

Slavery and Abolition: The Evolution of Frederick Douglass  
Learning Unit  
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TAH: A More Perfect Union  
September 24, 2009

## Slavery and Abolition: The Evolution of Frederick Douglass Learning Unit

The purpose of this learning unit is to teach US History I students the importance of the Abolitionist Movement and its impact on one of the movement's key essential characters, Frederick Douglass. This learning unit will trace the evolution of Frederick Douglass's political and moral views towards the United States Constitution by focusing on his experiences as a slave and his involvement in the Abolitionist Movement.

At the completion of the learning unit, the students will be able to:

- 1) Describe the hardships and horrors of the slave institution in the United States by reading the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*
- 2) Explain how Frederick Douglass' experiences as a slave impacted his moral view of the United States Constitution by reading the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*
- 3) Describe Frederick Douglass' changing views towards the United States Constitution by reading and taking notes on the article, "*Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass*"
- 4) Formulate a 2 page research paper describing the evolving views of Frederick Douglass toward the United States Constitution and how it dealt with the institution of slavery by completing the assigned readings and participating in the paper writing workshop in class.

This learning unit will take three days to complete on a 55 minute class schedule. This particular learning unit, in this particular time frame, is designed to be implemented at the honors level. This learning unit can certainly be applied at the College Prep 1 or College Prep 2 (remedial) levels, but it is recommended that the instructor modify the timetable as necessary to accommodate various learning levels and needs. During this learning unit, students will be assessed through various means, including homework, primary document analysis, cooperative learning activities, and a culminating assignment in the form of a 2 page paper. Again, each of these lessons can be modified to be taught at all learning levels so that the learning objectives can be completed.

**Title: Launch Lesson: Frederick Douglass and Slavery**

**US History I**

**Date: TBA**

**Expected # of Students: 15 - 25**

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**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Describe the horrors and hardships of the slave institution in the United States by reading the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*
- Explain how the importance of Frederick Douglass' experience as a slave impacted his moral view towards the United States Constitution by reading the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

**Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:**

USI.29 Describe the rapid growth of slavery in the South after 1800 and analyze slave life and resistance on plantations and farms across the South, as well as the impact of the cotton gin on the economics of slavery and Southern agriculture

USI 31. Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism.

**Materials Needed for the Lesson:** *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

**INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)**

**Launch Segment (5 minutes)**

**Motivation/Lead-in:** Who was Frederick Douglass? What was the Abolitionist Movement?

**Pre-requisite Reading Assignment (Assigned 3 days prior to this lesson):** Read the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

**Benefits/Relevance:** The importance of this learning unit is to show students the hardships of slavery and the goals of the Abolitionist Movement through the life and experiences of Frederick Douglass.

### **Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (X minutes)**

Students will take notes on the graphic organizer during the class activity (see below):

- a. Slavery
  - i. Family Life
  - ii. Daily Tasks and Jobs
  - iii. Master/Slave Relations
  - iv. Resistance/Consequences
  
- b. Frederick Douglass
  - i. Impact of slavery on family life
  - ii. Daily Tasks and Jobs
  - iii. Master/Slave Relations
  - iv. Resistance/Consequences

### **Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 50 min.)**

Using the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass* and working with a partner, the students will complete the graphic organizer provided to chart key information about the institution of slavery and how it affected Frederick Douglass' life while in captivity.

### **Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 2 min.)**

“Ticket out the Door”: Based on the information you have written into your graphic organizer and from reading the Douglass' narrative, what do you suppose Douglass' initial view was of the U.S. Constitution and how it dealt with the issue of slavery? (Hint: Think about the issue of morality and slavery)

### **Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice**

- 1) Complete the graphic organizer as needed
  
- 2) “Ticket out the Door” Response Question – In response to the question above, the students should write a brief answer hypothesizing what Douglass's initial view towards the U.S. Constitution were (to be covered in tomorrow's lesson). This should be written in 7 – 8 complete sentences and students should be prepared to discuss their answer tomorrow.

**TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED**

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)  
or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work,  
etc.)]**

**Declarative Knowledge:**

- a. Slavery
  - \* Family Life
  - \* Daily Tasks and Jobs
  - \* Master/Slave Relations
  - \* Resistance/Consequences
  
- b. Frederick Douglass
  - \* Impact of slavery on family life
  - \* Daily Tasks and Jobs
  - \* Master/Slave Relations
  - \* Resistance/Consequences

**Procedural Knowledge:**

- a. Graphic Organizer
- b. “Ticket out the Door”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Per: \_\_\_\_\_

US History I: *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*

**Directions:** Using the *Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*, work with a partner and fill in the appropriate information in the graphic organizer below. For each topic, fill in the information that slaves generally experienced while in captivity (left column) Afterwards, describe Frederick Douglass' experience for that particular topic as well (right column).

Topic	Typical Slave Experience	Frederick Douglass' Experience
Family Life		
Daily Tasks and Jobs		

Master/Slave Relations		
Resistance and Consequences		

**Title: Lesson 2: Frederick Douglass and the U.S. Constitution**  
**US History I**  
**Date: TBA**  
**Expected # of Students: 15 - 25**

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**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Describe Frederick Douglass' changing views towards the United States Constitution by reading and taking notes on the article, "*Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass*" and completing the "Frederick Douglass: Changing Views" worksheet

**Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:**

USI.29 Describe the rapid growth of slavery in the South after 1800 and analyze slave life and resistance on plantations and farms across the South, as well as the impact of the cotton gin on the economics of slavery and Southern agriculture

USI 31. Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism.

**Materials Needed for the Lesson:** Robert Cohen's article: "*Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass*" and the "Frederick Douglass: Changing Views" worksheet

**INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)**  
**Launch Segment (10 minutes)**

**Motivation/Lead-in: Class Discussion:** Based on reading Frederick Douglass's narrative and the homework assignment from last night, what do you think Douglass initially thought about the U.S. Constitution and how it dealt with slavery? Was it an immoral document because of its sponsorship of slavery? Do you agree that its support of slavery was immoral or do you think it provided the means to eventually dismantle the system?

**Benefits/Relevance:** Students will benefit from this lesson by not only learning about Frederick Douglass' role within the Abolitionist Movement and about his changing views towards the U.S. Constitution, but they will also become informed of the conflicting ideologies that existed among the participants within the Abolitionist Movement.

### **Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (10 minutes)**

Students will take notes on the following:

- a. William Lloyd Garrison
- b. Garrisonian View/Moral Suasion
- c. *“The Liberator”*
- d. Relationship with Frederick Douglass
- e. How Garrison influenced Douglass’ initial view of the Constitution

### **Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 30 min.)**

As a class, the students and instructor will analyze the first section of Robert Cohen’s article, *“Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass”*, and begin work on the “Frederick Douglass: Changing Views” Worksheet. During this time period, the instructor should focus discussion questions towards Douglass’ experience as a slave and how his time with William Lloyd Garrison influenced his initial views towards the U.S. Constitution.

### **Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)**

“Ticket out the Door”: As you close the initial discussion on the article and give the students their assignment (see below), pose the question: What might have caused Frederick Douglass to develop a more favorable opinion of the U.S. Constitution and how it dealt with slavery?

### **Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice**

Finish reading the article and the “Frederick Douglass: Changing Views” worksheet for class tomorrow.

## **TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED**

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)**

**or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

### **Declarative Knowledge:**

Students will take notes on the following:

- a. William Lloyd Garrison
- b. Garrisonian View/Moral Suasion
- c. *"The Liberator"*
- d. Relationship towards Frederick Douglass
- e. How Garrison influences Douglass' initial view of the U.S. Constitution

### **Procedural Knowledge:**

- a. Read and analyze the article, *"Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass"*
- b. Complete the "Frederick Douglass: Changing Views" worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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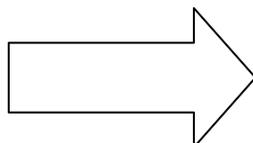
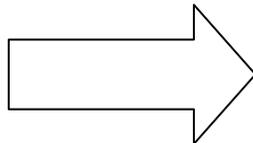
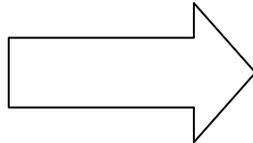
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“Frederick Douglass: Changing Views” Worksheet

Directions: Using Robert Cohen’s article, “*Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass*”, show how Frederick Douglass’ view towards the U.S. Constitution changed during his time as a participant in the Abolitionist Movement. Be sure to cite specific passages within the article in the chart below as you fill in the essential information.

