

Causes of the Civil War/Abolition Movement

Frederick Douglass's Speech "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro"

Estimated Time: 60 minutes

Standards:

1) National Standards:

- a) **NSS-USH.5-12.4 ERA 4: EXPANSION AND REFORM (1801-1861)**
Compare the positions of African American and white abolitionists on the issue of the African American's place in society.
- b) **NSS-USH.5-12.5 ERA 5: CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION (1850-1877)** Explain the causes of the Civil War and evaluate the importance of slavery as a principal cause of the conflict.

2) Massachusetts State Standard:

- a) **USI.31:** Describe the formation of the abolitionist movement, the roles of various abolitionists, and the response of southerners and northerners to abolitionism.

Focus/Concept:

Considering multiple points of view, analyzing the ideas expressed Douglass's speech

Measurable Outcome:

Students will write a short dialogue using the points of view of at least two figures in American history, where they imagine how those figures would have responded to the Fourth of July speech.

Primary Source:

Excerpt from the speech by Frederick Douglass titled "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro"

Overview:

The purpose of this lesson is to give students studying the causes of the Civil War an opportunity to consider the difficult subject of abolition from multiple viewpoints. They will do this by analyzing a primary source document. This document will be analyzed using two strategies, the "SOAPStone" and a "Chalk Talk". The former is designed to generate a basic understanding of the text and the latter to consider the document in greater depth. This lesson should be implemented at a point where the students have already learned the history of slavery both in the north and the south.

Lesson Implementation:

Objectives:

- 1) Participating in both a SOAPStone and “Chalk Talk” activity, the students will engage in written and oral discussion focused on questions relating Frederick Douglass’s speech “Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro”.
- 2) Students will participate in a follow—up discussion based on their chalk talk activity.

Required Materials:

- 1) Four large pieces of chart paper
- 2) Markers (enough for each student)
- 3) Copied excerpt from Frederick Douglass’s speech “Meaning of the Fourth of July for the negro”
- 4) “Basic Facts” Sheet
- 5) Homework Sheet “Responding to Douglass”

Activity:

- 1) ***Preparation:*** Before the class begins, take two pieces of chart paper and tape them together in a way that creates one large piece that students can write on. This process should be done twice. On the first piece of chart paper, write the following question: *How do you think Douglass’s antislavery audience for this speech reacted to what he had to say? Why do you think so?*
On the second piece of chart paper, write the following question: *Had you been in that audience, how would you have reacted to his message? Why?*
Tape these pieces of chart paper on opposite sides of the room.
- 2) Once the students are in and seated, review with them what they have learned about the growth and development in both the north and the south of slavery as a political, social, and economic institution. Before this lesson, it is necessary that students have this background knowledge. Let them know that they will be learning about the movement to end slavery in America, from the Revolutionary War period through the eve of the Civil War and that Frederick Douglass, who they will be learning more about, was a key figure in this movement.
- 3) To prepare for the chalk talk, hand out excerpt from the Frederick Douglass speech “*Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro*”. Give them a brief lecture about both Douglass and the context for the speech. Use the “*Basic Facts*” sheet as a guide for preparing the students. Have the students read the excerpt from the speech. This can be done either out loud or silently.

- 4) ***SOAPSTone Activity:*** To generate a basic class understanding of the text, discuss Douglass's speech by brainstorming on the board the following aspects of the speech with the students:
- Subject (what is the speech about?)
 - Occasion (When is the speech given?)
 - Audience (Who is Douglass talking to? Who is the speech written for?)
 - Purpose (Why is he giving this speech?)
 - Setting (Where is he giving it?)
 - Tone (What mood, or feeling, does he convey?)
- 5) Ask the students to count off (1,2,1,2,1...etc). Have the ones gather in front of one piece of chart paper and the twos in front of the other.
- 6) ***Chalk Talk Activity Procedure:***
- Each group will have the opportunity to answer each question
 - They will have five minutes at each question.
 - At the end of the five minutes, the teacher will say "switch" at which time the students will switch to the other piece of chart paper.
 - After having had an opportunity to answer both questions, students will silently review the responses the whole class has given.
 - Important Rules:
 - Chalk talk is a SILENT activity. There is no talking.
 - During the chalk talk, students may answer the question and respond to one another. This must be done only with writing.
 - Write small, so both groups have enough room with which to write.
 - Be patient, no more than 3-4 students writing at any one time.
- 7) ***Chalk Talk Follow up:***
- This is an opportunity for teacher-led discussion based on the responses given by the students. The teacher should begin by asking the students to share any questions, comments, or ideas on either question that stuck out for them. Ultimately, the teacher should ask the students to directly address the questions asked. Leave opportunity for students to share opinions and points of view. One question I have asked to hook them onto the issue of abolition is to ask them if they think northerners would have been more or less likely than southerners to resist ending slavery in America and why.

Assessment

- 1) ***At the end of class:*** In their notes, have the students silently complete the following sentence: The main message from Douglass's speech is _____.
- 2) ***For Homework:*** Have the students complete the creative writing assignment titled "Responding to Douglass".

Douglass Speech: “Basic Facts” Sheet

- 1) By 1852, Douglass was a well-known abolitionist and had already distinguished himself as a writer, newspaper publisher, traveled extensively and was a sought-after public speaker.**
- 2) In 1852, the issues of slavery and abolition had become major national issues, due in part to the work of abolitionists like Frederick Douglass.**
- 3) On July 5, 1852, he was invited to speak to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence.**
- 4) The speech was given at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, New York, which was his home at the time and the location from which he published his antislavery newspaper, the “North Star”.**
- 5) He spent three weeks writing the speech.**
- 6) He spoke to a crowd of around 600.**
- 7) His audience was a largely white, antislavery audience friendly to his point of view.**

Many historians consider this speech the most powerful antislavery speech delivered before the civil

Excerpts from “Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro” by Frederick Douglass, Delivered July 5, 1852 in Rochester, New York

..Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us?

Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common... The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine... Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day?

Fellow-citizens, above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. ..My subject, then, fellow-citizens, is American slavery.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy...

notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented, of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. ..While drawing encouragement from "the Declaration of Independence," the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age.

8th Grade Homework

RESPONDING TO DOUGLASS

Imagine you are leaving the Corinthian Hall after hearing the speech given by Frederick Douglass. As you are leaving, you overhear someone from the north and south discussing their reactions to what Douglass had to say. Depending on which northerners and southerners are talking, their reactions may be very different. In fact, depending on any person's point of view, his or her thoughts or feelings on a topic like Douglass's speech would vary greatly. Consider the following lists of possible northerners and southerners we have studied this year:

Northerners	Southerners
A textile manufacturer	Senator John Calhoun
John Brown, profiteer in the slave trade	President Andrew Jackson
Benjamin Franklin	Thomas Jefferson
A Quaker minister from Pennsylvania	A cotton planter

Using this list:

- 1) Choose one northerner and one southerner.
- 2) Write an imaginary dialogue between them in which they discuss the following:
 - a) Their reaction to Douglass's speech
 - b) Reasons why they reacted that way
 - c) Their points of view on the issues of slavery and abolition
 - d) How their points of view influence their opinion of what Douglass had to say

The following are the requirements:

- 1) A minimum of 200 words
- 2) A demonstration of clear thought and effort
- 3) An accurate representation of each person's point of view on slavery and abolition
- 4) No errors in fact

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