

READING  
ADDITIONAL  
RESOURCES

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# *Reading* Nonfiction 1



Biography and Autobiography

Science and Technology

History and Geography

Historic Speeches

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## PREVIEW

**BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY****LESSON 1:** The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass**LESSON 2:** The Story of My Life (Helen Keller)**LESSON 3:** Journal of the First Voyage to America  
(Christopher Columbus)**LESSON 4:** Sacajawea

When you complete this unit, you will be able to answer questions like these:

- *Why did African-Americans who had escaped from slavery need to carry “free papers”?*
- *How did the inhabitants of San Salvador react to the arrival of Columbus?*
- *How did Helen Keller first learn the meaning of words?*
- *How did Sacajawea help the Lewis and Clark expedition?*

**PRETEST**

Write **T** or **F** to show whether you think each statement is *true* or *false*.

1. \_\_\_\_ Attempting to escape from slavery was difficult and dangerous for African-Americans.
2. \_\_\_\_ When Frederick Douglass was caught trying to escape from slavery, he was arrested.
3. \_\_\_\_ People who become blind and deaf at an early age can never learn to read and write.
4. \_\_\_\_ Christopher Columbus gave the natives of San Salvador glass beads in exchange for fresh water.
5. \_\_\_\_ Christopher Columbus visited Japan after sailing away from San Salvador.
6. \_\_\_\_ Sacajawea guided the Lewis and Clark expedition all the way across the western United States to the Pacific coast.
7. \_\_\_\_ For her valuable services to the Lewis and Clark expedition, Sacajawea was paid \$10,000.00.

## LESSON 1

### Before reading . . .

An autobiography is a person's life story in his or her own words. This lesson presents an adapted excerpt from Frederick Douglass's autobiography. He was the famous African-American abolitionist and writer who became an adviser to President Lincoln. As you read, notice how Douglass reacted to the events along his escape route.



### THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It was the custom in Maryland to require free black people to have what were called free papers. These identification papers listed the person's name, age, color, and height. Many slaves had escaped by impersonating the owner of one of these sets of papers. A slave who closely resembled the description in the papers would borrow or hire them until he could escape to a free state. Then he would mail the papers back to the owner. This operation was hazardous for the lender as well as for the borrower.

Unfortunately, I did not resemble any of my free acquaintances closely enough. But I had one friend—a sailor—who owned a sailor's protection. This document had a similar purpose to that of free papers. It described the person and certified that he was a free American sailor. I did not match very closely the description on the sailor's protection I borrowed. Close examination of it would have caused my arrest at the start.

In order to avoid this, I decided not to buy a train ticket at the station. Instead, I arranged to have my baggage delivered to the train just as it was starting. I jumped on the car when the train was

already in motion. As the train sped on its way, I took a seat in the car for black people. Then the conductor began collecting tickets and examining the papers of his black passengers. My heart was beating anxiously. My whole future depended on the decision of this conductor. When he reached me, he said, "I suppose you have your free papers?" To which I answered, "No, sir; I never carry my free papers to sea with me." Luckily, I had taken the precaution of dressing in a sailor's suit. "But you have something to show that you are a free man, have you not?" "Yes, sir," I answered. "I have a paper with the American eagle on it that will carry me round the world." Then I showed him my sailor's protection. The conductor glanced at it quickly, took my fare, and went on about his business.

Though much relieved, I realized I was still in great danger. Had the conductor looked closer at the paper, it would have been his duty to arrest me. Then I would have been sent back to Baltimore from the first station. After Maryland, I had to pass through Delaware, another slave state. Slave catchers waited at the borders for their prey. Though I was not a murderer fleeing from justice, I felt just as miserable as a criminal. The speeding train seemed to be moving far too slowly.

At Wilmington, I got off the train and took the steamboat for Philadelphia. In making the change I was afraid of being arrested, but no one disturbed me. In Philadelphia, I took the night train for New York, arriving there the next morning. I had completed my journey to freedom in less than 24 hours. This was the end of my experience as a slave.



**COMPREHENSION**

Write your answers in complete sentences.

1. What people owned free papers, and what was their purpose?

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2. Why was Douglass unable to use the free papers belonging to any of his acquaintances?

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3. Why did Douglass decide *not* to buy a train ticket at the station?

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4. Why was Douglass's heart beating anxiously as the conductor approached him?

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5. Why did Douglass believe that his whole future depended on the decision of the conductor?

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6. What kind of identification did Douglass show to the conductor?

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7. After paying his train fare, why did Douglass believe that he was still in great danger?

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8. Why did Douglass feel the train was moving too slowly?

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## VOCABULARY

Circle a letter to show the meaning of each **boldface** word. If you need help with meanings, use context clues in the reading.

1. **hazardous**

- a. unpleasant
- b. dangerous
- c. expensive
- d. harmless

3. **certified**

- a. asserted
- b. ascertained
- c. confirmed
- d. mentioned

2. **baggage**

- a. shipments
- b. containers
- c. compartments
- d. luggage

4. **precaution**

- a. safeguard
- b. preparation
- c. prescription
- d. provision

## PLOT AND SEQUENCE

Number the events to show which happened first, second, and so on.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass decided not to buy a train ticket at the station.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass got off the train at Wilmington and took the steamboat for Philadelphia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The conductor asked Douglass for his free papers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass took the night train from Philadelphia, arriving in New York the next morning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass jumped on the train after it had already started to move.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass borrowed a sailor's protection from a friend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass had his baggage delivered to the train just as it was starting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The conductor began collecting tickets and examining the papers of his black passengers.

