

## **Lesson Plan #5 for *Genius of Freedom: The Douglass Monument* by Charlene Weigel**

**Grade Level:** Middle or high school

**Topics:** Frederick Douglass, memorials

**Pennsylvania History Standards:** 8.1.6 B, 8.1.9 B, 8.3.9 A, 8.3.9 B, 8.3.9 C

**Pennsylvania Core Standards:** 8.5.6-8 A, 8.5.9-10 A, 8.5.11-12 A, 8.5.6-8 G, 8.5.9-10 G, 8.5.11-12 G

***African American History*, Prentice Hall textbook:** pages 301, 428-430

**Overview:** Pennsylvania high school students learn about Frederick Douglass's role as an escaped slave who became a leading abolitionist. Students often read all or excerpts from his autobiography. By thinking critically about the primary source *An Authentic History of the Douglass Monument* by J.W. Thompson, students can gain a deeper understanding of the impact of Douglass as well as how this black American was viewed in by his northern contemporaries.

Rochester, New York, was the home of Douglass during much of the time he published *The North Star*, a leading abolitionist newspaper. Douglass developed a strong friendship with fellow Rochester resident Susan B. Anthony, and became an outspoken advocate of women's rights as well. Their dual appeal made Rochester a gathering place for abolitionists and feminist leaders as well as an active site on the Underground Railroad. It was in Rochester in 1852 that Douglass delivered his famous speech "What to the slave is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?" Douglass received political appointments after the Civil War that relocated him to Washington, D.C., but his body was returned to Rochester to be buried in Mount Hope Cemetery after his death in 1895. It is not surprising, therefore, that Rochester erected a memorial statute to Douglass, the first statue in America to honor an African-American, dedicated in 1899, and the focus of Thompson's 1903 book that is the primary source for this lesson plan.

Thompson's book analyzes key moments in the life of Frederick Douglass and the memorial statue that was constructed in Rochester to commemorate him. In this lesson plan, students will examine and analyze the statue itself as well as the inscriptions to understand how Douglass was viewed by his northern contemporaries at the time.

## Materials:

- From the Exhibit: Image of the Douglass monument, p. 32
- From the Exhibit: Chapter XIV: Descriptive and Interesting Facts and Letters, pages 156-157 describing the statue inscriptions.
- Ebook - *An Authentic History of the Douglass Monument* by J.W. Thompson: <https://books.google.com/books?id=VmEDAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=an+authentic+history+douglass+monument&source=bl&ots=l20LqfKNs1&sig=K-ghWEIepyx0G9vw3urztid3464&hl=en&sa=X&ei=CiZZVdmDG87hsAT5koGOBQ&ved=0CD4O6AEwCO#v=onepage&q=an%20authentic%20history%20douglass%20monument&f=false>
- Worksheet A: Statue analysis
- Worksheet B: Inscription Analysis
- Exit Ticket
- Smart board/Overhead projector

## Additional Teacher Background:

- Concise overview on the history of the statue: <http://media.democratandchronicle.com/retrofitting-rochester/frederick-douglass-monument>

## Procedure:

1. Set stage for lesson by reminding students of any prior study of the writings and impact of Frederick Douglass.
2. Display image of statue from primary source (primary source, facing page 32).
  - a. Introduce the statue analysis with some background facts using question/response to engage the students:
    - i. Show close image of statue in current setting in Highland Park, Rochester, NY ([http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/09/blacks\\_in\\_western\\_art\\_with\\_frederick\\_douglass\\_statue\\_blacks\\_get\\_their\\_say.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/09/blacks_in_western_art_with_frederick_douglass_statue_blacks_get_their_say.html) ). The model for the statue was made in 1898 by sculptor Sidney W. Edwards. Douglass died in 1895. Ask students on what they think Edwards modeled his image of Douglass.
      1. *Technology at the time included photography. Students may guess that Douglass modeled before he died, that there was a picture of Douglass used by Edwards, or other creative ideas. In reality, Edwards used Douglass' son Charles R. Douglass as the model.*
    - ii. Ask students why Rochester, NY was the site for this statue.
      1. *Douglass published *The North Star* in Rochester in 1847. Douglass was active in the Underground Railroad in Rochester (an important stop on the way to ultimate freedom in Canada), and delivered his famous speech*

*What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? in Rochester in 1852. Douglass moved to Washington, D.C. in 1872 after his home in Rochester burned to the ground in a suspected arson incident*

*(<http://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/historyculture/frederick-douglass-chronology.htm>). Douglass is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester.*

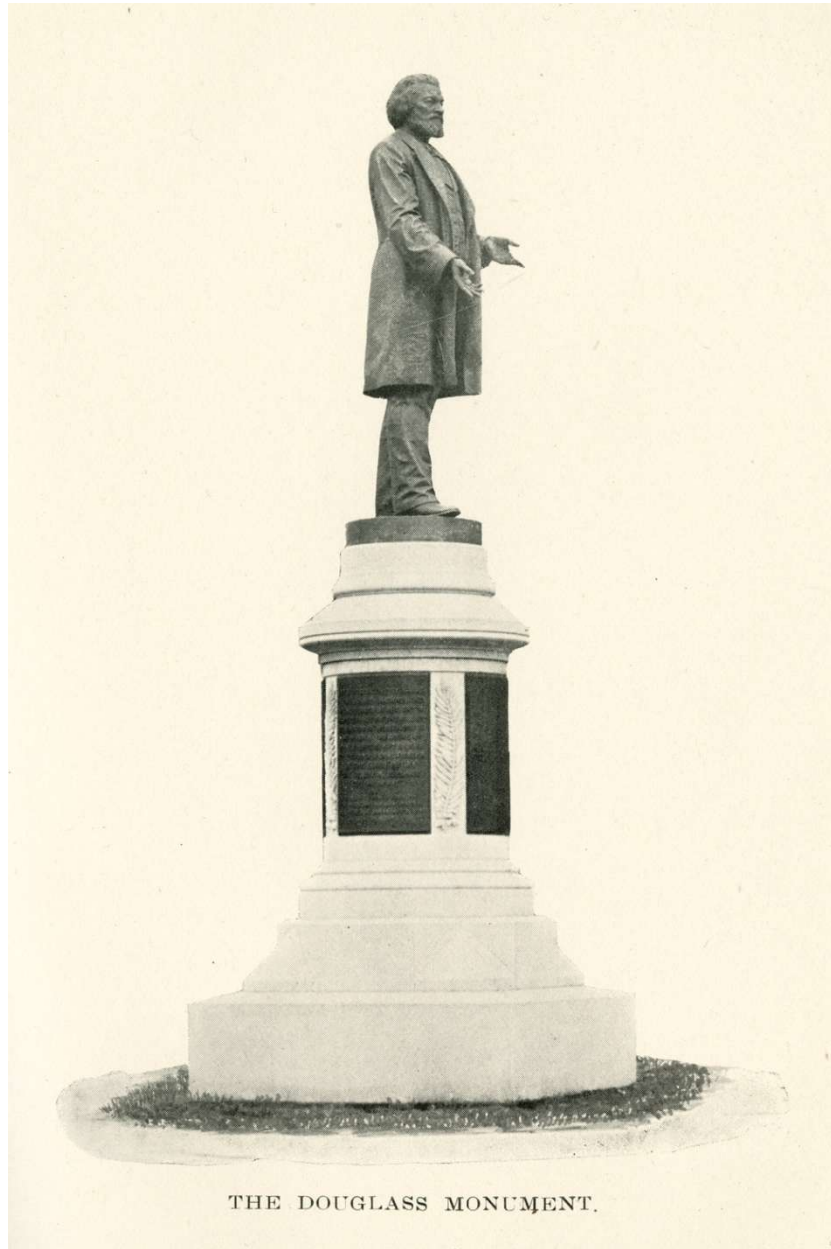
- b. Pair up students to complete Worksheet A: Statue Analysis. Facilitate group discussion of pairs' work.
3. Distribute Worksheet B: Inscription Analysis. Jigsaw Analysis, distributing analysis of each inscription to small groups with report-out to all. Assign students to pair up to work on analysis of one of the three sides with detailed inscriptions (West, East and North). After students have time to work in pairs, facilitate reporting out to larger group of conclusion of each pair.
4. Group Discussion: Facilitate discussion of why statue had detailed inscriptions on N, E and W sides but only "Frederick Douglass" (name only) inscribed on southern side.
  - a. *Douglass and other escaped slaves fled N, E and W to escape slavery. The decision to face the southern exposure of the statue with Douglass name alone is at the same time an acknowledgement of the South's role in slavery, and also a statement that there can be no stronger inscription than this man's name alone as a statement of his legacy to all four quadrants.*
5. Exit Ticket: See attached



THE DOUGLASS MONUMENT.

**Genius of Freedom: The Douglass Monument**  
**Worksheet A: Statue Analysis**

Look carefully at the following image of the statue of Frederick Douglass from the **Genius of Freedom Exhibit: The Douglass Monument**.



THE DOUGLASS MONUMENT.

Now consider this image of Abraham Lincoln from The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. (<http://livinglincoln.web.unc.edu/2015/04/17/the-lincoln-memorial-how-it-stands-today/>)

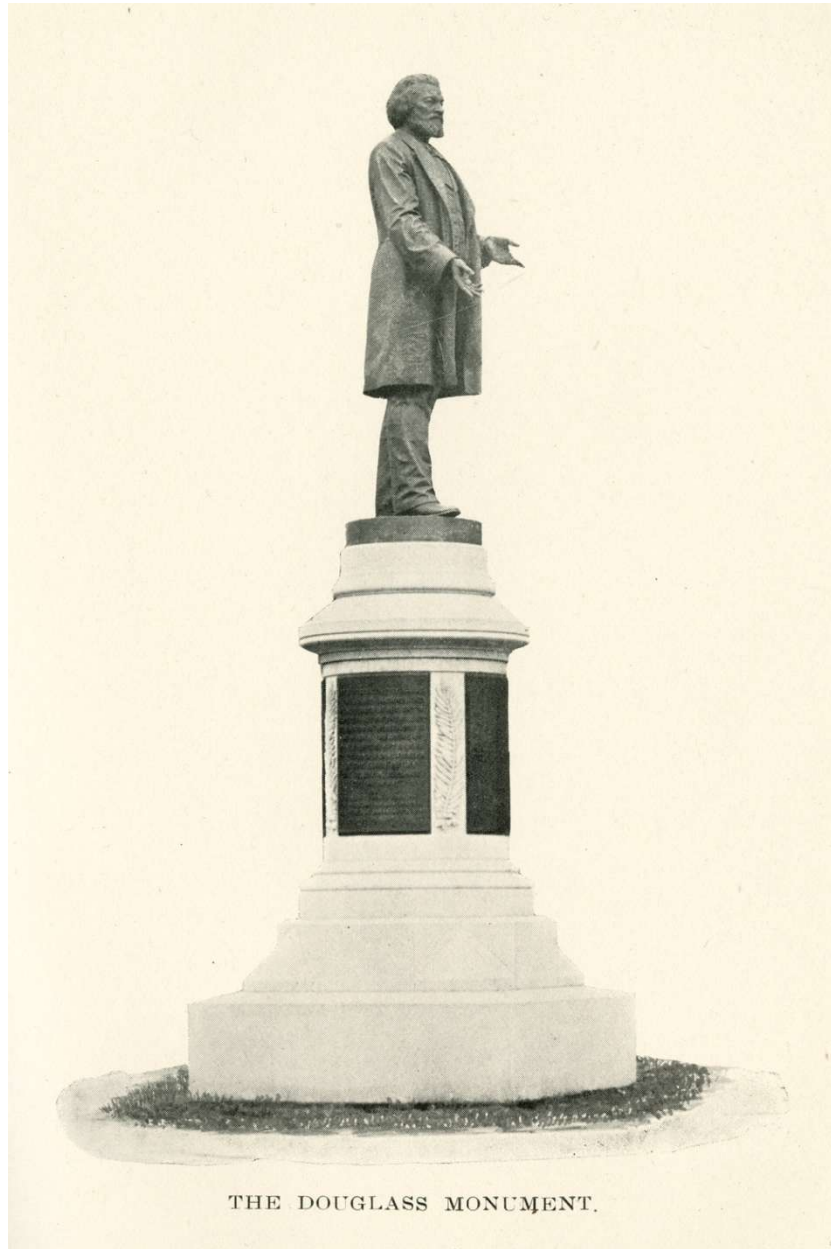


With your partner, discuss the following questions. Jot down some notes on your analysis to be ready to share with the class:

1. What physical similarities do you see between the two monuments?
2. What physical differences do you see between the two monuments?
3. What three adjectives would you use to describe your reaction to The Douglass Monument? Why did you pick those words?
4. What three adjectives would you use to describe your reaction to the Lincoln Memorial? Why did you pick those words?
5. Pretend you are the sculptor for The Douglass Monument. Pick one specific aspect/gesture/attribute of the monument. Why did you choose to depict Douglass in that manner?
6. Pretend you are the sculptor for the Lincoln Memorial. Pick one specific aspect/gesture/attribute of the monument. Why did you choose to depict Lincoln in that manner?

**Genius of Freedom: The Douglass Monument**  
**Worksheet A: Statue Analysis [Answer Key](#)**

Look carefully at the following image of the statue of Frederick Douglass from the **Genius of Freedom Exhibit: The Douglass Monument**.



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With your partner, discuss the following questions. Jot down some notes on your analysis to be ready to share with the class:

1. What physical similarities do you see between the two monuments?
  - a. *The hands are prominent in both statues but Lincoln is resting his hands on the edge of his chair. Douglass is using his hands as if he is actively talking to an audience.*
    - i. *In fact, the Douglass statue depicts Douglass delivering a speech on the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment giving blacks the right to vote*  
([http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/09/blacks\\_in\\_western\\_art\\_with\\_frederick\\_douglass\\_statue\\_blacks\\_get\\_their\\_say.html](http://www.theroot.com/articles/history/2014/09/blacks_in_western_art_with_frederick_douglass_statue_blacks_get_their_say.html) ).
  - b. *Both men have an expression of being lost in thought.*



- c. *The position of both statues commands the audience to look up at each man.*
  - d. *Both men are dressed in formal attire, clothing you might expect to see on prominent citizens of the day.*
  - e. *Both statues are full body statues (rather than just a bust). Both men are depicted in detail, including hair and facial expression.*
  - f. *Both men have one foot in front of the other as if gesturing toward the audience.*
2. What physical differences do you see between the two monuments?
    - a. *Lincoln is sitting while Douglass is standing. Lincoln's stance is more passive. Douglass is more active.*
    - b. *Lincoln is not actively engaged with the audience. His hands rest on his chair. You might have the sense that you walked in on him while he is deep in thought. Douglass is gesturing out to the audience with a sense of active engagement, as if he is trying to make a point or persuade the audience.*
    - c. *Douglass' gaze seems to stare out actively toward an audience. Lincoln seems to be more self-reflective as if he was having a private moment.*
  3. What three adjectives would you use to describe your reaction to The Douglass Monument? Why did you pick those words?
    - a. *Students will have a variety of responses to this prompt. Some might include powerful, persuasive, engaging, thoughtful, engaged, requesting, outreaching. Ask the students to supply evidence to support their choice of adjective.*
  4. What three adjectives would you use to describe your reaction to the Lincoln Memorial? Why did you pick those words?
    - a. *Similar to #4, students will have a variety of responses, potentially including reflective, thoughtful, confident, powerful.*
  5. Pretend you are the sculptor for The Douglass Monument. Pick one specific aspect/gesture/attribute of the monument. Why did you choose to depict Douglass in that manner?
    - a. *Douglass led a life of active engagement. He was an agent on behalf of many advancements for enslaved and eventually freed Americans. But his stance also conveys a sense request/persuasion for the audience, as if his work was not yet complete.*
  6. Pretend you are the sculptor for the Lincoln Memorial. Pick one specific aspect/gesture/attribute of the monument. Why did you choose to depict Lincoln in that manner?
    - a. *Lincoln died just as his vision for a unified country was becoming reality. The statue conveys his power and achievement, but with a reflexive sense as if Lincoln is contemplating rather than gloating.*

## Genius of Freedom: The Douglass Monument Worksheet B: Inscription Analysis

The Douglass Monument is inscribed on three sides (North, West and East). Work in your group to analyze your assigned inscription from the Exhibit based on the following questions:

- Paraphrase the inscription.
- Imagine that you are Sidney W. Edwards, the statue's sculptor. You are at the dedication ceremony for the statue and are asked by the press why you selected that particular quotation from Douglass, above all others, to include on the statue. How would you respond?

