

Name: _____ Class: _____

Cultural Common Ground Gets Harder To Come

By

By Elizabeth Blair
2011

In an earlier time, Americans had fewer choices of what to watch or listen to on television. But now, in a world with infinite choices, some believe that finding common ground with one's neighbor is becoming more and more difficult. As you read the article below, take notes on the benefits and drawbacks of cultural fragmentation.

- [1] We live in a world of seemingly infinite choices: Press the remote control and you can watch documentaries, cartoons, dramas and talent shows. Click the mouse and you can play video games, listen to music, watch movies or chat with friends. Technology has given us access to many different forms of expression, and entire communities have formed around them. Americans live in a culture of multiple cultures no longer broken down simply by ethnicity, religion or age.



"1950's - MODERN ADDICTION" by Clapagaré is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

So is there a name for this? Casey Rae-Hunter of the Future of Music Coalition says the academic word for it is *disintermediation*, "but since that's a mouthful, 'fractured culture' works just fine."

Alyssa Rosenberg, a blogger for *The Atlantic*, says "'fractured' implies something is broken [or] wounded." Rosenberg prefers "fragmentation" and says, "When it comes to popular culture, fragmentation is a wonderful thing."

When Mark Lopez of the Pew Hispanic Research Center hears the term "fractured culture," he thinks about young Latinos. "[They're] straddling two different cultures," Lopez says. "They're straddling the culture of their immigrant roots, but an American culture as well."

- [5] American culture is sliced up in so many different ways that what's popular with one group can go virtually unnoticed by another. Univision, for example, is watched by millions of Latinos in the U.S., but millions of other Americans couldn't tell you what channel it's on.

What makes us laugh on TV isn't as broad-based as it once was. At its peak in the mid-1980s, *The Cosby Show* had 30 million viewers. Today's top-rated sitcom, *Two and a Half Men*, gets more like 15 million.

Since we're not all watching the same shows, "water-cooler moments"¹ are harder to come by. Dan Schneider, a TV veteran and executive producer for Nickelodeon, says a show like *Modern Family* is a perfect example. "[It's] a really great comedy that's popular and new that's on the air right now," he says, "but if you go walk around the mall and say, 'Did you see last week's *Modern Family*?' how many people out of 10 are going to say, 'Yeah, I saw it?'" Schneider believes not that many. "The TV markets are so nichey² that even a popular show isn't watched by most people you're going to run into." In other words, there is no one, dominant cultural conversation.

The same is true for the music industry. Today's best-selling album is selling a lot less than its counterpart of 10 years ago. Rae-Hunter of the Future of Music Coalition says this fragmentation has opened up the world for creators and consumers alike.

"The arrival of the Internet to some degree leveled the playing field, and that allowed a plethora³ of folks who otherwise would've had no shot of getting on commercial radio to be heard," says Rae-Hunter.

- [10] iTunes, webcasts, Pandora: There are many more "pipes" delivering the goods than there used to be, Rae-Hunter says. "It's an amazing time to be a fan."

Fractured media is also turning the advertising industry upside down. Fay Ferguson is co-CEO of Burrell Communications, an ad agency that designs marketing campaigns aimed at African-American consumers. "It's ushering in a totally different era of communications," Ferguson says.

She says American culture has been fractured for a while. In fact, Burrell Communications was founded on "the principle that black people are not dark-skinned white people." She says the agency knew that African-Americans were a separate, viable market. She says there have always been many American cultures. "But technology has been an enabler," Ferguson says. "So now there's a way to get to these smaller groups efficiently."

Ferguson says targeted marketing is the name of the game now more than ever.

In such a fractured society, is America at risk of losing a common culture? Rosenberg of *The Atlantic* says maybe. But she also thinks it will make us appreciate the mass cultural events that do occur even more, like the end of the Harry Potter series or Michael Jackson's death.

- [15] Rosenberg cites Jackson's death as one of the rare moments that affected millions of people: fans, former fans and those around the world who simply recognized his influence. "It was enormous because we were united in a way that we aren't normally," Rosenberg says. "It added significance to the event."

If Jackson were coming of age now, could he become the King of Pop in such a fractured culture? Probably not. The once monolithic⁴ record companies have lost their power. The fractured media has made it easy for people to discover all kinds of new talent — and learn about artists from other cultures — just by changing the channel.

