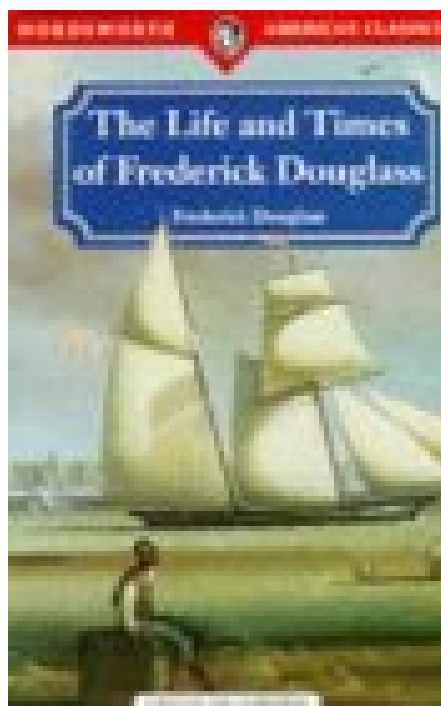




Life and Times of Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass

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Raised as a plantation slave, Douglass went on to become a writer, orator, and major participant in the struggle for African-American freedom and equality. In this engrossing narrative he recounts early years of abuse; his dramatic escape to the North and eventual freedom, abolitionist campaigns, and his crusade for full civil rights for former slaves.

Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Details

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Author : Frederick Douglass

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Genre : History, Nonfiction, Biography, Military History, Civil War, Classics, Autobiography, Memoir, Cultural, African American

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From Reader Review Life and Times of Frederick Douglass for online ebook

Rebecca says

Very insightful. This man was amazing.

John Gurney says

Considering the slave Frederick Douglass was never allowed to set foot in a school, the exact and proper prose in this incredible story demonstrates the depth of his self-education. He learned to read on the sly, having been (illegally) taught the alphabet by a kindly master's wife. Douglass's story includes more 'humane' masters as well as an incredibly cruel one. The drudgery of daily slave life and the horror of whippings come through vividly in this biography that starts in Maryland.

Douglass eventually escapes, and this part of the autobiography is written with literary flourish. He arrives penniless in New York State and works his way up. In Massachusetts, he joins the abolitionist cause. In Rochester, NY, he'd publish an abolitionist newspaper. His personal experiences with prejudice, even in the north, are very interesting; Douglass was a man of great inner power who stood his ground, when most black slaves were docile by habit, reinforced by the whip.

A large part of Douglass's story is his abolitionist efforts, his involvement in politics and his personal interactions with John Brown, Charles Sumner, William Lloyd Garrison, and, especially, Abraham Lincoln. Douglass was involved in early Republican Party politics and was also an early, leading advocate of women's suffrage. His fascinating life included forays to Canada and Europe, at first to stay ahead of escaped slave catchers.

This book is excellent, being a fascinating story that is well written. That it was penned by an entirely self-educated man adds to its reading pleasure. There are so many 'wow' moments herein. I strongly recommend *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*.

Katrina Sark says

"I could think of nothing scarcely but my life, and in thinking of my life, I almost forgot my liberty. I have observed this in my experience of slavery that whenever my condition was improved instead of it increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire to be free and set me to thinking of plans to gain my freedom. I found that to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one, and it is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right, and he can brought to that only when he ceases to be a man."

John Doyle says

This one was a page turner for me. It is a fascinating (nearly) contemporaneous account of the decades before and after the Civil War. Frederick Douglass is a new hero for me as one of the figures in American history whose courage and conviction matched the monumental challenges of his times. The broad outlines of his story are well known but the details were entirely new to me and they were riveting. My favorite passages in the book describe Douglass' encounters with Abraham Lincoln. Also fun to read Douglass' reflections on his emotional experience and feelings of "now what do I do with myself?!" immediately after the end of slavery and achievement of his life's work. Less fun is the realization that 150 years later the echoes of slavery are an enduring challenge in American society.

