

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Main Ideas & Summarize

Read the short story and answer each question.



Frederick Douglass: A Voice for Justice

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in the early 1800s. As a child, he was not allowed to learn to read, but he secretly taught himself using scraps of newspapers and books. He believed that knowledge was the first step to freedom.

At age 20, Douglass escaped from slavery and traveled north. He began to speak out against slavery, telling powerful stories about his life. His speeches shocked and inspired audiences. Some people didn't believe he had ever been enslaved—his words were so intelligent and powerful.

Douglass wrote several books, including his famous autobiography. In it, he described the cruelty of slavery and the strength of the human spirit. He used his voice to demand justice, equality, and education for all people.

He also worked with leaders like Abraham Lincoln to push for change. After slavery was abolished, Douglass continued fighting—for the rights of women, African Americans, and immigrants.

Even after his death in 1895, his words continue to influence people. Today, schools, museums, and libraries honor his legacy. His life is a reminder that one voice—when used with courage and truth—can change the world.



Name: _____

Frederick Douglass: A Voice for Justice

1. What is one main idea of the passage?

- A. Frederick Douglass escaped slavery and used his voice to fight for justice.
- B. Frederick Douglass wanted to become president of the United States.
- C. Frederick Douglass never learned how to read or write.
- D. Frederick Douglass wrote books about how to farm.

2. What is another main idea from the text?

- A. His work continues to inspire people long after his death.
- B. He disappeared from history after slavery ended.
- C. He lived quietly after escaping slavery.
- D. He only focused on ending slavery, not other causes.

3. Fill in the blank:

Douglass believed that _____ was the first step toward freedom.

4. What details in the passage support the idea that Douglass used his voice to create change?

5. Summarize the two main ideas of the passage and include at least one detail for each.



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: V

Lexile Level: 950L–1100L

Grade Level: 5th Grade, End of the Year

Genre: Biography / History

Introducing the Text

“This text shares the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass, a powerful speaker and writer who escaped slavery and fought for justice. Students will identify two main ideas, connect them to supporting evidence, and write a summary that shows deep understanding.”

Vocabulary: slavery, autobiography, justice, legacy, equality

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about slavery in U.S. history?
 2. How can writing or speaking make a difference in the world?
 3. What might it mean to be remembered for using your voice?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What obstacles did Douglass face, and how did he overcome them?
 2. What evidence shows his impact during his lifetime?
 3. How does the author show Douglass’s influence after his death?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What are the two main ideas in this passage?
 2. What details from the text support each main idea?
 3. Why is Frederick Douglass’s life still important to study today?
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Activity Idea

Have students create a “Legacy Poster” for Frederick Douglass. The poster should include his two main contributions from the passage and a direct quote or paraphrase of something he did or believed. Students can add their own reflection on how his voice continues to matter today.

