

Plan a circle: “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass”

Frederick Douglass (1845) · public-domain memoir (selected chapters) · grades 9–12 · ~2 weeks. Rights: Public domain.

Kit section 5 (group agreement & calendar) filled in for one text — a finished plan students see before writing their own. *Tinted italic* = sample answers.

Preview note: Plan context and support for accounts of enslavement, violence, and racist language.

Text, group, and target

Text / author / edition	<i>“Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass” — Frederick Douglass (1845). Public-domain memoir (selected chapters).</i>
Group / period / dates	<i>Marcus’s group · Period ___ · Meetings ___ & ___</i>
Grade / TEKS target (p. 3)	English III · §110.38 — author’s purpose and rhetoric (informational); 5(C,D): analytic commentary and summary; 1(D): student-led discussion.
Learning intention	We are learning to explain how Douglass connects literacy and freedom (author’s purpose).
Success criteria	I bring one open question, cite two details with chapter, respond to a peer, and name how my thinking changed.

Reading map & calendar

Chunk	Read through	Meeting date · leader
<i>1</i>	<i>Ch. 1–5: birth, separation, witnessing violence, and being sent to Baltimore.</i>	<i>Wk 1 · Leader: Marcus</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Ch. 6–8: learning to read — “the pathway from slavery to freedom.”</i>	<i>Wk 1 · Leader: Nia</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Ch. 9–11: Covey, the turning point, and escape (details withheld).</i>	<i>Wk 2 · Leader: Sol</i>

Members & first-meeting jobs (p. 7 roles)

Member	First job	Rotates to (next meeting)
<i>Marcus</i>	<i>Questioner</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>
<i>Nia</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>
<i>Sol</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>	<i>Evidence tracker</i>
<i>Dee</i>	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Questioner</i>

Text-specific discussion questions (open — more than one answer)

- **Predict:** Douglass says learning to read was forbidden — what will literacy open, or endanger, for him?
- **Question:** Why might Douglass withhold the exact means of his escape?
- **Clarify:** What does he mean that literacy showed him “the pathway from slavery to freedom” yet also discontent?
- **Summarize:** Trace how Douglass learns to read despite obstacles, without opinion.
- **Interpret the theme:** How does Douglass connect literacy and freedom (his purpose)? Use two details.

Optional Jigsaw lenses (p. 4): *Purpose* (the abolitionist argument) · *Structure* (the chronological memoir) · *Rhetoric* (appeals and irony) · *Theme* (literacy as freedom) · *Context* (American slavery, 1845).

Sample 3–2–1 notes: Sol, purpose lens

Name: *Sol* · Home group: *Marcus's group* · Period ____ · Meetings ____ & ____ · Section: *"Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," Chunk 2* · Expert lens: *Purpose*

What a finished prep looks like. Kit section 6 / Organizer A completed for one reader, so students can compare their notes to a strong model.

Questions <i>Why is literacy dangerous to enslavers?</i> <i>Why withhold the escape's details?</i>	3 · Important ideas <i>1. Douglass is denied education by law and custom.</i> <i>2. He trades bread for reading lessons and studies in secret.</i> <i>3. Literacy lets him understand — and begin to resist — his condition.</i>
Vocabulary <i>chattel = a person treated as property.</i> <i>emancipation = the act of being set free.</i>	2 · Supporting details <i>1. Auld warns that reading would make Douglass "unmanageable" (Ch. 6–7). → Reveals literacy's power.</i> <i>2. Douglass's resolve after learning to read (Ch. 7). → Shows both its cost and its promise.</i>

1 · Summary in my own words

Douglass recounts how he learned to read against the law, and how that literacy drove his path toward freedom.

Bring to the circle

My interpretation: *Knowledge is the first step from bondage toward freedom.*

Synthesis (two lenses): *The memoir's purpose (abolition) rests on the theme: literacy exposes and undoes the logic of slavery. Text points: Auld's warning (Chunk 2) and Douglass's resolve (Chunk 2).*

After discussion: *My thinking became clearer once the group compared evidence.*

TEKS evidence: 6(C,D) supported inference; 7(A) theme through characters/events; 1(D) response to a peer. · Pair with the PlotPoint "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass" room.