1. After particularly shocking or exciting episodes of a television series, coworkers would often gather around the office water-cooler the next day to discuss their reactions. The term "water-cooler moments" has come to refer more generally to scenes in popular shows that everyone watches and enjoys talking about with others.
2. an informal version of "niche," which describes products that are appealing only to a specific kind of person
3. **Plethora (noun):** a very large number or amount

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Summarize the central ideas of the article on the lines below.

2. PART A: How does the comparison of “Two and a Half Men” to “The Cosby Show” in paragraph 6 contribute to the idea of cultural fragmentation?
- A. It illustrates how divided our attention to different media has become as more options have become available.
 - B. It suggests that modern shows are more difficult for all ages to relate to due to more “adult” themes.
 - C. It reveals the lack of community felt among Americans as a result of having fewer cultural experiences in common.
 - D. It explains the reason behind the comedic sitcom’s decline, as cultural interests become more varied.
3. PART B: Which of the following paragraphs contributes to the idea of cultural fragmentation in the same way as the example in Part A?
- A. Paragraph 4
 - B. Paragraph 8
 - C. Paragraph 11
 - D. Paragraph 15
4. PART A: What does the word “nichey” mean as it is used in paragraph 7?
- A. Broadly appealing to a wide variety
 - B. Not relatable to most people
 - C. Given to popularity and trendiness
 - D. Pertaining to particular segments of a wider market

5. PART B: Which detail from paragraph 7 provides the best clue to the meaning of the word “nichey”?
- A. “we’re not all watching the same shows”
 - B. “really great comedy that’s popular and new”
 - C. “most people you’re going to run into”
 - D. “one, dominant cultural conversation”

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In your opinion, is the fragmentation of American culture good, bad, or both? Explain your answer.
2. Can you think of examples of “fractured culture” not listed in this article? Discuss.
3. Fay Ferguson argues that American culture has been fractured for a while. Do you agree or disagree with this assertion? Explain your answer.
4. In the context of this article, how has America changed over time? Cite evidence from this article, your own experience, and other art or literature in your answer.
5. Do you believe that it’s important to preserve “cultural common ground”? Explain your answer.

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Fish Cheeks

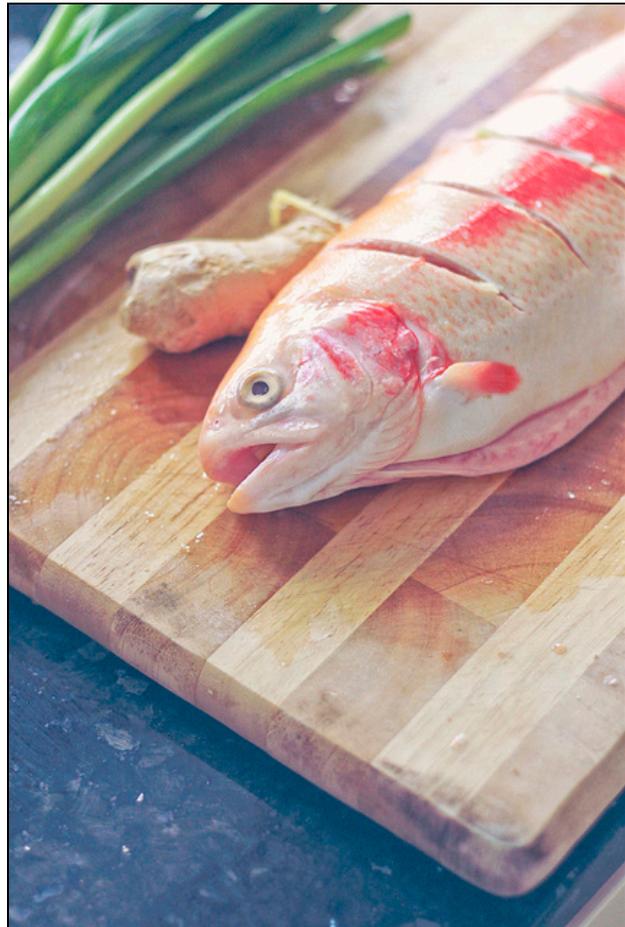
By Amy Tan
1987

Amy Tan (born 1952) is an American writer whose work often provides insight into the experiences of Chinese Americans and mother-daughter relationships. While her parents emigrated from China, Tan herself was born in Oakland, California. As you read, take notes on how the author's use of imagery contributes to the overall tone.

