Frederick Douglass Socratic Seminar 2016

1. How has the absence of Douglass’s family for most of his life affected his view on slavery?
2. How did the master’s actions influence him in his future? How did the master’s treatment of him influence his role as an abolitionist?
3. At what point in his life/in the book do you think Frederick Douglass truly realized he wanted (or rather needed) his freedom?
4. Do you think Douglass would have been presented with the same opportunities that led to his freedom had he been born a female?
5. Which does Douglass seem to use most in his rhetoric, ethos, logos, or pathos? Does Douglass achieve his intended purpose with his narrative?
6. Douglass story was written as facts about his life (nonfiction), but he also has a lot of pathos. How does he do it? Discuss how he tells his story and how he combines his history with his purpose of persuading his audience?
7. How did educating himself affect his view of his self worth?
8. Did traveling to England and back and meeting new people affect his views and ideals? Did he learn more than he had by meeting new people?
9. Out of all of his masters, do you think any should have been forgiven by Douglass?
10. Do you think that slaves dehumanized other slaves? Consider Douglass’s language. Does he humanize or dehumanize the other slaves by how he describes them?
11. Douglass talks about how all of his masters are Christians and calls them hypocritical. Why was Douglass against having a religious slaver master? What role does religion play in the book? Is Douglass himself for or against Christianity?
12. Do you think that Douglass is a good influence or model on the issue of racism today? How should his work influence today? Do you think his work will continue to be significant, or will he be forgotten through time?
13. How was slavery detrimental to the south? To America overall? How do we see this played out in the family and community as described by Douglass?
14. Why did Douglass end the book the way he did? What was the impact of this?
15. Put yourself in Douglass’ shoes. How would you react to seeing your aunt whipped like he saw? Why do you think Douglass reacted the way that he did? How do you think the institution of slavery influenced his actions?
16. Why do you think Frederick Douglass was able to rise above other slaves and prosper? What about Douglass made him able to be successful in becoming free?
17. If Frederick Douglass was never a slave, would he have still become famous as an author and as an abolitionist? Consider how he creates his ethos.
18. Do the overseers enjoy being cruel? If yes, what changed them from not enjoying it to enjoying it?
19. Which do you think had a bigger effect on the slaves, physical harm or mental dehumanization?
20. Describe Douglass’s different masters. Do you think he would have been completely destroyed (or dehumanized) if he would have spent longer at the “slave breaker”?
21. Why does Frederick Douglass refer to slavery as a “living thing”?
22. How do you think the world would be different today if slavery (in America) had never ended? How is slavery still seen today?
23. When he was younger, did Douglass believe he was less than human? And was this sense of self depreciation by nature or nurture (born or taught)?
24. How does Douglass view America? The American Dream? Does he see the American Dream as achievable for slaves? If not, how are his attitudes about change and success similar to the idea of the American Dream?
25. What do you think Douglass would think about our world today, specifically in terms of racial (or other discrimination) issues?
26. Why was it important for slave owners to keep slaves ignorant of their birthdays or their parentage? Why is this so troubling for slaves (like Douglass)? Why separate families? How is the family structure affected by slavery? Why?
27. Discuss the role of literacy and education in Douglass’s narrative. What claim is he making about the importance of education? Do you agree?

Socratic Seminar Rules

1. **Refer to the text** when needed during the discussion.  A seminar is not a test of memory.  You are not "learning a subject"; *your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text.*
2. **RESPECT YOUR PEERS AND RESPECT THE DISCUSSION. DO NOT have out work from another class or have your phone out. This will result in a 0 for the entire discussion regardless of prior contributions.**
3. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.
4. Talk to the participants, not just the leader.
5. Stick to the point currently under discussion; make notes about ideas you want to come back to.
6. Don't raise hands; take turns speaking.
7. Listen carefully and respectfully.
8. Speak up so that everyone can hear you.
9. Talk to each other, not just to the teacher or the leader.
10. Discuss the ideas rather than each other's opinions.

**Discussion Rubric—**

Score yourself and your contributions to today’s discussion.

**Circle number that corresponds most accurately with today’s experience.**

1. Number of *positive comments* I made during today’s discussion:

**1 2 3 4**

1. How would you rate the quality of your comments,1 being “terrible” (the lowest) and 4 being ”awesome and insightful” (the highest).

**1 (terrible) 2 (ok…not great, but I tried) 3 (good!) 4 (I am a discussion**

**wizard)**

1. Did you reference the text during the discussion? (both in your comments and in reference to other’s comments)

**1** **(no) 2 (a few times) 3 (sometimes) 4 (So much!)**

1. Did you abide by all the Socratic Seminar Rules?

**1 (no) 2 (I tried) 3 (yes, with a few lapses) 4 (I rocked this)**

1. Did you use this time to learn more about the reading from your classmates and discussion?

**1 (no) 2 (I tried) 3 (yes, with a few lapses) 4 (I rocked this)**

**Now…Add up your total \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/20**

**Now subtract:**

* 5 points if you interrupted a classmate
* 5 points if you talked over someone or to a neighbor while others were talking
* 5 points for every comment that you made that was off topic or unrelated

**Final Total \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/20**

**Comments:** In the space below, write a short 3-5 sentence reflection on the activity. What points did this discussion clarify? What did you learn? Did it change your mind on anything? Do you think your discussion abilities in Seminar have changed from the beginning of the year?