

Name _____

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass—Chapters 1-6 Study Guide

Chapter 1

1. Why is Frederick not sure when he was born?

2. What is Frederick's last name at birth?

3. Why would slaveholders want to keep a slave ignorant of such a simple thing as the date of his birth?

4. Who were Frederick's mother and father?

5. Why does Frederick make the point that a slaveholder who has fathered a child is likely to be tougher on that child?

6. Why does Frederick only rarely see his mother?

7. Is Frederick's relationship with his mother typical of other slave children? How?

8. What is the role of the overseer on the plantation?

9. What do we learn about Plummer, the overseer?

10. Who is Frederick's first master?

11. Why do you think Frederick tells the story of Lloyd's Ned?

Chapter 2

1. Who were the family members of Frederick's master Colonel Edward Lloyd?

2. What is the relationship of Colonel Lloyd to Frederick's master?

3. Was there a "pecking order" among slaves? Explain.

4. Why would a slave who has a very bad life on a plantation fear being sold to a slave-trader?
5. Why was Severe an appropriate name for the overseer?
6. Why is it difficult to find copies of slave songs?
7. Why does Frederick suggest that slaves sing out of sorrow rather than out of joy?

Chapter 3

1. How did Colonel Lloyd keep the slave boys from taking his fruit?
2. Why was it particularly difficult to be the slaves in charge of Colonel Lloyd's horses?
3. What is ironic about Colonel Lloyd's treatment of his horses compared to the treatment of his slaves?
4. What happened to the slave who told Colonel Lloyd the truth about his master?
5. What is a maxim?

Chapter 4

1. Why is Mr. Austine Gore a "first-rate overseer"? What is the irony of this description of him? What is ironic about his name?
2. What reason does Mr. Gore give for killing Demby the slave?
3. What other examples does Frederick give of his statement "that killing a slave, or any colored person . . . is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or by the community"?

Chapter 5

1. What was life like for Frederick on the plantation?
2. Why was Frederick so happy to be leaving the plantation?
3. Why did he particularly want to go to Baltimore?
4. What relationship did his new master have to his old master?
5. Why did Frederick, who was seven or eight, not know the month or year of his sailing?
6. What were Frederick's initial impressions of his new mistress, Mrs. Sophia Auld?

Chapter 6

1. To what does Frederick attribute the kindness of Mrs. Auld?
2. What, according to Frederick, changes her?
3. Why is Mr. Auld angry when he finds that Mrs. Auld is teaching Frederick his letters?
4. Why does Frederick call Mr. Auld's forbidding his learning how to read "invaluable instruction"?
5. Why does inability to read keep men enslaved according to Frederick and to Mr. Auld?
6. What does Frederick hope to gain by learning how to read?
7. Who teaches Frederick why black men are not taught to read?
8. Why is this lesson so important to him?
9. Why is the life of a city slave so much better than the life of a plantation slave?
10. Why does Frederick relate the story of the slaves Henrietta and Mary?