[1] I fell in love with the minister's son the winter I turned fourteen. He was not Chinese, but as white as Mary in the manger. For Christmas I prayed for this blond-haired boy, Robert, and a slim new American nose.

When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas? What would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food?

On Christmas Eve I saw that my mother had outdone herself in creating a strange menu. She was pulling black veins out of the backs of fleshy prawns.¹ The kitchen was littered with appalling² mounds of raw food: A slimy rock cod with bulging eyes that pleaded not to be thrown into a pan of hot oil. Tofu, which looked like stacked wedges of rubbery white sponges. A bowl soaking dried fungus back to life. A plate of squid, their backs crisscrossed with knife markings so they resembled bicycle tires.



"IMG_6871" by ais3n is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

And then they arrived — the minister's family and all my relatives in a clamor³ of doorbells and rumples Christmas packages. Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence.

-
1. A prawn is a common name, used particularly in the United Kingdom and Ireland, for large swimming crustaceans or shrimp.
 2. **Appalling (adjective):** causing shock, disgust, or alarm
 3. **Clamor (noun):** loud and confusing noise

[5] Dinner threw me deeper into despair. My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table, dipping them into the dozen or so plates of food. Robert and his family waited patiently for platters to be passed to them. My relatives murmured with pleasure when my mother brought out the whole steamed fish. Robert grimaced. Then my father poked his chopsticks just below the fish eye and plucked out the soft meat. "Amy, your favorite," he said, offering me the tender fish cheek. I wanted to disappear.

At the end of the meal my father leaned back and belched loudly, thanking my mother for her fine cooking. "It's a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied," explained my father to our astonished guests. Robert was looking down at his plate with a reddened face. The minister managed to muster up a quiet burp. I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night.

After everyone had gone, my mother said to me, "You want to be the same as American girls on the outside." She handed me an early gift. It was a miniskirt in beige tweed. "But inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame."

And even though I didn't agree with her then, I knew that she understood how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner. It wasn't until many years later — long after I had gotten over my crush on Robert — that I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu. For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods.

"Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan from Seventeen Magazine. Copyright © 1987 by Amy Tan and the Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How does the narrator's description of the cod in paragraph 3 impact the tone of the passage? [RL.4]
 - A. She describes it as "slimy" and pathetic, which contributes to the angry tone of the passage.
 - B. She describes it as "slimy" with "bulging eyes," which contributes to the horrified tone of the passage.
 - C. She describes it as pleading with big "bulging eyes," which contributes to the pitying tone of the passage.
 - D. She describes it as pleading not to be cooked, which contributes to the mocking tone of the passage.

2. How does the narrator's point of view affect how the events are described in the passage? [RL.6]
 - A. She is nervous to have the boy she likes over for Christmas dinner, and so the text focuses entirely on the boy's reactions.
 - B. She is bored with her family's old Chinese traditions and wants to try new modern customs, and this affects how she focuses on being more "American."
 - C. She is excited to have the minister's son over for Christmas, and this excitement causes her to criticize every little detail of her mother's cooking.
 - D. She is embarrassed by her family's Chinese customs, and this shame influences how she describes the food and her family's behavior.

3. PART A: What does the word "despair" mean as used in paragraph 5? [RL.4]
 - A. shock
 - B. misery
 - C. frustration
 - D. disgust

4. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "Robert grunted hello, and I pretended he was not worthy of existence." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "My relatives licked the ends of their chopsticks and reached across the table" (Paragraph 5)
 - C. "I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night." (Paragraph 6)
 - D. "how much I had suffered during the evening's dinner" (Paragraph 8)

5. What does paragraph 8 reveal about the narrator's character development? [RL.3]
 - A. After the dinner, she realizes that the minister's son is not as friendly as she thought.
 - B. As an adult, she regrets trying to fit in with other Americans and losing her identity.
 - C. Years later, she learns to appreciate her family and her Chinese American identity.
 - D. Years later, she learns to love her mother's cooking, which she previously hated.

