

# Teacher Backgrounder

**Title:** Telling His Own Story: Frederick Douglass

**Grades:** 3–5

## Context:

Frederick Douglass was a voracious reader and prolific speaker throughout his lifetime. Introduce your students to Douglass’s unique background, from self-emancipated freedom seeker to Presidential advisor. Underscore his role in securing rights for himself and others.

Douglass also had his photograph taken many times and believed in the power of photography to depict people’s true identities. Explore three portraits of Douglass from c. 1850, c. 1865, and 1887.

As a writer, speaker, and advocate, Douglass knew the power of rhetoric. Challenge your students to create an original poem, rap, or song about Frederick Douglass’s life and accomplishments. If time permits, you could even have your students hold a mini performance celebrating their original artistic work!

## Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to ...

1. Recall facts about the life of Frederick Douglass.
2. Discuss contributions that Frederick Douglass made to the fight against slavery.
3. Analyze images of Frederick Douglass to understand his use of photography to tell his own story and fight against racism.
4. Write verses detailing Frederick Douglass’s life.

## Materials & Preparation

### INVESTIGATE

The slides are designed for you to use with your whole class or to share directly with individual students. Review the slides and prepare to present or share the link with individual students.

### INQUIRE

Make copies of the corresponding handouts (one per student) or share the PDFs digitally. Review articles: [Frederick Douglass and the Power of Photography](#) (National Park Service) and [Frederick Douglass and the Power of Pictures](#) (Library of Congress).

### IMAGINE

Review the Activity Guide. Each student will need writing materials and may need additional research materials about Frederick Douglass.

## Cross-curricular Connections:

- ☒ Social Studies
- ☒ Language Arts
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Math
- ☒ Arts

## Tech It Up:

- Share lesson materials via GOOGLE CLASSROOM or LMS
- Play the suggested videos
- Share the handouts digitally
- Devote time to exploring the recommended resources online

# PORTRAITS OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

**Directions:** Take a detailed look at the photographs of Frederick Douglass. What do you notice? What inferences can you make?

**What do you notice about the three photographs?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How did Douglass pose for these photographs?**

**How did Douglass dress for these photographs?**

**Why do you think Douglass had his photograph taken so many times?**

# Activity Guide: Telling His Story

## Your Challenge

Create a poem, song lyrics, or a rap about Frederick Douglass. Consider if you want your writing to have a rhythm and/or rhyming words. How do you want to express your thoughts and feelings about this remarkable abolitionist?

## Materials

- Writing utensils
- OPT: recording device to capture performances

## Time to Create

### STEP 1:

Begin by brainstorming about the facts that you want to share about Frederick Douglass:

- His Early Life:** What about his childhood and early life helped shape him into the person he was?
- His Work:** Douglass worked hard throughout his life. What do you want to highlight?
- His Achievements:** Consider what he accomplished personally and professionally, for himself and for others.
- Notable Facts:** These could be key events that you want to include or facts that you want to share.

### STEP 2:

Next, play with words by considering rhythm and rhyme. Think about your choice of words to convey just how influential Douglass was during his lifetime and how he is still important today.

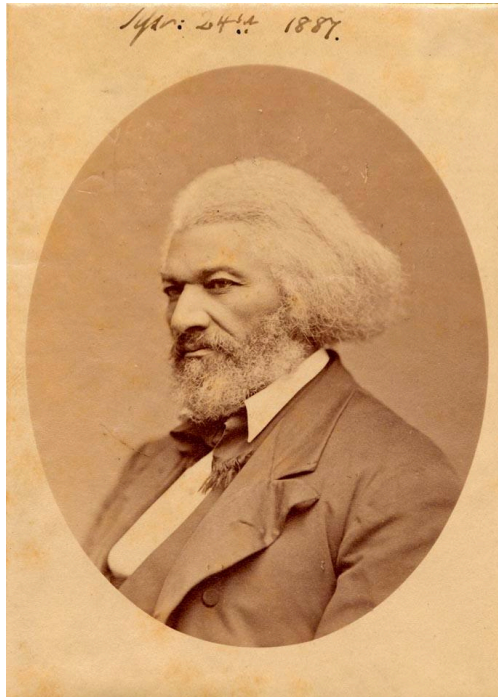
### STEP 3:

Write down your poem, rap, or song. You may want to refer to the writing cycle to revise and edit your work. If time permits, share your original work!

# TIME TO BRAINSTORM

**His  
Early Life**

**His Work**



**His  
Achievements**

**Notable  
Facts**

[illegible]