

What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

By Frederick Douglass

Directions: Today's activity focuses on the life of Frederick Douglass and more specifically his work, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?". Open *Gale In Context: U.S. History* and use the links provided in the document to answer the questions. **Be sure to log in to *Gale In Context: U.S. History* BEFORE clicking any links.** For the first three questions, read the sourcing information and the Historical Context part of the document before continuing.



What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (1852)

1. What is the document type listed in the sourcing information?
2. Why do you think it is important to know that information prior to reading?
3. What date was this given?

Historical Context: Before diving further in the speech, analyze what is happening in the timeframe in which Douglass gave this speech, what was the historical context. Using *Gale In Context: U.S. History*, utilize the Person Guide on Frederick Douglass to read more about the historical situation and answer the following questions.

Person Guide on Frederick Douglass

4. Douglass was born into slavery; how did he gain his freedom?
5. Describe Douglass's life at the time of the speech. What did he do? Who did he associate with?
6. What was happening with the issue of slavery at the time of the speech?

Point of View: Using what you have now read about the historical context of the United States at the time of the speech and Frederick Douglass’s personal life, do an in-depth reading of the speech. During this reading, use the author’s point of view, or perspective, to find deeper meaning.

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7. How does Douglass address those in attendance? Why do you think that is important?
8. Douglass claimed, “The Fourth of July is yours, not mine”, what do you think he meant by this?
9. Douglass stated, “The conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting”. Do further research in *Gale In Context: High School*, add historical context to this. What events could Douglass have been discussing?
10. What do you think the main point of the speech is?

Extension: Using the **Highlights and Notes** tool, highlight three lines you think are the most powerful. In the note portion, write what you think Douglass’s overall meaning of this statement is and why. (**Listen for directions from your teacher on how to attach or turn in these highlights and notes**)

Answer Key

1. Speech.
2. Answers will vary.
Example: Sets the tone for how to read the document.
3. July 5, 1852.
4. Douglass ran away and secured his own freedom and eventually his freedom was purchased after his first autobiography written and he had to flee to Europe.
5. Douglass was an abolitionist who traveled the country to speak. He was also a writer who published his first autobiography in 1845 and the editor of the *North Star*, a newspaper he founded in 1847.
6. Answers will vary slightly, examples could include: the growing abolition movement and/or the Fugitive Slave Act.
7. Fellow Citizens. Douglass was an African American and formerly enslaved, he was speaking to a predominately white crowd and chose to use an address that called them equals.
8. Answers will vary.
Example: The celebration of the Fourth of July is hypocritical while there was still slavery in the United States.
9. Continued compromises over slavery, fugitive slave act, etc.
10. Answer will vary:
Example: It was hypocritical for Douglass to celebrate the Independence of the United States given that Independence only applies to some.

Extension: Students should highlight three portions and use the notes function to annotate the meaning of the passage. They can export these into Google Drive, Microsoft One Drive, Email, PDF, or Copy them into a document. If you need help using Gale's Highlights and Notes feature, view this [tutorial](#).