## NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

**Frederick’s Journey: The Life of Frederick Douglass**

Written by Doreen Rappaport, Illustrated by London Ladd

Lesson Plan by JoAnn Wood

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### Abstract

A powerful biography of Douglass, in which the basic contours of his life are enhanced by quotes from his own works. Back matter includes author & illustrator notes, a timeline, and recommended text and online resources for further exploration.

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<td>Book Summary</td>
<td><em>Frederick’s Journey</em> is the powerful, well-researched and eloquently voiced story of the life of Frederick Douglass. Rappaport and Ladd tap the inspiration that he provides of how to overcome life’s difficulties and live free. The book’s author and illustrator notes and other back matter enhance the story.</td>
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| NCSS Themes | II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
III. People, Places, and Environments  
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions  
X. Civic Ideals and Practices |
| Materials |  
- Map(s) of the United States, 1818 - 1895  
- Map of U.S./Great Britain and Ireland in mid-1800’s  
- Writing/Social Studies journals for students  
- Internet to access websites  
- Chart paper & markers  
- Images of sculptures and paintings of Douglass |
| Objectives | Big Ideas: How can individuals respond to injustice and enslavement? How do learning and literacy become weapons in the fight for freedom and justice? How do historic figures leave a legacy to inspire us today?  
Students will:  
1. explore the geographic settings of the life of Douglass. How did his environment affect his experiences and decisions?  
2. determine the historical context within which this story took place, using the timeline and other cues from the text as well as background information on slavery and Douglass’s life.  
3. examine the writer’s point of view and her purpose in telling this story.  
4. closely read and respond to how the illustrator worked to capture in images significant moments in this man’s life.  
5. use our historical imaginations to visualize what life was like for Douglass, and how his life changed over time. |
| Lessons | Post the Big Ideas or EQ’s for the lesson on the board or chart paper or place in student social studies journals. |
These are divided into segments which can be adjusted to fit your students’ needs.

- How can individuals respond to injustice and enslavement?
- How do learning and literacy become weapons in the fight for freedom and justice?
- How do historic figures leave a legacy to inspire us today?

Begin the lesson by asking students to name a historic figure whom they think has helped grow freedom in our country. Discuss the various names they might generate and mention the various forms their activism has taken. Ask them if they can think of a way that learning and literacy have been involved in that work. Jot their responses on the board or chart.

Show the front cover of the book and add the name of Frederick Douglass to the list (if he has not already been named). Tell them that we are going to look more closely at one such figure. Ask them to study the painting of Douglass and brainstorm what kind of character traits they think he might have had based on this depiction.

Read the book aloud, taking time to fully explore the illustrations and what they add to the story. Read it through with them first to establish the contours of his life, and discuss first impressions. Have them jot in their journals questions that arise from either the text or the images in this biography. What do they know now about Douglass; what do they wonder?

Build disciplinary thinking by re-reading the book and discussing it with students from four viewpoints. The depth of student observations will correlate to their age and level of background knowledge. Elicit questions and discussion with the following prompts.

- Read through a second time, noting any historical information they glean. Note this information on a chart.
- Read through the book and look for geographic cues related to this setting. Trace the movement from one place to another that marked the life of Frederick Douglass.
- In what ways does this book talk about how the government or authority figures have an impact on the lives of Douglass and those for whom he speaks?
- How did the economic lives of Douglass and others in this book change with their change in status from slave to free? What were some economic challenges during slavery and what kinds of changes were brought about by emancipation?

Find primary source images of sculptures, his home, and other material that can help your students examine his life more closely at [http://www.doreenrappaport.com/fredericks-journey-the-life-of-frederick-douglass](http://www.doreenrappaport.com/fredericks-journey-the-life-of-frederick-douglass)

Also explore primary sources located at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site at: [https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/frdo/index.html](https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/frdo/index.html)

| Suggested Extension Activities | There are many ways that this multi-faceted lesson may be connected with other curriculum areas, including:
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<td>a. ELA connections - Reading, writing, speaking, and listening permeate all of the social studies activities above. Read an excerpt from Douglass’s autobiography aloud to students (located at <a href="http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23/23-h/23-h.htm">http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23/23-h/23-h.htm</a> and have students analyze...</td>
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the “voice” of Douglass, comparing and contrasting his own words in describing an event with the way that Rappaport describes the same event in her biography. You will want to select the passage carefully to correspond to events depicted in the biography and that are appropriate for the age and maturity level of your students. Some passages are quite distressing to read.

b. The importance of literacy in Douglass’s life. Re-read the section of the biography emphasizing how he learned to read and how this contributed to his ability to become an advocate for others. Tie this early literacy to later speaking and writing accomplishments, including the publication of the North Star newsletter. Examine a copy of this newsletter at the Library of Congress at: http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/02/0210001r.jpg and see some suggestions for using it at: http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/educate/norths.html

c. Explore how effectively Rappaport uses quotations from Douglass to move the story along and to reveal aspects of his character. Her explanation of how and why she uses quotations so liberally is, “I use words from archives, letters, songs, poems, memoirs, and court testimony – interwoven with my words – to trace the struggles, fears, hopes, inventive resistances, courage, dignity and celebrate the triumphs of ‘extraordinary-ordinary people’ whose names many of us will never know.” http://doreenrappaport.com/about/ Assign each group of students one of the quotations that Rappaport uses in the text to probe more fully and share out with the whole class.

d. Great Speeches – Frederick Douglass became known as a great orator in the cause of abolition. Share with your students excerpts from one of his great speeches, found at: http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/douglass.htm Consider having them delivering the quote in the way that Douglass might have, given his goal of convincing his audience members of the evils of slavery. Have students identify an issue today on which they feel passionately and develop a speech to convince others on that issue.

e. Art connections – Read the illustrator’s notes and how he researches and prepares to bring the past visually to life. Some students might wish to create their own illustration of Douglass. What artistic decisions will they make? Explore images of the known sculptures of Douglass and analyze using the 4 steps of Feldman’s model of art criticism: Description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. One brief overview is at: http://www2.gvsu.edu/hipshean/resources/Feldman's%20Model%20Crit.pdf An alternative way to analyze images or other primary sources is the Library of Congress primary source analysis process of Observe, Reflect, and Question is described at: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf

Digital Resources

Online sources – The back matter of the book provides an author’s note, an illustrator’s note, a timeline, and text and web resources where students may find more information about Douglass. Guide them to explore this topic further. For more information about Doreen Rappaport, see http://doreenrappaport.com/. For more information about London Ladd, see http://londonladd.com/

Author

JoAnn Wood retired as the Elementary Social Studies Supervisor for the Cobb County School District in Marietta, Georgia, in 2014, and is now the Social Studies Program Specialist at the Georgia Department of Education. Her 33 years of elementary and middle
school teaching plus her extensive work with teachers have nurtured her enthusiasm about
great children’s literature and the ways it can bring learning to life. You can reach her at
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