

Frederick Douglass

In 1818, Frederick Douglass was born a slave in Maryland. When he was just a baby, he was taken from his mother. He was never sure who his father was. When he was born, he was owned by a man named Aaron Anthony. He was later given to a woman name Lucretia Auld who sent him to Baltimore to serve her brother-in-law, Hugh Auld. Hugh Auld's wife broke the law by teaching twelve-year-old Frederick some letters of the alphabet. After that, Frederick learned to read from some of the white children in the neighborhood. His owner was very angry about this, believing that if slaves learned to read, they would become unhappy with their condition and would want to be free!

In 1833, when Frederick was sixteen years old, Lucretia Auld and her husband Thomas took Frederick back from Hugh Auld. They were not happy with his service, however, and they sent him to work for a harsh "slave-breaker" named Edward Covey. After being beaten many times by Covey, Frederick finally fought back. He won the fight, and Covey never beat him again. The incident was never spoken of, probably because Covey was ashamed that a slave had beaten him.

In 1837, Frederick Douglass married Anna Murray, a free African American woman who lived in Baltimore. Though he was still a slave when he got married, he soon escaped with the help of a free black seaman, who gave him fake identification papers so he could board a train and leave Maryland. He ended up in New York. Later, some British sympathizers, people who believed black slaves should be freed, paid Frederick's owner to officially grant his freedom.

In his early twenties, Frederick Douglass became an active abolitionist. An abolitionist was someone who believed that slavery should be ended (abolished). There were both black and white abolitionists. Frederick Douglass became a well-known speaker who was often asked to give speeches about his life as a slave. He also wrote about his views against slavery. His most famous work is his own life story, called *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, which was published in 1845. Because he was such a good writer and speaker, many people did not believe that Frederick Douglass, a black man, had written the book. They thought it was made up.

Frederick Douglass (cont'd)

However, many others believed in Frederick Douglass and his story, and the book became more and more popular. Because of this, Frederick's friends suggested that he go to Europe for a while in case the book drew enough attention that his former owner would try to get him back. Frederick went to Ireland in 1845 and then to England. He spent two years in Europe, giving speeches about slavery as he had in the United States. When he returned to America, Frederick Douglass became the publisher of a number of newspapers. He continued to give speeches and to write, and in 1863, he met with President Lincoln to discuss the treatment of black soldiers.

By the time the Civil War began in 1861, Frederick Douglass was the most famous black man in the country. He and other abolitionists believed that the purpose of the war was to end slavery. There were other reasons for the war as well, but in 1862, President Lincoln proclaimed that slavery was to be ended in the United States. But the fight for freedom was not over. Next, Frederick Douglass had to work for equality between the races.

After the Civil War ended, Frederick Douglass became President of the Freedman's Savings Bank. It was a time known as the Reconstruction, when attempts were made to rebuild America without slavery. In 1868, Frederick Douglass became the first black American to be nominated for vice president. He was selected by presidential candidate Victoria Woodhull, who ran as a candidate of the Equal Rights Party. He didn't even know he had been nominated! He continued to speak about equality and brotherhood and held many important positions throughout the rest of his life, including United States Marshal and Recorder of Deeds (property) for the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.). After his wife Anna died, Frederick Douglass married a white woman who was twenty years younger than he was. The marriage upset many people, but once again, Frederick Douglass was making a statement for equality.

Frederick Douglass Questions

1. Frederick Douglass was
 - a. a slave.
 - b. an abolitionist.
 - c. a writer.
 - d. All of the above

2. Frederick Douglass
 - a. was born a slave.
 - b. remained a slave for his entire life.
 - c. became a slave when he was 12 years old.
 - d. None of these.

3. An abolitionist was
 - a. a person who fought for equal rights.
 - b. a person who wanted slavery to end.
 - c. a Civil War soldier who fought for the south.
 - d. None of these

4. Frederick Douglass was sent to serve Edward Covey because
 - a. Covey was known as a “slave-breaker” and it was thought that Frederick needed to be disciplined.
 - b. Covey was a sympathizer who wanted to help Frederick escape.
 - c. his owners needed money, so they sold him.
 - d. he was a gift to Covey from the Aulds.

5. Lucretia Auld broke the law when she
 - a. allowed Frederick Douglass to travel by train.
 - b. taught Frederick Douglass to read.
 - c. taught Frederick Douglass some letters of the alphabet.
 - d. took Frederick Douglass away from his mother.

Frederick Douglass Questions (cont'd)

6. Frederick Douglass
 - a. escaped slavery but his owners kept looking for him.
 - b. escaped slavery and was later officially given his freedom.
 - c. was released from slavery by Edward Covey after he beat Covey in a fight.
 - d. Was granted freedom when he married Anna Murray, who was not a slave.

7. Why did Frederick Douglass go to Ireland in 1845?

8. In what year did Lincoln proclaim that slavery was to be ended?

9. The Reconstruction, which occurred just after the Civil War, was a time in American history when
 - a. the country was trying to rebuild without the help of slaves.
 - b. people celebrated the end of slavery.
 - c. many new buildings were constructed.
 - d. there was peace and harmony in America for a while.

10. Name two positions held by Frederick Douglass after the Civil War.

Name _____

Date _____

Frederick Douglass Answers

1. d
2. a
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. b
7. He was afraid that the popularity of his book might make his former owner come after him.
8. 1862
9. a
10. Any two of the following: President of the Freedman's Bank, United States Marshal, Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia