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Narrative of the Life and What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?

Frederick Douglass · *1845 / 1852 · original English text*

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. The hosted volume is Douglass's 1845 Narrative together with the 1852 Rochester oration. Map both; do not treat the speech as a mere appendix.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does a man born in slavery owe to the telling of his own life, and what is the Fourth of July to the American slave?

"I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland."
Narrative of the Life, chapter I

The hosted volume combines Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845, PG #23) and the oration delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, July 5, 1852 (Wikisource). Both are complete in the site text and EPUB. Map both parts; flag the combined volume. The Narrative's opening is exact, including "Tuckahoe" and "Talbot county." The oration's famous question is exact: "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" (4th as printed). A testimony and a public argument, for older students; the violence and the moral indictment should be taught with gravity, not sensationalized, and not softened.

KEY CHARACTERS

Frederick Douglass
The speaker of both the 1845 Narrative and the 1852 oration.

the family in Maryland
The mother and the relations from whom the child is kept and taken.

the masters and overseers
The men whose power the Narrative records without softening.

the Rochester hearers
The audience of the Fourth of July oration, addressed as 'you.'

WHAT IS YOUR 4TH OF JULY?

"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?"
The Rochester oration, 1852

Grades 8–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
Born in Tuckahoe
NARRATIVE, THE OPENING

He was born in Tuckahoe, in Talbot county, Maryland, without accurate knowledge of his age. The Narrative begins in a place and in a withheld date.

- The first sentence of the life is exact in both witnesses.
- The withheld birthday is already part of the testimony.
- This volume also contains the later oration.

> *"I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland."*
> Narrative, chapter I

02
A Life Taken, and a Life Taken Back
THE NARRATIVE

Learning, labor, a fight for manhood, and a flight. The 1845 book is a complete short life, not the later longer autobiographies.

- Teach the violence and the family separations with gravity, for older students; do not sensationalize them.
- The 1845 Narrative is this book; later Douglass memoirs are other works.
- Quote this typography.

03
A Name, and a Voice
THE CLOSE OF THE NARRATIVE

The fugitive becomes a speaker. The book ends as a beginning of public work.

- The Narrative's close is not the end of the hosted volume.
- The later oration belongs to the same file and the same map.
- A short, complete 1845 life, for older students.

04
The Fourth of July
THE ROCHESTER ORATION

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? The speech answers without softening: a day that reveals injustice and cruelty. It is a complete oration in this volume, not a excerpt.

- The question is exact, including '4th of July' as printed.
- Teach the indictment as Douglass spoke it; do not blunt it.
- Flag the combined volume: Narrative plus oration.

> *"What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?"*
> The Rochester oration, 1852

05
A Combined Volume
THE HOSTED FILE

PG #23 and the Wikisource oration are joined in the site text and EPUB. Map both; quote each from the part that appears in both witnesses.

- The catalogue title names both works.
- For older students; a testimony and a public argument.
- Do not treat the speech as a mere appendix.

A Life Taken Back · A Testimony · Bondage · A Public Indictment · A Combined Volume

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 8–12

1. The hosted volume combines Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845, Project Gutenberg #23) and the oration delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, July 5, 1852. Both are complete in the site text and EPUB. Map both parts; flag the combined volume.
2. The Narrative opening is exact: "I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland." The oration's question is exact: "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" (4th as printed). For older students; teach the violence and the indictment with gravity, not sensationalized, and not softened.
3. This is the 1845 Narrative, not Douglass's later longer autobiographies. Quote stretches that appear in both witnesses, and say which part of the volume they come from.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #23; Wikisource (Oration, delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester), the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/narrative-and-fourth-of-july/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.