

Chapter 1

Page 1

Opening sentence is traditional of slave narratives. It sets the premise of the text. 1st person narrative tells us this is a personal story; we are hearing directly from the ex-slave.

First paragraph gives us insight into the way in which slaves were dehumanised. By not allowing slaves to know their date of birth, parentage etc it means a slave can never really know his/her self.

Further evidence of the ways in which slaves were stripped of their rights.

- the master had such control and ownership over his slaves that he could rape/abuse a female slave without any repercussions.
- Slave women had their children taken away from them. In fact their child was not truly theirs, but rather 'owned' by the master.

Page 3

Religion is first mentioned here and will feature heavily throughout the narrative

Douglass makes his first suggestion that **slavery changes white people** this is referred to on several occasions throughout the narrative. Therefore slavery is demeaning to both black and white.

Page 4

Style and language are important features. Douglass is recounting a scene from childhood yet he describes it with very eloquent language and mature reflection. He is clearly making the point that he is educated and that such incidents in slavery did not defeat him. This would also have made his narrative more engaging and worthy to his audience.

Chapter 2

Page 5

Eloquent **Style and language** repeated.

First suggestion/hint of the **city as symbolic of a better life/freedom**

Page 6

Tone. A very matter of fact tone is used to describe the poverty in which slaves lived. It is significant that this is not told in an impassioned way but rather stated. Douglass is trying to use his narrative as not just a personal account of his life, but rather as **evidence** of the negativity of slavery.

Violence against women. Thus far this is the only type of violence that has been mentioned in the book. Perhaps Douglass is trying to infer that female slaves had a much more difficult time, or perhaps he is just sympathetic to women's rights and sees this as a chance to bring it to the attention of a wider audience.

Irony is introduced here when Mr. Hopkins is described as a good overseer.

Song Douglass' discussion of the song of has two purposes. He discusses both his place in and out of the 'circle' of slavery which reminds us that this is a first-hand account of slavery.

He also uses the song to make the point that slaves were deeply unhappy and the singing of these songs represents that. The fact that so many white people thought the slaves were happy shows how little they knew of their feelings and how misguided (or how much they turned a blind eye) to the pain of the slaves.

Chapter 3

Evidence is used throughout this chapter to add authenticity to Douglass' work and by recounting details that do not just come directly from his own experience it reminds us that this not just a story about his life but rather there to tell us of the wider story of slavery.

Page 11

Psychological, as well as physical, effects on slaves is shown when he retells the story of the slave who is punished for telling the truth about his master. This tells us that slaves could not trust many people and lived in fear and to a degree had to be paranoid.

Page 12

The boastful conversations the slaves had about their master being the best reinforces the idea that they had nothing and so lived vicariously through their masters. They had nothing to be proud of so had to take pride in that. This is ironic given how their masters would treat them.

Chapter 4

Page 13

There is irony in the sentence: 'Mr. Austin Gore, a man possessing, in an eminent degree, all those traits of character indispensable to what is called a first-rate overseer.'

Douglass uses an ironic tone here to imply that only those with a poor sense of justice could consider Gore a good man or overseer. Anyone who has compassion would see him otherwise.

Pages 14 & 15

The use of evidence and examples of the separate accounts of slaves being murdered by their masters or overseers, again acts as a reminder that this narrative has a dual purpose. Douglass is not simply narrating events in his own life, but rather using this as a vehicle to awaken people to the horrors of slavery in the hope it will spur them into action to make a stand against it.

Chapter 5

This chapter marks a change in Douglass' life. He is given to another family and this means a move to the city of Baltimore. Douglas sees this as a chance for something better to happen.

Baltimore (and indeed the city) is used to represent opportunity, if not freedom.

Again Douglass uses language and imagery to demonstrate his education and remind the reader that he is no longer a slave and is able to discuss this matter on the same level as them.

We are also introduced to the notion of freedom and escape from slavery when Douglass states in the last paragraph that he believed 'slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace'.

Chapter 6

Page 19

Douglass opens this chapter with a detailed account of how good and kind his 'mistress' is when he first arrives in Baltimore. He then contrasts this with the dramatic change that took place with her - 'her angelic face gave place to that of a demon.'

He does this to again emphasise that slavery does not just destroy the slaves but also the slave holders. He may want to appeal to readers that they should not just strive to end slavery for the slaves but also for themselves.

Page 20

When Mr. Auld instructs his wife not to teach Douglass because 'it would forever unfit him to be a slave.' and make him 'discontented and unhappy' we see the way in which slave owners tried desperately to keep slaves ignorant.

Mr. Auld does in fact teach Douglass the most valuable lesson which is education is 'the pathway to freedom'.

As we read on we do discover that Douglass does, however, fulfill Auld's prophecy and becomes unhappy because he now knows about freedom but cannot gain it.

Page 21

The symbolic nature of the city is again made evident.

Once again the brutal description of abuse takes place towards slave women.

Chapter 7

Page 22

The first page of this chapter does not in fact deal with the mistreatment of Douglass directly. It is almost as if he feels sorry for his 'mistress' and what happened to her because of slavery.

It was very odd for a slave to feel pity for their master/mistress.