Crystal says

I'm at a loss how to review a book like this. it seems too important of a piece of history and literature to matter what my mere opinion is. But here goes. I was introduced to Frederick Douglass through his first memoir (sadly not as part of my schooling--shame on my school), and was completely swept away by him. His passion for freedom and justice and right vs. wrong spoke to me, and he instantly joined the pantheon of my heroes. HE also inspired me to read his third and final memoir, which was a significantly larger volume. I took my time reading this book. There was a lot to digest, and while there were many utterly engaging narratives and brilliant insights, there were also sections that slowed down the narrative a lot, especially towards the end of the book, where Douglass included verbatim many speeches/ articles/ essays both by and/or about him. Some of them were really long, and I think listening to this book on audio in the car didn't serve me well in fully appreciating those sections.

However, the vast majority of this book swept me away and enforced more than ever what an amazing person Douglass was. How he came so far and achieved so much, despite the horrible circumstances of his birth and youth, and the never-ending prejudices he faced as a man of color in the United States. Multiple times throughout the book I found myself wanting to write down lines of his writing. His insights into the United States' decline into the Civil War were especially timely and yet concerning, when compared with the obvious parallels in current life to what he described of his experience and observations of that time. the chapter where he addresses women's suffrage had me cheering aloud in my car. What an amazing heritage his book and even more so his life leaves to the world. I intend to buy a copy of this book to keep in my permanent library, and am looking for even more books about him. I'll end with one of my favorite quotations: "For no man who lives at all, lives unto himself. He either helps or hinders all who are in anywise connected to him."

Rob says

In my ignorance, when contemplating reading this book I'd anticipated having to endure a dusty and dated relic in the interest of personal growth. Because I knew nearly nothing of Douglass, and because of the time in which it had been written I thought it would be a tough slog.

What I found instead was inspired and vibrant language that connected me directly to a human being, timeless in it's nature (though a product of it's time in terms of terminology). It described vivid scenes of adventure and revealed profound truths. As he described his flight from slavery it played in my head like a movie.

For me, this was an outstanding introduction to the work of Frederick Douglass and an inspiration to learn more. Despite the seriousness of it's content and the significance of the work, the pages fly.

Dennis Murphy says

The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, by Frederick Douglass

Though at times braggadocious, the autobiography paints a genuine portrait of the world we have long since left behind. He comes across as an eminently wise man, and he is deserving of his place in history. I had read excerpts of his material before, and made reference to him in the past. My first encounter with him was on the history channel, back when that channel lived up to its name, where he was likened to a modern day Cato, surprising his audience with an uncommon mastery of the spoken word when they had thought they would receive a negro-affected accent that was bound to the unedified subjugated status of his birth. In this text Mr. Douglass said that he faced fierce resistance to this by his own companions, who feared that his speech would lead others to doubt his genuine status - a fear that would be made manifest shortly after their wise, but ultimately undignified and dishonest counsel.

I very much enjoyed this book, and found that I had to consume it in small chunks so as to better digest it. On a whole, it took me a little over a week to finish my consumption of it - though I find that I started from Chapter 15 to the end this evening.

I would recommend it to the canon of Western Literature, and certainly in any definitive list of top 100 American Works of Literature.

Alissa says

could skip past the first half of the book if you read book 2. appreciate this book's 2nd half because it addresses his life after escape (political career).

Kayli Wolber says

The Life of Frederick Douglas is a book that anyone should read. This man lived such a life of despair and struggle and is able to show gratitude to the few people in his life that helped him. He creates very detailed scenes of his experiences without using much emotion. Readers are then able to create their own emotions toward the text. Douglas doesn't need to use pathos throughout much of his autobiography due to the brutal facts of situations he has been through. His journey out of slavery is very inspiring and captures his true character through the actions he chooses to take. I would recommend this book for anyone to read. It is a compelling story and is able to teach readers about the brutal history of slavery.

