



Lecture 5: How Objects Reflect Society

NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDRICK DOUGLASS

HOW OBJECTS REFLECT SOCIETY

- ✖ Our objects reflect *us*. Everything from a bill of sale for a slave to replacement limbs for injured soldiers indicate our society's priorities and sense of morality.
- ✖ You will choose and examine photographs of two items from Frederick Douglass's National Historic Site virtual museum.
- ✖ Six analysis questions follow. Answer all questions thoughtfully, even if you do not have all the answers.

HOW OBJECTS REFLECT SOCIETY

<http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/frdo/index.html>

1. What object did you choose? Why did it appeal to you?
2. Why was it made? How was it actually used?
3. What does it say about fashion or technology of the time?
4. How has the object's meaning changed over time?
5. What does it tell you about the social conditions of the time?
6. What cultural issues does it raise?

ASSIGNMENT 5: CHAPTERS 9&10

Chapter 9

1. Why does Frederick now know the date?
2. Who is Frederick's newest Master?
3. What rule of slaveholding does Master Thomas Auld violate?
4. How did the slaves get food?
5. Why does Frederick say that "adopted slaveholders are the worst"?
6. What, according to Frederick, happens to Master Thomas Auld after his conversion to Christianity? Why?
7. Why does Frederick find irony in the fact that the slaves sabbath school is discontinued? (English/Education) *
8. Why does Frederick let Master Thomas's horse run away?
9. Again, Frederick compares the treatment of slaves to the treatment of horses. How?
10. How does Master Thomas propose to 'break' Frederick?
11. Why is the use of the verb 'to break' ironic? *
12. Why was Mr. Covey's reputation for breaking slaves of great value to him?
13. Why does Frederick suggest that Mr. Covey's "pious soul" (p.70) adds to "his reputation as a 'nigger-breaker'" (p. 70)?

ASSIGNMENT 5: CHAPTERS 9&10

Chapter 10

1. Why does Mr. Covey whip Frederick?
2. Why are the slaves so fearful of Mr. Covey? Why does their work go on in his absence?
3. Why is it “never safe to stop a single minute” (p. 73)?
4. What does Frederick mean by “Mr. Covey’s forte consisted in his power to deceive” (p. 74)?
5. Why does Mr. Covey buy a slave to use as a breeder?
6. Why does he hire Mr. Samuel Harrison, a married man? What irony does Frederick find in this?
7. How does Mr. Covey succeed in breaking Frederick?
8. How does Frederick succeed in again becoming a man?
9. Why does Frederick go to Master Thomas Auld?
10. Why does he return to Covey? Who convinces him to do so? What does Sandy Jenkins suggest that Frederick do?
11. How does Frederick win the fight with Mr. Covey?
12. Why does Frederick contend that Mr. Covey does not turn him in?
13. What would have happened to Frederick had Mr. Covey turned him in? *

ASSIGNMENT 5: CHAPTERS 9 & 10 (CONT.)

1. Why is Frederick's battle with Mr. Covey "the turning-point in my career as a slave" (p. 82)?
2. How are the holidays used to "disgust the slave with freedom" (p. 85)?
3. Where does Frederick go after leaving Mr. Covey's on January 1, 1834?
4. Who is his new master and how does he treat Frederick?
5. Why does Frederick include the anecdotes about the two religious slave holders Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Weeden? What point is he attempting to make? *
7. Why and where does Frederick begin a Sabbath school? Why is it essential that the slaves tell no one about it?
8. What would the slaveholders like the slaves to do on the sabbath? Why is this ironic?
9. Why does Frederick decide to include the slaves in his Sabbath school in his plans to obtain his freedom? Why is this dangerous?
10. Frederick makes the point that many slaves would "rather bear those ills we had, than fly to others, that we knew not of " (p. 93). How does this help explain why so few slaves escaped?
11. How do the slaves plan to run away?
12. What is the purpose of the "protections" written by Frederick?
13. What happens to their plan, and how do the "protections" nearly cause their deaths?
14. What happens to each of the slaves who attempted to run away?
15. When Frederick returns to Baltimore, what does he do?
16. Frederick again decides to fight when he is attacked. What happens to him? What does Master Hugh attempt to do for Frederick?
17. What must Frederick do with the wages he earns each week as a caulker? Why?