Lesson 1:

Importance of Education

“Learning is the pathway from slavery to freedom.” (Frederick Douglass)

This lesson is a good post-reading activity for it will engage students in an active discussion of the narrative. Its main focus is on understanding slave narrative as genre and understanding the importance of education. It is suitable for on-level and advanced classes. Regular classes may need more guidance, while advanced classes may be more independent.

INTRODUCTION:

_The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave_ is an insightful firsthand experience and primary source to comprehend the abomination of an institution such as slavery in the United States. By reading Frederick Douglass’s narrative students will gain an in-depth knowledge of the feelings aroused by this dramatic situation, in which a human being is allowed to keep another human being as chattel. The power of this narrative lies not only in being a historical primary source but also a successful account of how to defy fate and overcome adversity. Douglass does so by using learning and education as the only tools to break the chains that deprive him of his freedom. Perhaps it takes someone who was denied the right to learn to teach today’s students the importance of the education they take for granted.

STUDENTS WILL:

- recognize elements of an autobiographical account
- analyze the style, purpose and organization of this literary work.
- recognize literary elements such as symbols, motifs, themes in the narrative.
- understand how literary works reflect the culture that shaped them.
- analyze the role of education in their own lives.
- writing an autobiographical account of the lasting impact of education on the students lives.

RELEVANCE TO THE NC COURSE OF STUDY:

This lesson addresses the following goals of NC SCS for English III

**Competency Goal 1:** The learner will demonstrate increasing insight and reflection to print and non-print text through personal expression.

**Competency Goal 4:** The learner will critically analyze text to gain meaning, develop thematic connections, and synthesize ideas.

**Competency Goal 5:** The learner will interpret and evaluate representative texts to deepen understanding of literature of the United States
PROCEDURE:

• Divide the class into eleven groups and have each group tackle one of the chapters drawing the main idea and summarizing it for the rest of the class. Let each group do the following for their assigned chapter:

   1. What’s the purpose of this chapter?
   2. How does Douglass tie this chapter to the rest of the narrative?
   3. What kind of language does he use to convey meaning? Highlight the words you consider are powerful when it comes to education or slavery.
   4. Find autobiographical elements that help understand the meaning of the narrative.
   5. The narrative was a vehicle to open the eyes to people to the atrocities of slavery. How does Douglass achieve this in your chapter?
   6. Highlight in the text Douglass’s quotes that strongly address the power of self-education and learning. What is Douglass saying about education?

• Have a representative of each group share the group’s work with the rest of the class. Encourage students to look for the patterns that keep repeating in each chapter.
• Come to a conclusion as a class about the ways the narrative is structured help reader identify with the protagonist, i.e. Douglass himself and empathize. Also draw out of students’ discussion Douglass’s message about the importance of education.

FOLLOW UP ASSIGNMENT:

1) Students write their own narrative addressing what education has done in their lives, bearing in mind, their purpose, subject matter, audience, etc.
2) Conduct a role-play activity of Master Auld, Mistress Auld, and Frederick discussing Frederick’s learning how to read.