Elevates Douglass

Page 24

Douglass discusses his enlightenment and the way in which he realises that freedom is something he cannot live without.

It is here that his master's words come true - he is miserable and admits that at times he is envious of the other slaves who are not educated and who are ignorant.

This not only emphasises the importance of education in allowing the pursuit of freedom but again sets him slightly apart from other slaves.

Page 25

Douglass includes the anecdote of meeting the Irishmen to show that not all whites were willing to keep blacks enslaved. This is inclusive to his audience given that it would mostly be whites who would read his work.

By pretending to not understand the Irishmen, it shows again that slaves could not really trust anyone and felt they had to be cautious of those who would trick them.

This is also the point when he knows he must be free one day.

Page 26

The final sentence reminds us that he is educated and also that he earned his education through a long laborious process.

Chapter 8

Page 27

He returns to the undignified life of a plantation slave and uses an ironic tone to describe the way in which slaves were 'ranked together' with cattle and other animals. This shows another way that slaves are degraded and are simply regarded as property.

The mention of slaves being passed around different owners and having no control over their own lives also confirms this.

Douglass also mentions the 'brutalising effects of slavery both on slave and slave holder.' It is interesting that he continually refers to this.

Page 28/29

Douglass breaks out of the past-tense autobiography style to write about the plight of his grandmother in an imaginative way (and in present tense as though she was still alive) This reminds us that this is not simply his autobiography.

The emotional tone is also different from the rest of the text and it could be employed to appeal both to the readers' emotions as well as their reason as to why slavery is barbaric.

Page 30

The symbolism of the city is evident here - in the city he could move around freely but also it is where he gained his education.

Chapter 9

Page 30

The first sentence is significant because he is telling us that he is becoming more educated. At the beginning he told us that slaves were kept ignorant of dates as a way of dominating and subjugating them, by saying that he was able to keep dates indicates that he is coming closer to freedom.

Page 31

The theme of religion is prominent here. Douglass does not criticise religion but rather those that claim to be religious yet act in the most unchristian way. (hypocrisy of slave holders)

This is a recurring theme throughout the text.

Page 32

The theme of women being abused is again evident here. The most graphic accounts of beating are always directed towards women. (Given his audience, Douglass is perhaps trying to fight for different causes through his work)

Page 34

There is element of irony in the 'high reputation' of Covey. What kind of people would regard his behaviour as an attribute?

Chapter 10

Page 35

In this chapter Douglass details the most period of his time in slavery. Not only is the work physically demanding, but Covey's treatment of Douglas leaves his emotionally exhausted also.

Page 38

Douglas's famous speech in which he discusses anguish contains many examples of effective language techniques. The tone also changes in this section and becomes much more impassioned and personal. This reminds the audience that this really did happen to Douglas and it also gives them an insight into the emotional torment of slaves.

Page 42

Douglass discusses the superstitious nature of slaves. He ties together both his African ancestry and his new education. By taking the root he appeases Sandy and shows his connection to slaves. But by saying that he didn't believe in it he is creating a distance between Sandy and himself. This reminds the audience that they can trust him because he is educated and not like the other slaves. Therefore he gives his narrative more credibility.

Page 43

'My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact.'

This is a very significant statement as it shows that Douglass has in some way reached mental freedom and that the process has been firmly set in motion for his attempts to escape.

Page 44

'The holidays are part and parcel of the gross fraud...'

This links to the recurring theme of slavery existed both because the slaves are kept in ignorance and the white people not within the slave trade are to some degree ignorant. Douglass is angry at the way slave holders try to control slaves and make them believe that there is no better life for them.

By exposing this he appeals to the audience to be aware of it and do something.

Page 46

Douglass come back to theme of religion and the way that slaveholders hide behind it, and are hypocrites. He becomes quite impassioned about it and wishes to expose these people for the frauds they are.

Page 50

He uses personification to describe the desire for freedom he had. He also emphasizes the fear that he experienced in making his decision to try to escape. He makes the audience aware that this was no easy decision to make.

By creating a detailed description of his first attempt to run away Douglass gives his work a sense of drama and tension for the readers. He also creates authenticity and reinforces his right to tell this story.

Page 59

He describes his master as a thief and appeals to the readers the idea of them handing over their wages every week. It shows the way in which slave holders good or bad, ultimately exploited human being for their own gain.

Chapter 11

Page 59/60

Douglass turns the tables on slave holders. When he appeals to people to give away the secrets of the Underground Railroad he not only wants to protect slaves but also wants slave holders to experience the feeling of helplessness that comes from being kept ignorant. He returns to theme of ignorance but this time it is the white man and not him who is denied knowledge.

Page 65

Douglass's wonder at the wealth and lifestyle in New Bedford is used to remind the reader that the wealth of the country does not rely on slavery, as those of the South so strongly believe.

He is making a strong argument that he hopes will appeal to the rational and economic side of his audience.

Appendix

Douglass is religious and so does not want to mislead the reader that he is not. He doesn't want it to come across that he has written this to attack religion.

This is particularly significant when we think of the people most likely to read this narrative when it was published. Many abolitionists were religious; therefore Douglass most certainly does not want to offend the very people whom he seeks to appeal to.