6. In paragraph 7, Amy's mother says to her, "You want to be the same as American girls on the outside... But inside you must always be Chinese." How does this quote contribute to the overall meaning of the story? [RL.6]

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Hello, My Name Is

By Jason Kim
2017

Jason Kim is an Asian American screenwriter and playwright. In this personal account, Kim discusses his experiences emigrating from Korea at a young age and his struggle to fit into American culture while maintaining his identity. As you read, take notes on how Kim's experiences shaped his feelings about his identity.

- [1] I will never forget the day I picked a new name. I was standing in front of my class on my first day of school at Craig Elementary in St. Louis, Missouri. I had, only a day before, landed at Lambert airport after a 16-hour flight from Seoul, South Korea. I was 10 years old. I was nervous, terrified, and jet-lagged, and I was wearing a vest because I thought it was chic.

For my entire life, everyone, including me, had known me by my Korean name: Jun Hyuk. But here, in this new country, in a brand-new classroom full of foreign faces, I had to pick a new, easy-to-pronounce, American name.

Jason.

Jason Kim.

- [5] How did I settle on Jason? Because I didn't speak any English. Because my teacher didn't speak any Korean. And because it was either going to be Aladdin, from my favorite childhood Disney tale, or Jason, from the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*.

I spent the next decade wanting nothing more than to look like a Larry Lorberbaum or a Garrett Kennedy. I still vividly remember my first time at recess, a confusing experience for several reasons, in large part because hanging off monkey bars and making each other cry during dodgeball were not educationally sanctioned¹ activities in Asia. What was so fun about waiting in line, running up the steps, and going down a tiny slide over and over again? What was the value in sprinting after your classmate like a person with rabies, screaming, "TAG!"

Why didn't anyone look, sound, or act like me?



"Sammy" by Hannah Yoon is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

1. to give official permission or approval

I spent most days at recess sitting alone on the sidelines, eating the special snack that my mother had packed. The snack, a rice cake or a piece of candy from Korea, was always accompanied by a note, usually a joke, and sometimes embellished with a drawing, which often looked like an abstract painting when it was meant to be a sketch of our beloved deceased poodle.

A month had passed when a teacher finally tapped me on the shoulder.

[10] "Are you OK, sweetie?"

Before I could answer, another teacher rang out, "Maybe he likes sitting alone. Maybe that's the Asian way."

But in truth, I wanted to participate. I wanted to run up to Timmy like a crazy person and yell, "YOU'RE IT!" I just didn't know how.

Outside on the playground, sitting alone at recess, I learned to hate being Asian. I wanted desperately, more than anything, to be white.

I immediately forced my parents to stop calling me Jun Hyuk at home. I named myself after some guy in a live-action children's television series, and by God, they were going to call me by that name. I got rid of my fitted vests for loose-fitting basketball jerseys. I bought tickets to an Incubus concert and threw away my K-pop² CDs. I stopped reading Korean children's books in order to figure out what the hell was going on with James and his giant peaches.

[15] At the dinner table, I committed the two worst sins that a Korean son could possibly commit: I stopped speaking Korean and I stopped eating Korean food. My parents would try to talk to me over a bowl of kimchi stew, and I would pout and ask, in English, if we could order the Meat Lover's pie from Pizza Hut. For my 11th birthday, my mom made me my favorite Korean dish, oh jing uh bokkeum (spicy stir-fried squid), and I looked at her with disdain³ as I declared, "This is disgusting." The next day for dinner, she made me a cheeseburger. I promptly told her it tasted inauthentic and made her drive me to McDonald's. Oh, and no more special snacks either. Unless they were artificially flavored and made by Kraft. (I was a heinous⁴ child. Sorry, Mom.)

I graduated from high school and moved to New York City for college, where my primary goal was to blend in. But more and more, my new friends wanted to know about all the things that made me uncomfortable in the Midwest. To them, being an immigrant made me interesting. At dinner parties, people would fawn over the Korean food and ask for my mom's recipes. They even wanted to know about my childhood in Seoul. And at karaoke, people were genuinely excited that I could sing both Girls Generation and Natalie Imbruglia's "Torn." All of a sudden, being different was an asset, not a risk. In New York, I didn't have to be ashamed about being an Asian immigrant. I could just be ashamed about everything else in my life.

