



new bedford  
whaling museum

ART. HISTORY. SCIENCE. CULTURE.

# Telling His Own Story:

## Frederick Douglass

## **This lesson includes three sections:**

**1**

### **INVESTIGATE** (15 min.)

Click through the following slide deck to learn more about Frederick Douglass, a famous activist, author, and speaker who told about his escape from enslavement.

**2**

### **INQUIRE** (15 min.)

Using the provided handout, examine photographs of Douglass to draw inferences about his life and his use of photography.

**3**

### **IMAGINE** (30 min.)

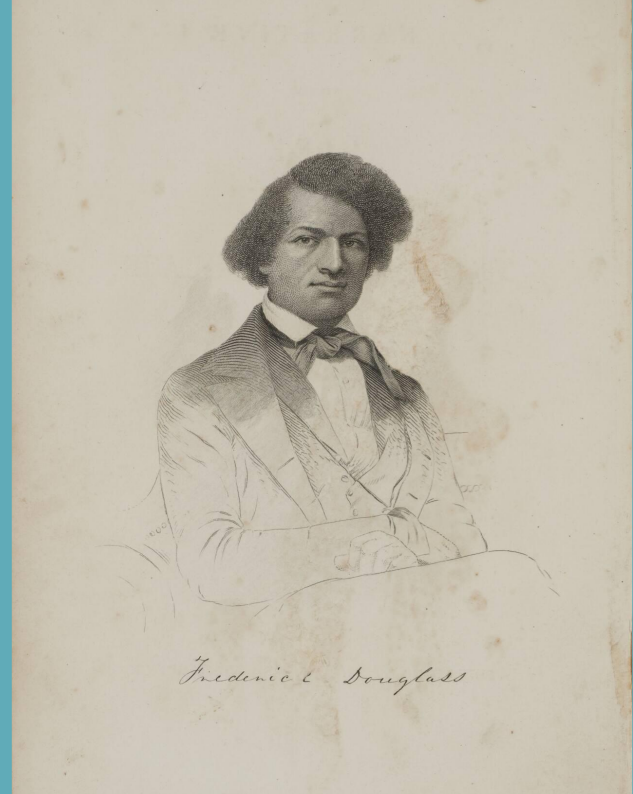
Follow the steps in the Activity Guide to write a poem or song lyrics to honor Frederick Douglass.

INVESTIGATE

# Who was Frederick Douglass?

Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born around 1818 in Maryland. Frederick was born into slavery and separated from his mother at a young age.

Even though it was against the law, Frederick learned to read as a child, and he helped others learn how to read, too.



Frederick was treated badly for years by enslaver Edward Covey. He tried many times to escape slavery.

In 1838, he pretended to be a sailor and he made a daring escape traveling to New York, a free state.

There, he married Anna Murray, a free Black woman, and they moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts. He and Anna had five children together.



Frederick and Anna Douglass lived with Polly and Nathan Johnson in New Bedford. The New Bedford Historical Society preserves the house as a museum. Watch this [video](#) to learn more.

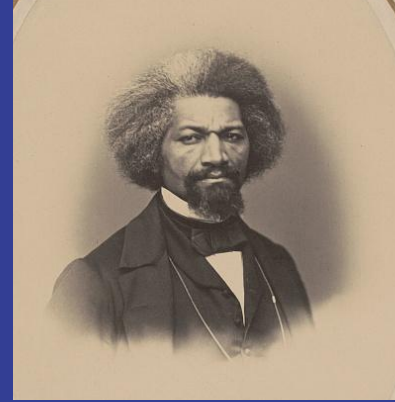
# What did Douglass do as a free man?

In New Bedford, their new friends Polly and Nathan Johnson encouraged Frederick and Anna to change their last name to Douglass after characters in a poem.

Frederick Douglass began going to meetings with **abolitionists**. He was inspired to speak out against slavery.

## **ABOLITIONISTS:**

People who fought to “abolish” or end slavery



NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
LIFE  
OF  
FREDERICK DOUGLASS,  
AN  
AMERICAN SLAVE.

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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BOSTON:  
PUBLISHED AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY OFFICE,  
No. 25 CORNHILL.  
1845.

Douglass became an abolitionist leader by sharing his personal stories about slavery and trying to escape.

In 1845, Douglass wrote his first autobiography, a bestseller. He wrote three autobiographies to tell his own story.