East Side Group:

On the east side of the shaft is the following, taken from a speech made by Douglass on the famous Dred Scott decision in 1857:

"I know no soil better adapted to the growth of reform than American soil. I know no country where the conditions for effecting great changes in the settled order of things, for the development of right ideas of liberty and humanity, are more favorable than here in the United States."

West Side Group:

West side is the following extract from a speech on West Indian emancipation, delivered at Canandaigua, August 4, 1857:

"Men do not live by bread alone; so with nations, they are not saved by art, but by honesty; not by the gilded splendors of wealth, but by the hidden treasure of manly virtue; not by the multitudinous gratifications of the flesh, but by the celestial guidance of the spirit."

North Side Group:

North side are these quotations from the speeches of **Douglass:**

“The best defense of free American institutions is in the hearts of the American people themselves.”

“One with God is a majority.”

“I know of no rights of race superior to the rights of humanity.”

## Genius of Freedom: The Douglass Monument Worksheet B: Inscription Analysis [Answer Key](#)

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“I know no soil better adapted to the growth of reform than American soil. I know no country where the conditions for effecting great changes in the settled order of things, for the development of right ideas of liberty and humanity, are more favorable than here in the United States.”

- *Prompt 1: America is exceptional as a country able to remedy past errors (“growth of reform”) and develop in support of basic human rights such as liberty and humanity.*
- *Prompt 2: The Dred Scott decision was a “black mark” in American history, in which slavery was supported by the highest court of the land. Ironically, this decision galvanized the abolitionists to respond with greater force, unifying and strengthening the Republican Party. As sculptor, I not only wanted to acknowledge Douglass’ comments on this decision, but also to capture his optimism and hope for the ultimate American response.*

West Side Group:

West side is the following extract from a speech on West Indian emancipation, delivered at Canandaigua, August 4, 1857:

“Men do not live by bread alone; so with nations, they are not saved by art, but by honesty; not by the gilded splendors of wealth, but by the hidden treasure of manly virtue; not by the multitudinous gratifications of the flesh, but by the celestial guidance of the spirit.”

- *Prompt 1: Both practical and spiritual/artistic motivations are necessary to explain humanity's growth. Honesty, virtue and spiritual guidance are essential human qualities.*
- *Prompt 2: As sculptor, I wanted to capture Douglass' thoughts on the abolition of slavery (“West Indian emancipation”) in a British colony well before slavery was abolished in the United States. I wanted capture Douglass' focus on the attributes of honesty, virtue and spirit that he believed guided the British in that momentous decision, and highlight the need for those same qualities needed for American emancipation.*

North Side Group:

North side are these quotations from the speeches of **Douglass:**

“The best defense of free American institutions is in the hearts of the American people themselves.”

“One with God is a majority.”

“I know of no rights of race superior to the rights of humanity.”

- *Prompt 1: There are basic human rights, so basic that they are clear to all men and to God.*
- *Prompt 2: As sculptor, I wanted to emphasize the basic human right of freedom that Douglass advocated. Douglass was religious and believed in God's righteousness, hence his statement that if even only one person can see God's view on basic human rights, he/she has the power of a majority.*



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: The Douglass Memorial

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Exit Ticket

1. Which of the following statements about the Douglass Memorial statue is false: \_\_\_ The statue shows Douglass giving a speech about the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment \_\_\_ The statue lacks a pedestal, positioning Douglass at ground level \_\_\_ The statue was dedicated after his death
2. Select one inscription from the statue base and explain its significance:

Answers:

Q1 - The false statement is “The statue lacks a pedestal, positioning Douglass at ground level.” When revealing this answer to students, consider adding a comment about the relevance of pedestals in statuary at the time the statue was cast. The elevation is a sign of honor and respect.

Q2 - Students may select any of the four inscriptions and have a number of thoughtful responses to this prompt. Some could include:

- South Side: The statue is inscribed with Douglass’ name - standing alone to both identify the subject but also to highlight his greatness (name alone is meaningful).
- North Side: The statue is inscribed with famous lines from Douglass’ speeches emphasizing the power of one individual, the power of the will of the American people, and basic human rights.
- West Side: Inscription celebrates the elimination of slavery in the British West Indies, emphasizing that a nation’s greatness comes from its treatment of its citizens.
- East Side: Inscription is from Douglass’ speech on the Dred Scott decision in which he voices his faith in America and hope, despite the setback that decision represented, that America would rectify the wrongs of slavery.