2. K-pop, also known as Korean pop, is a musical genre originating in South Korea.

3. **Disdain** (*noun*): the feeling that someone or something is unworthy of one's respect

4. **Heinous** (*adjective*): very bad, wicked, or evil

A year after I finished graduate school in playwriting, almost two decades after I'd landed at Lambert airport, Lena and Jenni⁵ cast me as an Asian American graduate student on the fourth season of *Girls*. Almost immediately after the episodes aired, I began receiving emails, tweets, and Facebook messages from young Asian American writers, actors, and performers, who were excited to see a fellow Asian face on TV.

I was shocked. How could this be? I appeared on the show for, like, a millisecond, and my Beyoncé sweatshirt was definitely doing more work than I did onscreen. It was genuinely baffling to think that anyone could look at my very Korean face and feel a sense of connection, much less react in a positive way to the very features I hated about myself for so long.

We are at the point in our culture where people are finally beginning to talk about Asian identities in the media. I have not been at the forefront of those issues. I have been crouching in the back, hiding in the corner, watching people like Margaret Cho, Daniel Dae Kim, Ali Wong, George Takei, Constance Wu, and Aziz Ansari courageously speak up about the various issues that Asian Americans face in Hollywood.

[20] The issues exist both in front of the camera and behind the scenes. There are barely any roles written for Asian actors. And in general, the roles that can be played by a person of any race do not tend to go to Asian actors. Worst of all, the few roles that should go to Asian actors — some very high-profile — are being portrayed by white actors. Behind the camera, there are equally few Asian American writers, producers, studio executives, authors, and editors, and while there are certainly a significant number of people struggling to make it, their efforts seem to go largely unrecognized.

I have always been terrified of speaking up on behalf of diversity, which to me means a state of inclusion — a choice to be aware of the vast and profound⁶ range of identities in this world, including your own.

I have been terrified because I grew up in a country without many visible Asian Americans in the culture, and I learned to hate every part of myself that felt foreign and strange. Unfortunately, years later, this is a problem that many young Asian Americans continue to face. How do you understand yourself in a diverse country that actively chooses to ignore your particular kind of diversity?

At one point during my 20s, I took a long, dramatic look in the mirror and realized, You will be Korean for the rest of your life. As a teenager growing up in the Midwest, that thought made me cringe. Now, it makes me happy and deeply proud.

My dream now as a 30-year-old is for our country to become a place where a cameo like mine would go completely unnoticed. And to see every third-grade teacher tell his or her students, "Keep your name. You don't have to change a thing."

"Hello My Name is ____: How I Learned to Stop Whitewashing Myself" from Lenny Letter by Jason Kim. Copyright © 2017 by Jason Kim. Used by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

5. referring to the show's writers, Lena Dunham and Jenni Konner

6. **Profound (adjective):** very great or intense

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best identifies the main claim Kim develops in the text?
 - A. Asian Americans should be encouraged to embrace and celebrate their identities in America.
 - B. The difficulty Kim experienced accepting his identity as a child was due to the lack of Asian American actors he saw on television.
 - C. Asian American actors continue to be denied opportunities in the media because of their Asian identity.
 - D. Kim pursued playwriting in college with the objective of increasing the presence of Asian American actors in entertainment.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "I spent most days at recess sitting alone on the sidelines, eating the special snack that my mother had packed." (Paragraph 8)
 - B. "At the dinner table, I committed the two worst sins that a Korean son could possibly commit: I stopped speaking Korean and I stopped eating Korean food." (Paragraph 15)
 - C. "We are at the point in our culture where people are finally beginning to talk about Asian identities in the media." (Paragraph 19)
 - D. "My dream... is for our country to become a place where a cameo like mine would go completely unnoticed. And to see every third-grade teacher tell his or her students, 'Keep your name. You don't have to change a thing.'" (Paragraph 24)

3. PART A: How does Kim's inclusion of his experiences as a child contribute to the text?
 - A. It shows how difficult it can be to adjust to a new school and make friends.
 - B. It encourages readers to celebrate the diversity of their peers.
 - C. It emphasizes how Kim felt ashamed of and rejected his Asian identity.
 - D. It depicts the strained relationship that Kim had with his family while growing up.