He traveled around the world lecturing and he even started his own newspaper, *The North Star*.

# Who did Douglass fight for?

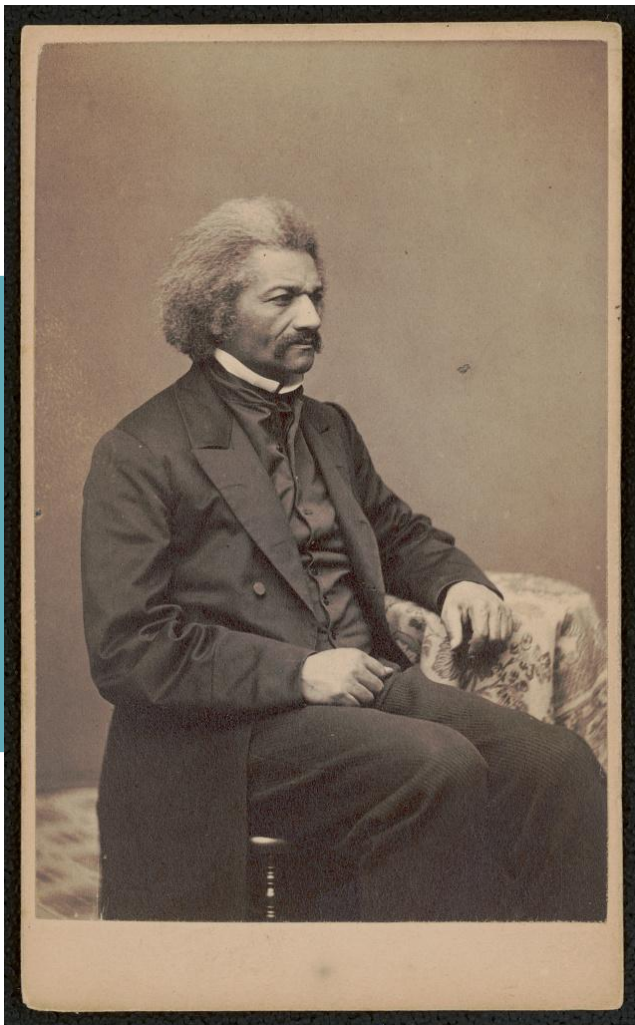
Douglass supported **civil rights**, including those of women, who also were fighting for the right to vote. He fought against school segregation and he fought for Black soldiers' rights during the Civil War.

## **CIVIL RIGHTS:**

A guarantee to equal opportunities protected by the law

The statue of Frederick Douglass in Abolition Row Park in New Bedford, MA.





Douglass worked closely with President Lincoln and received one of the President's walking sticks after he died. Later in life, Douglass was the first African American to hold a high-ranking office with the United States government, and he was even nominated to run for Vice President. Frederick Douglass died on February 20, 1895.

# Which quote is your favorite?

"Once you learn to read, you will forever be free."

"Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave."

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

"To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker."

"You are not judged by the height you have risen, but from the depth you have climbed."

"Our destiny is largely in our hands."

– **Frederick Douglass**

INQUIRE

# Time to question!

Frederick Douglass is considered to have been the most photographed American of the 1800s. He was photographed over 160 times!

He understood the art and power of photography. His portraits defied stereotypical images by showing a strong, confident, and resilient individual.

Use the worksheet to analyze the photographs on the next slide.

