

“What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” by Frederick Douglass

Historical Contextualization and Author’s Point of View with your Gale In Context Resources

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject/Content: U.S. History

Summary of Lesson: Students will use *Gale In Context: U.S. History*, *Gale In Context: High School*, or *Gale In Context: Middle School* to read a primary source and then place that source within the proper Historical Context and with a Perspective and Point of View.

Focus Questions: What is the overall meaning of the speech “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”? What historical events and personal experiences influenced Frederick Douglass’s writing and delivery of the speech? How do we place the speech in its proper historical context?

Resource: *Gale In Context: U.S. History*, *Gale In Context: High School*, or *Gale In Context: Middle School*

Time Frame: 45 minutes- 1 hour

Learning Expectation: Students will use their close reading skills to analyze a primary source. Students will provide proper historical context and perspective on their primary source using research skills and appropriate sources.

Assessment Types:

Informal Assessments: Students will be assessed informally through the introduction discussion and through debrief discussion through informal questioning

Formal Assessment: Students will be assessed formally through a formative assessment of questioning as they read the primary source and research Frederick Douglass.

Procedures:

Steps/Activities by the Teacher:

- Introduce the idea of Historical Context and Point of View with your students.
- Ask students why understanding Historical Context and Point of View is important to understand historical events or primary sources.
- Facilitate a class discussion on how misunderstanding of historical context and Point of View can lead to misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Primary Sources.
- Pass out or digitally distribute copies of the attached worksheet, Historical Context and Point of View with Frederick Douglass’s “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”.
- (Optional) Send direct links to the students to the Primary Source and supplemental resources using the **Get Link** tool.
- Allow time for students to read the primary source and research the life of Frederick Douglass and events of the early 1850s, most specifically 1852.
- Debrief after the assignment to clear up any lasting questions over the document, the historical context of 1852, Frederick Douglass, or the assignment and revisit the focus question and learning expectations of the lesson.

Sources:

Douglass, Frederick. "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? (1852)." *The African-American Experience*, Primary Source Media, 1999. American Journey. *Gale In Context: U.S. History*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/EJ2152000483/UHIC?u=[LOCATION_ID]&sid=bookmark-UHIC&xid=636a6faa. Accessed 7 July 2022.

"Frederick Douglass." *Gale Middle School Online Collection*, Gale, 2021. *Gale In Context: Middle School*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/NCYGSU445482869/MSIC?u=[LOCATION_ID]&sid=bookmark-MSIC&xid=55bd358d. Accessed 8 Feb. 2023.

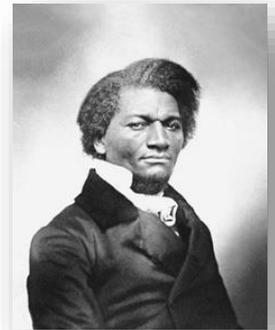
"Frederick Douglass." *Gale In Context Online Collection*, Gale, 2023. *Gale In Context: High School*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/TZMVMQ767177040/SUIC?u=[LOCATION_ID]&sid=bookmark-SUIC&xid=d1d0e3b0. Accessed 8 Feb. 2023.

"Frederick Douglass." *Historic World Leaders*, edited by Anne Commire, Gale, 1994. *Gale In Context: U.S. History*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1616000190/UHIC?u=[LOCATION_ID]&sid=bookmark-UHIC&xid=b70a9788. Accessed 7 July 2022.

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Directions: Today’s activity focuses on the life of Frederick Douglass and specifically his work, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”. Using either *Gale In Context: U.S. History*, *Gale In Context: High School*, or *Gale In Context, Middle School*, search for the primary source document of “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” using the searches below. Once you have found the document, read the Historical Context part of the article and the sourcing information, and answer the questions below before continuing.



Frederick Douglass
AP Photo.



Basic Search: Frederick Douglass and open the Primary Source from the African-American Experience of “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” or

Advanced Search: Gale Document Number: EJ2152000483

1. What is the document type listed in the sourcing information?
2. Why do you think it is important to know that prior to reading?
3. What date was this given?

Historical Context: Before diving further in the speech, let us explore what is happening in the timeframe in which Douglass is speaking. Using your Gale In Context resource use the search below to find the **topic page** over Frederick Douglass to read more about the historical situation and answer the following questions.



Basic Search: Frederick Douglass and Read more on the Topic page or
Advanced Search: Gale Document Number: K1616000190



Basic Search: Frederick Douglass and Read more on the Topic Page or
Advanced Search: Gale Document Number: TZMVMQ767177040



Basic Search: Frederick Douglass and Read more on the Topic Page or
Advanced Search: Gale Document Number: NCYGSU445482869

4. Douglass was born into slavery; how did he gain his freedom?
5. Describe Douglass’s life at the time of the speech. What did he do, who did he know?
6. What was happening with the issue of slavery at the time of the speech?

Point of View: Using what you have now read about the historical context of the United States at the time of the speech and Frederick Douglass’s personal life, do an in-depth reading of the speech. During this reading, use the author’s point of view, or perspective, to find a deeper meaning and reasoning for the view he was taking.



GALE IN CONTEXT
U.S. HISTORY



GALE IN CONTEXT
HIGH SCHOOL



GALE IN CONTEXT
MIDDLE SCHOOL

Basic Search: Frederick Douglass and open the Primary Source from the African-American Experience of “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July” or

Advanced Search: Gale Document Number: EJ2152000483

7. How does Douglass address those in attendance? Why do you think that is important?

8. Douglass claims, “The Fourth of July is yours, not mine”, what do you think he means by this?

9. Douglass stated, “The conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting.” After doing your research, add historical context to this. What events could Douglass have been discussing?

10. What do you think the main point of the document is?

Extension: Using the **highlight and notes** tool, highlight 3 lines you think are the most powerful. In the note portion, write what you think Douglass’s overall meaning of this statement is and why. (**Listen for directions from your teacher on how to attach or turn in these highlights and notes**)

Answer Key:

1. Speech
2. Answers will vary:
 - a. Sets the tone for how to read the document
3. July 5, 1852
4. Douglass ran away and secured his own freedom and eventually his freedom was purchased after his first autobiography was purchased and he had to flee to Europe.
5. Douglass was an abolitionist who would travel to country to speak. He was also a writer who had published his first autobiography in 1845 and the editor of the *North Star*, a newspaper he founded in 1847.
6. Answers will vary slightly: the growing abolition movement, Fugitive Slave Act, etc.
7. Fellow Citizens. Douglass was an African American and formerly enslaved, he was speaking to a predominately white crowd and chose to use an address that called them equals.
8. Answers will vary.
 - a. The celebration of the Fourth of July is hypocritical while there is still slavery in the United States.
9. Continued compromises over slavery, fugitive slave act, etc.
10. It is hypocritical for Douglass to celebrate the Independence of the United States given that Independence only applies to some.
11. **Students should highlight 3 portions and use the notes to annotate the meaning. They can export these into a Google Drive, Microsoft One Drive, Email, PDF, or Copy them onto a document.**