George says

"The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: Written by Himself" by Frederick Douglass is an outstanding autobiography of the former slave and abolitionist. Frederick Douglass is a larger-than-life figure and one of the most important leaders of the 19th Century United States.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in U.S. history or slavery.

[I hope to expand this review in the future when time permits.]

Rating: 5 out of 5 stars

Notes:

Audiobook:

Narrated by: Richard Allen

Length: 21 hours and 35 minutes

Release Date: 2012-02-07

Publisher: Dreamscape Media, LLC

Angie says

To say that I have been inspired by Frederick Douglass is an understatement. He was a man of grace, grit, integrity, intelligence, wisdom, honor, compassion, humility and tenacity. My favorite parts of the book was his conversion to Christ on page 69, the effects of slavery on his body, soul, and spirit on page 104, his friendship and influence with President Lincoln, his inspiring words to the black soldiers enlisted in the Union Army on page 329, and his reunion with his old master Captain Auld page 435.

Frederick learned how to read as a young boy. His self education inspired me the most and reminded me that there is power in knowledge. An education is PRICELESS! There is no power that can restrain a person from rising above his lowly circumstances. Where are all the Frederick Douglass' in our world today. Please come forth!!!!

Benjamin Uke says

Read this in under 4 hours for a research paper, it's Frederick Douglas's final biography written after the civil war. An old man now, He goes off and visits his former slave-masters.

TL;DR Slavery is over but racism is alive and strong, and will try to reinstate it if it has its way.

Alajiha Robinson says

I think this book was very descriptive and intellectual. I was able to fully understand and connect to the pain and suffering of African Americans during slavery. Douglass did not let being a slave define him because he knew what he was capable of in this world. Douglass was a huge factor of how slavery became abolished.

Linda Burr says

this is a must read. seriously, if you haven't read this book you should.

John says

An extraordinary book. Actually felt cheated that this book hadn't been introduced to me in school. Large portions of this should be on curricula for American history, particularly his life as a slave, an escapee, and an abolitionist (probably the first 3/4s of the book). His writing is exemplary, straightforward, with beautiful flourishes flashing with profound wisdom that still echoes true through today.

Angie says

Very inspiring account of Frederick Douglass and how he overcame seemingly unsurmountable odds to become a man who made a difference. My only quibble with this memoir is that at times he was long winded on minor points and often quoted speeches and letters in their entirety. Otherwise an excellent and enlightening read.

Robert Owen says

“The Life and Times of Fredrick Douglass” is at once a fascinating journey back to a pivotal time in American history, a chronicle of the practical indignities of American racial oppression and an enduring monument to the constancy of human dignity.

Douglass was a remarkable man whose life is worthy of exploration. Born into slavery, he endured its humiliations for almost twenty years. Yet as a young man, he grew indignant over the notion that he was less than anyone else and, over time, slowly summoned the skills, resources and courage necessary for him to escape. Once free, he quickly came to the attention of abolitionists who were impressed by his obvious intelligence and ability to speak in a compelling fashion to crowds about his life in bondage. He progressed up the ranks of the abolitionist movement to become, in addition to being a popular public speaker, an owner and editor of his own newspaper. By the outbreak of the Civil War, Douglass was an internationally renowned public figure who was either loved or hated by anyone who knew of him. During the War, Douglass agitated tirelessly for the ennoblement of the war's carnage by means of emancipating America's slaves. Despite frustration with Lincoln's maddening reluctance to free the slaves, Douglass nonetheless used his public presence to actively encouraged blacks to join the northern ranks and fight for their own freedom. Ultimately, Douglass became a kind of distanced confidant to Lincoln - a sort of moral voice to which Lincoln allowed himself to occasionally be exposed.