## 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?

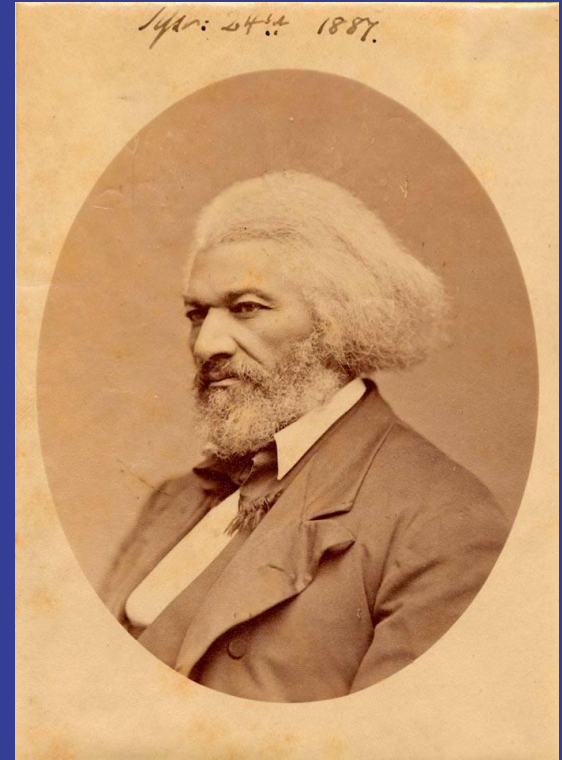
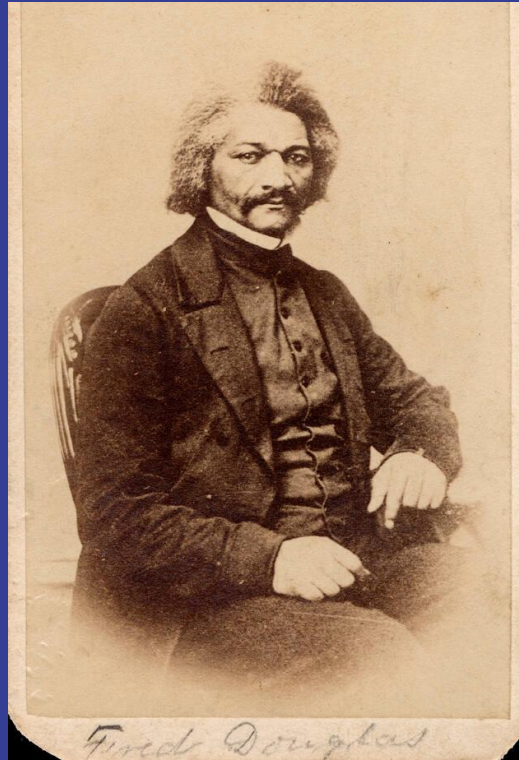
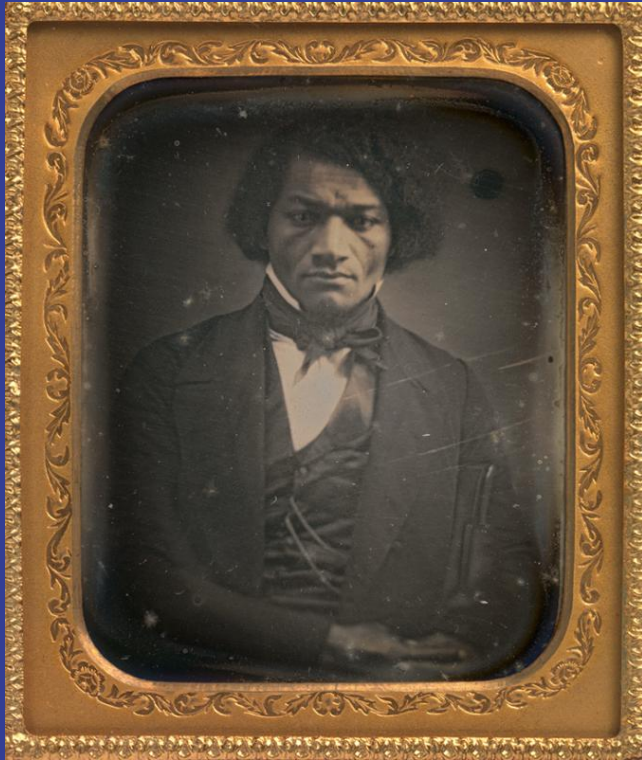
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5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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?



*"Men of all conditions may see themselves as others see them."*  
- Douglass on the power of photography

IMAGINE

# Time to create!

Douglass's name came from a poem called *The Lady of the Lake* by Sir Walter Scott. Honor Frederick Douglass and his story by creating a poem, song, or rap about his life.

Begin by brainstorming about some of his life events and accomplishments. You can research more about his life online.

Then use Flocabulary's video as inspiration for your own verses.

