Frederick Douglass and Identity: Resurrection to the Heaven of Freedom

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- **Compelling Question**
  - To what extent are you cultivating the strength of character necessary to achieve worthy goals such as enhancing freedom in your own life and the lives of others?
- **Virtue**: Identity (strength of character)
- **Definition** – Identity answers the question, “Who am I?”
- **Objectives**
  - Students will understand how Frederick Douglass rejected the identity of “slave” and determined to take on the identity of a free man.
  - Students will analyze their own actions, goals, and ambitions to determine how identity contributes to achievement of worthy goals.
- **Background**
  - Frederick Douglass was one of almost four million slaves who lived in the antebellum South. Slavery was a violent system of repression that forced African Americans to work for owners who reaped the reward of their labor. The system of owning another human being and their labor took away slaves’ inalienable rights and their dignity and identity. Slavery thus reduced people to the status of a thing or property. Because so many institutions of Southern society reinforced the control and de-humanization of slavery it took an incredible amount of courage for slaves to find ways to recover their freedom, self-worth, and individual identity. Frederick Douglass successfully achieved his freedom and sought to lift all slaves out of bondage.
- **Vocabulary**
  - Antebellum
  - Bondage
  - Slave-breaker
  - Brute
  - Stupor
  - Malaise
  - Underground Railroad
- **Walk-In-The-Shoes Questions**
  - As you read, imagine you are the protagonist.
    - What challenges are you facing?
    - What fears or concerns might you have?
    - What may prevent you from acting in the way you ought?
- **Sample Observation Question**
  - Describing his experiences under Edward Covey, Douglass later said, “…the dark night of slavery closed in on me, and behold a man transformed into a brute.” What do you think he meant by “…the dark night of slavery?” what would it mean for you to be “transformed into a brute?”
- **Sample Discussion Questions**
  - How and why did the individual exhibit a moral and/or civic virtue in facing and overcoming the challenge?
  - How did the exercise of the virtue benefit civil society?
  - How might exercise of the virtue benefit the protagonist?
  - What might the exercise of the virtue cost the protagonist?
- **Additional Resources**
  - History.com: Frederick Douglass http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/frederick-douglass
  - NPS.gov: Frederick Douglass http://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/historyculture/people.htm