## Frederick Douglass’ Changing View Towards the U.S. Constitution

### Douglass’ Initial View



### Douglass’ Changed View

**Title: Lesson 3: Still a “Covenant with the Devil”?**

**US History I**

**Date: TBA**

**Expected # of Students: 15 - 25**

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**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Explain how Frederick Douglass’ views towards the U.S. Constitution changed by finishing the assigned reading and worksheet
- Discuss how Frederick Douglass’ shift in his views towards the U.S. Constitution affected his relationship with William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists by finishing the reading and worksheet
- Formulate a two page paper analyzing the changing view of Frederick Douglass towards the U.S. Constitution

**Learning Standard(s) to which the lesson refers:**

USI.29 Describe the rapid growth of slavery in the South after 1800 and analyze slave life and resistance on plantations and farms across the South, as well as the impact of the cotton gin on the economics of slavery and Southern agriculture

USI 31. Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism.

**Materials Needed for the Lesson:** Robert Cohen’s article: “*Was the Constitution Pro-slavery? The Changing View of Frederick Douglass*”

**INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES (Means of Presenting)**

**Launch Segment (10 minutes)**

**Motivation/Lead-in: Class Discussion:**

Recap Question: What was Douglass’s initial interpretation of the U.S. Constitution?

Transition Question: What factors caused Douglass’ interpretation of the U.S. Constitution to shift?

**Benefits/Relevance:** This lesson is aimed to help students trace the evolution of Frederick Douglass as an abolitionist. By now, the students will have seen Frederick Douglass transition from the Garrisonian view of

the U.S. Constitution that labeled it as a “Covenant with the Devil” to a more political view that recognizes the components of the Constitution that will allow for the abolition of slavery. More importantly, this lesson shows the true complexity of the Abolitionist Movement and the clash of ideologies that existed among its leaders, such as Garrison and Douglass.

### **Introduce Information/Concepts/Examples (10 minutes)**

Students will take notes on the following:

- a. Political Abolitionism
- b. What led to Douglass to adopt Political Abolitionism?
- c. Specific clauses in the U.S. Constitution that can be used to dismantle slavery

### **Guided Practice and Feedback (Est. time: 30 min.)**

- 1) Handout the paper assignment and review it with the class {see handout}(5 min)
- 2) Using their notes, assigned readings, and the “Frederick Douglass: Changing View” worksheet, students will discuss as class the essential evidence needed to complete the paper assignment (15 min).
- 3) Individually, the students will work on a thesis statement and a structured outline in class, citing specific sources from which the draw from for evidence (10 min)

### **Evaluation/Closure (Est. time: 5 min.)**

Field any questions the students may have and address any concerns.

### **Enrichment/Remediation/Indep. Practice**

Paper will be due in one week from today.

## **TEACHING NOTES/CONTENT TO BE INTRODUCED**

**[Outline of Declarative Knowledge (definitions, names, dates, etc.)**

**or Procedural Knowledge (steps to follow, activities, ways to check work, etc.)]**

### **Declarative Knowledge:**

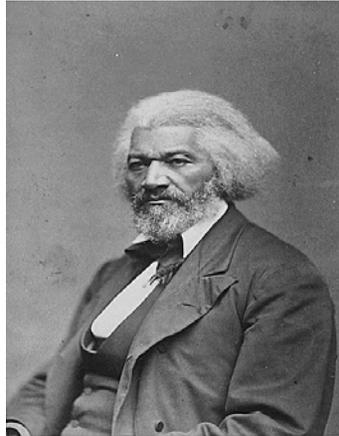
Students will take notes on the following:

- a. Political Abolitionism
- b. What led to Douglass to adopt Political Abolitionism?
- c. Specific clauses in the U.S. Constitution that can be used to dismantle slavery

### **Procedural Knowledge:**

Individually, the students will work on a thesis statement and a structured outline in class, citing specific sources from which they draw for evidence

## Still a “Covenant With the Devil”?: Frederick Douglass and the U.S. Constitution



Throughout this unit, we have examined slavery and the Abolitionist Movement through the experiences of Frederick Douglass. Specifically, we placed a great deal of emphasis on his views towards the U.S. Constitution and how they changed over time. For this paper, in 2 double spaced, typed pages, describe how Frederick Douglass' views changed over time towards the U.S. Constitution and how it dealt with the issue of slavery. How and why did this occur? What factors caused him to shift his views? Be sure to use the sources made available to you in class to provide your paper with sufficient evidence. Good luck!

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