THE  
**LADY OF THE LAKE.**

A POEM

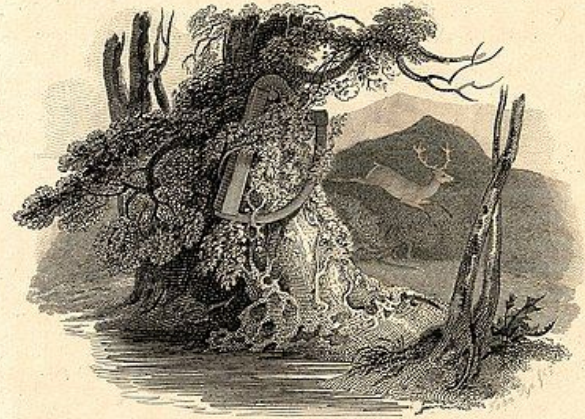
BY

**WALTER SCOTT, Esq.**

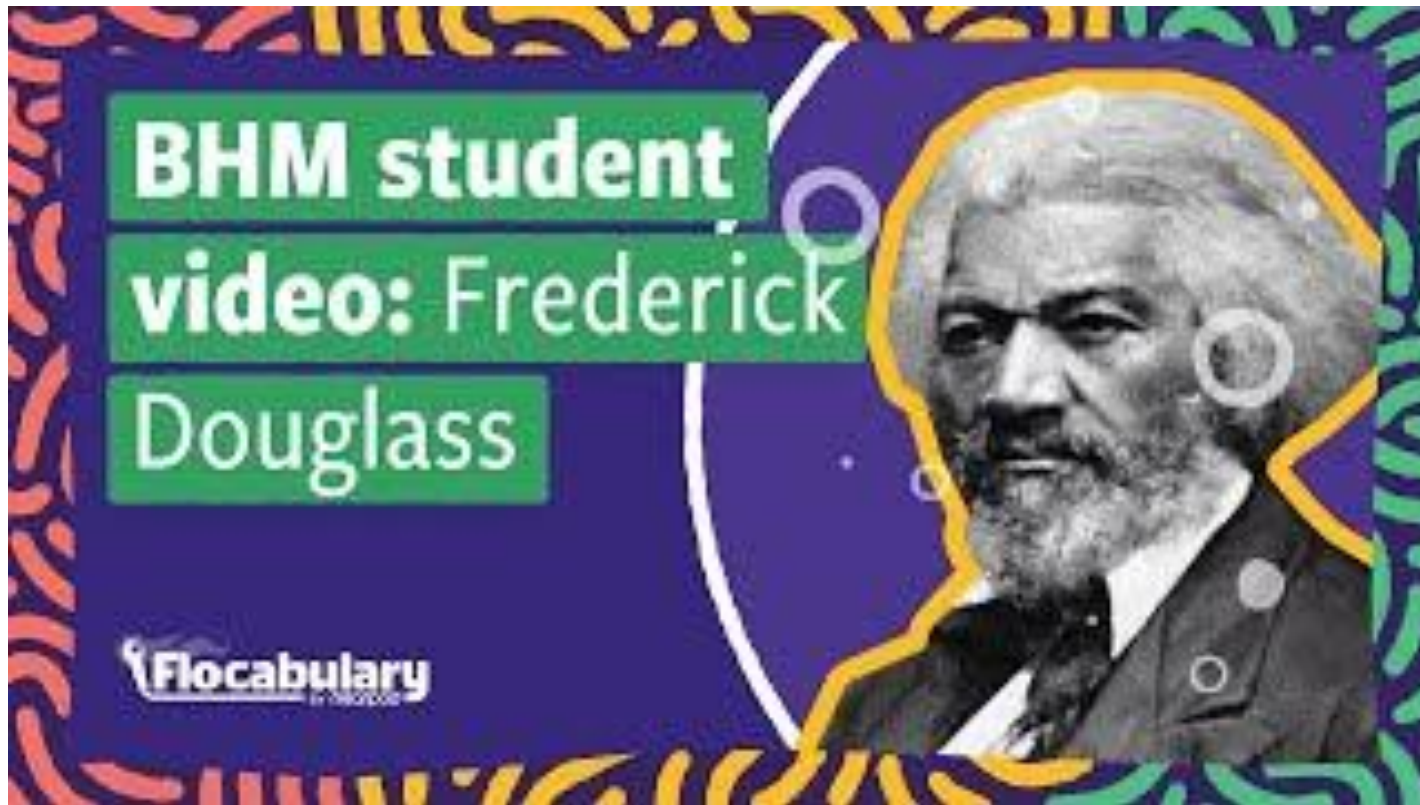
ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS

FROM THE DESIGNS OF

**RICH<sup>d</sup> WESTALL, Esq. R.A.**



LONDON,  
PUBLISHED BY JOHN SHARPE,  
PICCADILLY.  
1811.



