

## Text Complexity Analysis

Text complexity analysis			
<b>Created by:</b>	Michelle Henry	<b>Event/Date:</b>	Teachfest Connecticut: Summer Academy July 29, 2014
<b>Text and Author</b>	Excerpt from <i>Narrative Of The Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> , written by Frederick Douglass	<b>Where to Access Text</b>	Public Domain <a href="http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/dougeduc.html">http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/dougeduc.html</a>
Text Description			
Published in 1845, <i>Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> was the first volume of Douglass’s autobiography. In this excerpt, Douglass revealed the mental oppression that he had experienced as a slave and the importance of literacy as a means to enlightenment and freedom. It could be inferred that illiteracy perpetuated a slave’s ignorance and compliance while literacy inspired critical thinking and self-empowerment. For instance, alluding to his reading of the “Columbia Orator”, Douglass demonstrates how he was able to see the evil of slavery and how this realization instilled a profound sense of discontentment. This excerpt would fit well in an American Literature or U.S. History unit, highlighting the slave narrative genre and the struggles of slaves during the antebellum period. Douglass employs pedantic and emotional diction to convey the injustice of slavery.			
Quantitative			
<b>Lexile and Grade Level</b>	1070L- 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	<b>Text Length</b>	483 words
Qualitative			
Meaning/Central Ideas		Text Structure/Organization	
Literature has an impacting influence on readers. During the slave era, literacy was a means to freedom. In today’s society, literacy and education are just as important. Students could make connections to how other people were inspired by works of literature and how readers’ perspectives of the world can be affirmed, expanded, or challenged.		This text is a well-known excerpt of Douglass’s autobiography. The organization is sequential with Douglass introducing his first exposure to reading and then explaining the implications of his literacy and learning.	
Prior Knowledge Demands		Language Features	
Students should be made aware of the history of American Slavery, who Frederick Douglass was, and the contributions he made to the Abolitionist Movement. Slave narrative was an important genre in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century and was influential in fueling anti-slavery sentiments.		The use of figurative language (analogy of the “robbers” and the metaphor of “sting my soul”) could be explored to understand the depth of Douglass’s anguish. Because the story was written in the 19th century, punctuation usage especially in complex sentences differed from today’s usage.	
Potential Reader/Task Challenges			
In order for students to gain an understanding of Douglass’s slave experience, students should have knowledge of a brief history of American Slavery. Modern day students may not be able to connect with the severity of the slave experience; nonetheless, an individual’s conflict with his/her society is inevitable. Prior to reading Douglass’s narrative, students could be asked to make a connection to someone who was inspired by literature to question societal norms and to take action (i.e. Colonists were influenced by Thomas Paine’s <u>Common Sense</u> pamphlet; Christopher McCandless was influenced by Tolstoy, Jack London, Thoreau, etc.). In a post-reading activity, students could also compare the implications that literature had on Douglass with its implications on other people.			
Big Takeaway			
By alluding to an anecdotal example, his reading of the "Columbia's Orator", Douglass demonstrates the revolutionary effect that literature could have on its readers. For the first time, Douglass was enlightened to see the injustice and sheer inhumanity of slavery. Douglass's intense indignation against slavery was further underscored by his effective use of emotional diction and figurative language. Students should understand the value of literature and education not only for slaves during the antebellum era but also for the empowering of individuals in every society.			

## Vocabulary Analysis

	<b>Words that demand less teaching time (i.e. the definition is singular and concrete)</b>	<b>Words that demand more teaching time (i.e. words with multiple meanings and/or that are part of a word family)</b>
<b>Words that can be determined in context</b>	<p>forbade (Tier 2)  denunciation (Tier 2)  abhor (Tier 2)  detest (Tier 2)  unutterable (Tier 2)  anguish (Tier 2)  enslavers (Tier 2)  vindication (Tier 2)</p>	<p>unabated interest (Tier 2)  human rights (Tier 2)  discontentment (Tier 2)  sting my soul (Tier 2)</p>
<b>Words that cannot be determined in context</b>	<p>Voluntary emancipation (Tier 3)  Catholic Emancipation (Tier 3)</p>	