As remarkable as his tremendous accomplishments were and his personal story is, what I found most interesting were the “little things” written in the margins of his narrative that help to make the abstract notion of slavery and its consequences that are so assiduously documented by historians real to the reader. For example, the details of Douglass's description of his youth breathe life into the definition of slavery – “the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons.” provided by Orlando Patterson in his seminal work “Slavery and Social Death”. The reality of this “natal alienation”, or disassociation with the enduring institutions of family, is made heart-wrenchingly real by his description of having been raised by his maternal grandmother until he was old enough to be put to work, at which point she walked him to the master's plantation and left him in the care of the community of the master's slaves. Or, as described by C. Vann Woodward in “The Strange Career of Jim Crow”, the prevalence of Jim Crow

that Douglass routinely experienced in the North decades before it was systematized by law and custom in the “Redeemed” South (e.g. Jim Crow cars on trains or the difficulty he had finding hotel accommodations in cities throughout the North on his abolitionist speaking tours).

What was also remarkable was the degree of compassion Douglass expressed for his oppressors. For example, Douglass was taught the rudiments of reading from his then-mistress who, being young and naïve, had been excited by the project until she was harshly reprimanded for it by her husband. After this, she grew angry with Douglass when she caught him trying to read, and became vigilant about his activities, determined that her “error” not be compounded by Douglass’s continued reading improvement. Douglass seemed to feel genuinely sorry for the woman and the way that her accepted role in the institution of slavery had reduced her from being a kind, well-meaning person into a demonstrably mean, petty human being. Slavery, Douglass rightly believed, was a moral horror to anyone involved with it, regardless of their role. Along a similar vein, Douglass frequently expressed gratitude for the “courage” of various whites he met throughout his life who, in contravention of custom, came to Douglass’s defense or treated him not as a “black man” but rather, as a “man”. Our modern sensibilities would see these acts not as expressions of courage, but rather, as manifestations of simple and rather unremarkable human decency – yet Douglass, living in his time, saw them as revolutionary acts that were worthy of praise and acknowledgement.

Although the book was excellent and contributed to my understanding of America’s racial history, it’s important to note that it’s written in the prosaic style of a mid-19th century speech writer. Moreover, one has the sense of Douglass writing to future generations in order to secure his place in history and occasionally he lapses into discussions of petty controversies about which it was important to him to get his side of the story “on the record”. Sadly, these discussions have not aged well and, as someone ignorant of the details and full context of some of the controversies he discusses, I found that his discussions of them often made him appear petulant. Notwithstanding these minor deficits the book was outstanding and represents critical reading for anyone interested in American history in general, and America’s racial history, in particular.

Crystal says

This book was utterly engrossing, even as an old audio edition. I haven't read a real page turner in awhile, but this was exactly that for me. I didn't expect a book this old to be so utterly engaging, but I found myself relating so well to Frederick Douglass--not truly understanding his struggles, obviously, but relating to the feelings behind them--his outrage at injustice and determination to better himself and others and set things right. He was so clearly passionate about the subject of slavery, even after he himself was free and successful and relatively safe. He couldn't bear that anyone could continue in that state, and this book reflects that passion beautifully. Sometimes hearing his blunt recounting of the treatment of slaves (and even simply of African-Americans) that he witnessed and/or experienced was almost unbearable, and yet I couldn't stop reading. As a Christian, hearing the way southern slave holding Christians behaved specifically almost made me ill. So utterly against the message they thought they knew. (I also loved Douglass's clarification about his views on true Christianity at the end of the book. I loved that he learned to see that they did not represent the true faith, and that he said so boldly.) He told the truth so that others would know, and could better understand why the institution of slavery (and of racism) needed to be stopped. Reading works like this helps put even more context for the works of modern-day writers I've read recently, Ta-Nehesi Coates and D. Watkins and others. I know Douglass wrote a number of books, and I'll be looking them all up to read, and soon.

Morgan says

Writing quality: 1

Engagement: 1

Informative: 1

Personal Impact: 1

Personal Longevity: 1

Notes: Loved having the illustrations to give some visual contexts to the text. Very impacted this time by how recently this all happened. I've been researching my ancestors who lived in the same time period. Somehow, in history class, slavery seemed so much longer ago. This made it very real to me.

Great Book Study says

My review of Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, and a little American history:

<http://greatbookstudy.blogspot.com/20...>