You may want to rewatch **Flocabulary's video** on Frederick Douglass.

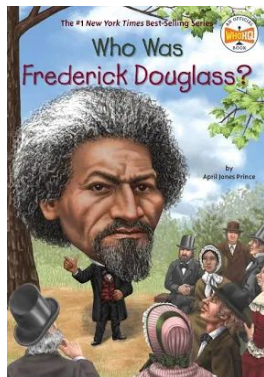
# Additional resources

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS**: Frederick Douglass

**TIME FOR KIDS**: Frederick Douglass

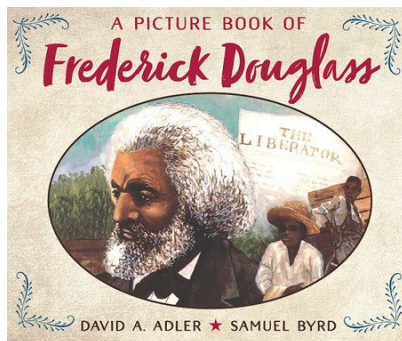
**HARPER KIDS**: Frederick Douglass, The Lion Who Wrote History (video)

**FreeSchool**: Biography of Frederick Douglass (video)



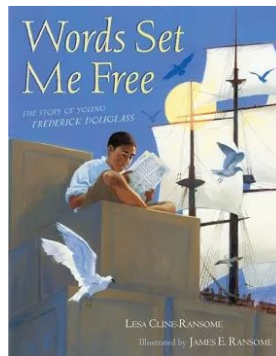
## **Who was Frederick Douglass?**

by April Jones Prince



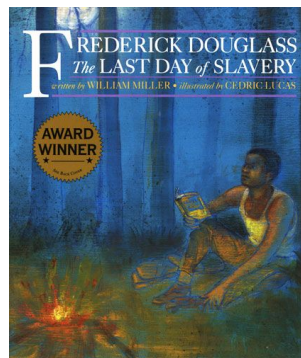
## **A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass**

by David A. Alder



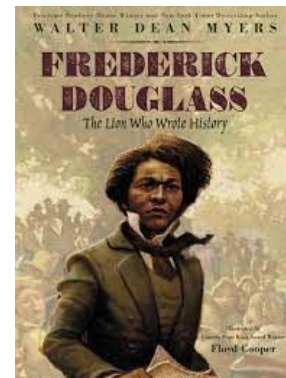
## **Words Set Me Free**

by Lesa Cline-Ransome



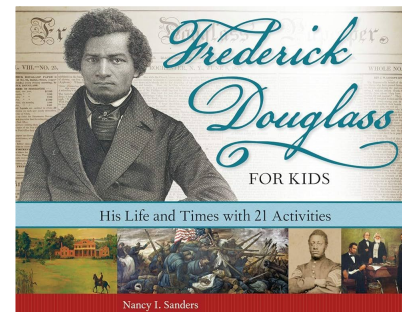
## **Frederick Douglass: The Last Days of Slavery**

by William Miller



## **Frederick Douglass: The Lion Who Wrote History**

by Walter Dean Myers



## **Frederick Douglass for Kids**

by Nancy I. Sanders



For more  
classroom activities,  
visit the  
New Bedford Whaling  
Museum website:

[www.whalingmuseum.org](http://www.whalingmuseum.org)

# Media citations

Slide 4 image: New Bedford Whaling Museum: [E449 .D746 1845](#)

Slide 5 image: [National Park Service](#)

Slide 6 images: [Library of Congress](#); [Frederick Douglass National Historic Site](#)

Slide 7 image: New Bedford Whaling Museum: [E449 .D746 1845](#)

Slide 8 image: [New Bedford Historical Society](#)

Slide 9 image: [Library of Congress](#)

Slide 13 images and quote: [National Portrait Gallery](#); New Bedford Whaling Museum, [1951.20.1](#), [2000.100.83](#); [National Park Service](#);

Slide 15 image: [Wikipedia](#)

Slides 16 video: *Black History Month Student Contest: Frederick Douglass* from [Flocabulary](#); [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_r2LqrDnsZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_r2LqrDnsZE)