

# Agency and Family

October 19 | Name: \_\_\_\_\_ | Section: \_\_\_\_\_

**Work together:** read the excerpt aloud, then annotate with a partner. Underline an action and circle a limit. Respond below or in your notebook.

## Jacobs: a father's attempt to purchase his children

I was born a slave; but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away. My father was a carpenter, and considered so intelligent and skilful in his trade, that, when buildings out of the common line were to be erected, he was sent for from long distances, to be head workman. On condition of paying his mistress two hundred dollars a year, and supporting himself, he was allowed to work at his trade, and manage his own affairs. His strongest wish was to purchase his children; but, though he several times offered his hard earnings for that purpose, he never succeeded. [...]

[Jacobs, Incidents \(1861\), Chapter I](#)

## Discuss and write

1. What did Jacobs's father want? What did he do to pursue it?
2. Who controlled the result? Identify the words that support your answer.
3. Write 3–4 sentences: why can an unsuccessful attempt still demonstrate agency?

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Limit or cost: \_\_\_\_\_

Interpretation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## An example of the analytical move

"He tried" names an action. Explaining how earnings created a possibility while the enslaver retained the power to refuse connects action with constraint. Use your own words and evidence.

Agency means purposeful action under constraints. It is not the same as legal freedom or consent to enslavement. Bring your print Dover Jacobs copy; these excerpts support class discussion and do not replace the assigned reading.

# Douglass and Learning

October 27 (Sections 2-3) / October 29 (Section 1) | Name: \_\_\_\_\_ | Section: \_\_\_\_\_

First 10 minutes: read these two excerpts with a partner. Mark a resource, a collaborator, and a risk. Then compare with the Covey passage on the next page.

## Douglass: exchanging bread for lessons

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. [...]

[Douglass, Narrative \(1845\), Chapter VII](#)

## Douglass: collective learning

[...] These dear souls came not to Sabbath school because it was popular to do so, nor did I teach them because it was reputable to be thus engaged. Every moment they spent in that school, they were liable to be taken up, and given thirty-nine lashes. They came because they wished to learn. Their minds had been starved by their cruel masters. They had been shut up in mental darkness. I taught them, because it was the delight of my soul to be doing something that looked like bettering the condition of my race. [...]

[Douglass, Narrative \(1845\), Chapter X](#)

## Partner questions

1. How did Douglass create opportunities for learning?
  2. What changed when he became a teacher?
  3. What does the danger of punishment reveal about enslavers' efforts to control knowledge?
- Explain using the supplied words.

Original wording is retained; [...] marks omissions. Read historical racist language critically and do not repeat slurs aloud.

# Douglass and Physical Resistance

October 27 / 29 continued | Name: \_\_\_\_\_ | Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Context: Douglass describes resisting Edward Covey's violence. Read both paragraphs, then discuss for 5 minutes. Finish the short comparison in class; preserve the final 15 minutes for Jacobs reading.

## Douglass: resistance and its limits

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped, though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights, but was never whipped.

[Douglass, Narrative \(1845\), Chapter X](#)

## Discuss the limit

1. Which words distinguish psychological change from legal freedom?
2. Why might physical confrontation carry different risks for Jacobs?
3. Write 3–4 sentences comparing two strategies on these handout pages. Explain one possibility and one limit. You are not ranking courage.

My comparison: \_\_\_\_\_

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