

Primary Source Analysis: Slave Resistance



Source: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, 1845.

Note: When living as a slave in Baltimore, Frederick Douglass convinced his master, Hugh Auld, to allow him to find his own employment in order to keep some of his earnings. However, after Douglass came back from a weekend away from the city, his angry master took away that privilege.

I told him [Hugh Auld] I hired my time, and while I paid him the price which he asked for it, I did not know that I was bound to ask him when and where I should go. This reply troubled him; and, after reflecting a few moments, he turned to me, and said I should hire my time no longer... he told me to bring my tools and clothing home forthwith. I did so; but instead of seeking work, as I had been accustomed to do previously to hiring my time, I spent the whole week without the performance of a single stroke of work. I did this in retaliation.

Saturday night, he called upon me as usual for my week's wages. I told him I had no wages; I had done no work that week. Here we were upon the point of coming to blows. He raved, and swore his determination to get hold of me. I did not allow myself a single word; but was resolved, if he laid the weight of his hand upon me, it should be blow for blow. He did not strike me, but told me that he would find me in constant employment in future. I thought the matter over during the next day, Sunday, and finally resolved upon the third day of September, as the day upon which I would make a second attempt to secure my freedom. I now had three weeks during which to prepare for my journey.

Historical Thinking Skill: Causation

THINKS Document Analysis

T (Topic)

H (Historical Context)

I (Intended Audience)

Political

Economic

Social

Religious

Other

1. When was this document created and/or circulated?

1. Who was the intended audience of this document?

2. What events were occurring during the time this document was written?

2. Whose voice or perspective is not shared in this document?

N (New Vocabulary)

1. What words are new to you or need to be defined?

K (Key Purpose)

1. Why do you think this document was created?

2. What historical purpose does this document have?

S (Significance)

1. List two things or ideas that make this document historically significant.

2. Provide one quote from the document that demonstrates why it might be considered historically significant. Explain your reasoning.



THINKING NATION