4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "I still vividly remember my first time at recess, a confusing experience for several reasons, in large part because hanging off monkey bars and making each other cry during dodgeball were not educationally sanctioned activities in Asia." (Paragraph 6)
 - B. "Before I could answer, another teacher rang out, 'Maybe he likes sitting alone. Maybe that's the Asian way.'" (Paragraph 11)
 - C. "My parents would try to talk to me over a bowl of kimchi stew, and I would pout and ask, in English, if we could order the Meat Lover's pie from Pizza Hut." (Paragraph 15)
 - D. "At dinner parties, people would fawn over the Korean food and ask for my mom's recipes. They even wanted to know about my childhood in Seoul." (Paragraph 16)

5. How did Kim's experience on "Girls" impact his views on Asian identities in the media?

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The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: Excerpts from Chapters 1 & 7

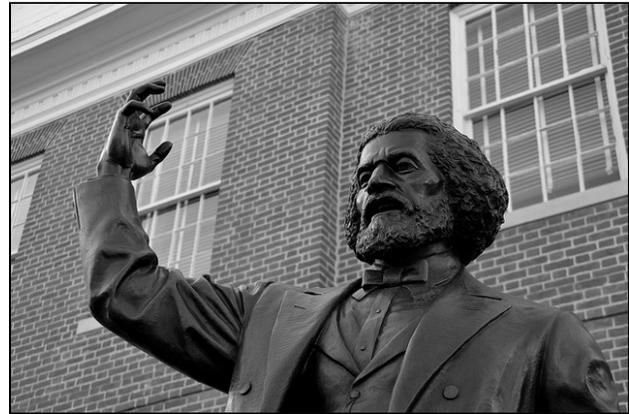
By Frederick Douglass
1845

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was an African American social reformer, orator, and writer. He escaped from slavery, taught himself to read and write, and eventually became the leader of the abolitionist movement, dedicated to ending the institution of slavery. In this excerpt of his 1845 autobiography The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass, he describes his experiences as a slave. As you read, take notes on the factors that motivated Douglass to educate himself.

Chapter I

[1] I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it.

[...] The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.



"Honoring Frederick Douglass" by Adam Fagan is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

[...] I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony—a title which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay. He was not considered a rich slaveholder. He owned two or three farms, and about thirty slaves. His farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself.

Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. [...] He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.

[5] [...]

Chapter VII

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems.¹ I had no regular teacher.

[...] The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge.

[...] I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of abolition.

1. strategy

[10] [...] The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—"S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus—"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus—"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—"S. A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write.

[...] Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass (1845) is in the public domain.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: How do the master's treatment of the slaves, as depicted in chapter 1, affect Douglass?
 - A. Like most slaveholders, he does not educate them, which prompts Douglass to learn to read and write.
 - B. Douglass witnesses brutal abuses of other slaves and knowing that he will soon enter this life as he grows, he becomes interested in education, escape, and abolition.
 - C. Douglass witnesses brutal abuses of other slaves, specifically his aunt, and that motivates him to take revenge on his masters and all other slaveholders.
 - D. The master beats and whips Douglass, a painful experience that Douglass will never forget and one he vows to write down for others to know.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass." (Paragraph 4)
 - D. "While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists." (Paragraph 8)

3. Which of the following best explains why Douglass likely worked so hard to learn to read and write?
 - A. He learned because he was curious about the world.
 - B. He learned in the hopes of improving his life as a slave, if not total escape from slavery.
 - C. He learned so that he may teach other slaves under Anthony's control.
 - D. He learned as a sort of revenge on his masters, who kept him in the dark.

4. Which of the following best describes the interaction between Douglass and the two Irishmen?
 - A. Douglass is ordered by the Irishmen to assist them (because he is a slave); afterwards, they talk and the men apologize for treating him so poorly.
 - B. Douglass fears the Irishmen for their recognition of him as a slave after he tells them he can read.
 - C. Douglass helps two Irishmen as the ship yard and they, in return, offer to help him escape to the North.
 - D. Douglass is wary of the Irishmen he helps because white men had been known to encourage slaves to run so they may catch them for a reward.

5. What methods did Douglass take to learn to read and write?
