer, but bids gradually drop off. It lies now between an aristocratic old citizen and our bullet-headed acquaintance. The citizen bids for a few turns, contemptuously measuring his opponent; but the bullet-head has the advantage over him, both in obstinacy and concealed length of purse, and the controversy lasts but a moment; the hammer falls, he has got the girl, body, and soul, unless God help her!

Her master is Mr. Legree, who owns a cotton plantation on the Red River. She is pushed along into the same lot with Tom and two other men, and goes off, weeping as she goes. The benevolent gentleman is sorry; but, then, the thing happens every day! One sees girls and mothers crying, at these sales, always! It can't be helped, &c.; and he walks off, with his acquisition, in another direction. Two days after, the lawyer of the Christian firm of B. & Co., New York, send on their money to them. On the reverse of that draft, so obtained, let them write these words of the great Paymaster, to whom they shall make up their account in a future day: "When he maketh inquisition for blood, he forgetteth not the cry of the humble!"

Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Kindle Edition. (pp.199-200)

### **"Education" Excerpts**

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold!

That very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, 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 the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Anything, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound and seen in everything. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Wisehouse Classics Edition) Wisehouse. Kindle Edition. 35-37

A table, somewhat rheumatic in its limbs, was drawn out in front of the fire, and covered with a cloth, displaying cups and saucers of a decidedly brilliant pattern, with other symptoms of an approaching meal. At this table was seated Uncle Tom, Mr. Shelby's best hand, who, as he is to be the hero of our story, we must daguerreotype for our readers. He was a large, broad-chested, powerfully made man, of a full glossy b\*\*\*\*, and a face whose truly African features were characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindness and benevolence. There was something about his whole air self-respecting and dignified, yet united with a confiding and humble simplicity. He was very busily intent at this moment on a slate lying before him, on which he was carefully and slowly endeavoring to accomplish a copy of some letters, in which operation he was overlooked by young M\*\*\*\* George, a smart, bright boy of thirteen, who appeared fully to realize the dignity of his position as instructor. "Not that way, Uncle Tom, not that way," said he, briskly, as Uncle Tom laboriously brought up the tail of his g the wrong side out; "that makes a q, you see." "La sakes, now, does it?" said Uncle Tom, looking with a respectful, admiring air, as his young teacher flourishingly scrawled q's and g's innumerable for his edification; and then, taking the pencil in his big, heavy fingers, he patiently recommenced.

Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Kindle Edition. 14.

## Oklahoma State Literacy and Social Studies Standards

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### PROCESS AND LITERACY SKILLS

Literacy Skills Standard 1: The student will develop and demonstrate Common Core Social Studies reading literacy skills.

#### A. Key Ideas and Details

1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.<sup>2</sup>
2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### B. Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
5. Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
6. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Content Standard 4:

The student will examine the political, economic, social, and geographic transformation of the United States during the early and mid-1800s.

3. Cite specific textual and visual evidence to compare the sectional economic transformations including the concentration of population, manufacturing, shipping, and the development of the railroad system in the North as contrasted with the plantation system, the increased demand for cotton brought about by the invention of the cotton gin, and the reliance on a slave labor system in the South.

4. Analyze points of view from specific textual evidence to describe the variety of African American experiences, both slave and free, including Nat Turner's Rebellion, legal restrictions in the South, and efforts to escape via the Underground Railroad network including Harriet Tubman.

5. Analyze and summarize the significance of the Abolitionist and Women's Suffrage Movements including the influence of the Second Great Awakening and the Declaration of Sentiments, and the leadership of Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth,

Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to the respective movements.

6. Examine the concept of Manifest Destiny as motivation and justification for westward expansion, including the A. Territorial growth resulting from the annexation of Texas, the Mexican Cession, and the Gadsden Purchase, B. Causes of the rapid settlement of Oregon and California, C. Impact upon Native American culture and tribal lands, and D. Growing sectional tensions regarding the expansion of slavery Content Standard 5: The student will analyze the social and political transformation of the United States as a result of the causes, course, and consequences of the American Civil War during the period of 1850 to 1865. 1

1. Cite specific textual and visual evidence to summarize the importance of slavery as a principal cause of increased sectional polarization as seen in the following significant events including A. The Compromise of 1850 as a last attempt to reach a compromise regarding slavery, B. Publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as fuel for anti-slavery sentiments

This curriculum unit substantially connects with the Oklahoma State U.S. History literacy standards, specifically literacy standards A.1, 4, and 6 as they deal with primary and secondary sources and an author's point of view. The curriculum unit also connects significantly with content standards 3.4,5, and 6, as well as 5.1.A and B.

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## End Notes

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2. Ibid. 410.
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