**DRAWING CONCLUSIONS**

Think about the events described in the reading. Based on that information, which of the following statements are reasonable conclusions? Put a checkmark (✓) next to each sensible conclusion.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Whenever a free black person allowed someone else to use his or her free papers, there was little chance of either person getting caught.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Since Douglass did not resemble his friend very closely, he was taking a big chance by using that man's sailor's protection.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Douglass need not have felt so anxious on his journey, because he was not truly in great danger.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The sailor's suit Douglass wore probably helped convince the train conductor that the sailor's protection was truly his.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Very few African-Americans tried to escape from slavery because most did not wish to be free.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ When Douglass escaped to freedom, blacks were not allowed to ride in the same train cars as whites.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Attempting to escape from slavery took a great deal of courage.

**RECALLING IMPORTANT DETAILS**

Circle a letter to answer each question.

1. Which of the following appeared on the sailor's protection that Douglass had borrowed?
  - a. Douglass's name
  - b. Douglass's color
  - c. Douglass's weight and height
  - d. an American eagle

2. When the conductor asked Douglass for his free papers, what did Douglass say?
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. "I left my free papers at home."               | c. "I loaned my free papers to a friend."                 |
| b. "I never carry my free papers to sea with me." | d. "I lost my free papers and I've applied for new ones." |
3. Which of the following was not a reason why Douglass felt he was in great danger?
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. Slave catchers waited at the borders.                        | c. Maryland and Delaware were slave states.                   |
| b. He did not match the description of the sailor's protection. | d. The train from Philadelphia to New York ran only at night. |
4. Leaving Wilmington, Douglass took which of the following?
- |                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. the steamboat for New York | c. the train for Philadelphia     |
| b. the train for New York     | d. the steamboat for Philadelphia |

## PUZZLER

One or more words in each sentence is written backward. Find these words, circle them, and write them correctly on the lines below. The first one is done for you.

1. Many slaves escaped by (gnitanosrepmi) the owner of a set of free papers.

*impersonating*

2. I did not elbmeser closely enough any of my free secnatniauqca.

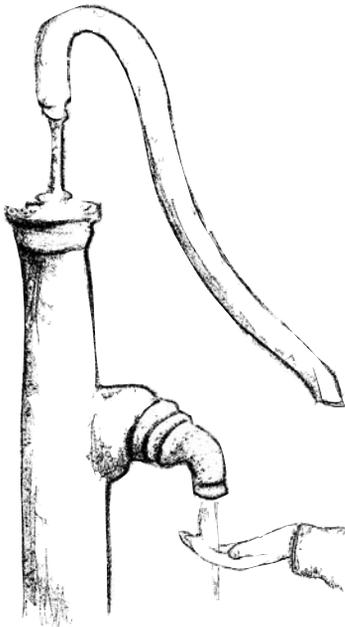
3. I degnarra to have my egaggab delivered to the train as it was starting.

4. Though I was not a reredrum, I felt just as elbaresim as a lanimirc.

## LESSON 2

### Before reading . . .

At the age of 19 months, a girl named Helen Keller was stricken with a devastating illness. It severely affected her speech and left her blind and deaf. This lesson presents an adapted excerpt from her autobiography. As you read, notice how Helen reacts to things most of us take for granted.



### THE STORY OF MY LIFE

I was six the morning my teacher came in 1886. She led me into her room and gave me a doll. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word “d-o-l-l.” I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly, I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother, I held up my hand and made the letters for the word *doll*. I did not know that I was spelling a word—or even that words existed. I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell a great many words in this uncomprehending way. It was several weeks later before I understood that everything has a name.

One day, I was playing with my new doll. Then Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap. She also spelled “d-o-l-l” and tried to make me understand that “d-o-l-l” applied to both the object and the word. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words “m-u-g” and “w-a-t-e-r.” Miss Sullivan had tried to impress upon me that “m-u-g” is *mug* and “w-a-t-e-r” is *water*—but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair, she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the

first opportunity. I soon became impatient at her repeated attempts. Seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth. I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. When she brought me my hat, I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought—if a wordless sensation may be called a thought—made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house. I was attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle there. Someone was drawing water, and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled the word *water* into the other. First she spelled the word slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly, I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought. It was then that the mystery of language was somehow revealed to me. I knew that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand! That living word awakened my soul—gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.



**COMPREHENSION**

Write **T** if the statement is *true* or **F** if the statement is *false*. Write **NI** for *no information* if the article does not provide that information.

1. \_\_\_\_ Right from the start, Helen knew that everything had a name.
2. \_\_\_\_ Spelling the word “d-o-l-l” with her fingers filled Helen with pride.
3. \_\_\_\_ The first time Helen made the letters “d-o-l-l,” she knew it was a word, and she knew what the word meant.
4. \_\_\_\_ Helen’s parents were pleased at her progress in learning how to make letters with her hands.
5. \_\_\_\_ Helen and Miss Sullivan had gotten into a tussle because Helen kept confusing mug with water.
6. \_\_\_\_ Helen’s parents hired Miss Sullivan because she had experience working with severely disabled people.
7. \_\_\_\_ Helen removed the source of her discomfort by throwing her new doll on the floor.
8. \_\_\_\_ Water flowing over one hand while the letters “w-a-t-e-r” were spelled out into her other hand taught Helen what a word was.

**SENTENCE COMPLETION**

Choose eight words from the box to complete the sentences below.

sensation	consciousness	sentiment	passionate
flushed	uncomprehending	barriers	fragrance
tussle	confounding	opportunity	imitation

1. Helen learned to spell a great many words in an \_\_\_\_\_ way.