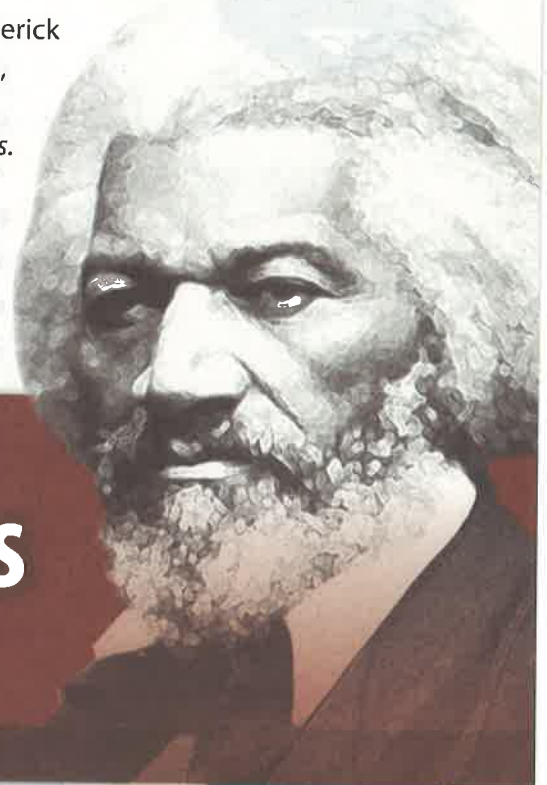


NAME



Background In his book *Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: The Story Behind an American Friendship*, Russell Freedman reveals the unique friendship that developed between two men who only met three times. Both men were born poor, self-educated, and rose to prominence, one as the sixteenth President of the

United States and the other as a powerful orator and influential abolitionist. In "My Friend Douglass," Freedman writes about what happened when Lincoln and Douglass met at the White House in 1865.



My Friend Douglass

Biography by Russell Freedman

CLOSE READ
Notes

- READ** ▶ As you read lines 1–23, begin to cite text evidence.
 - Underline the date, the place, the name of the person involved in the action, and the historical event in lines 1–9.
 - In the margin, restate what Lincoln says that slavery has caused.
 - In lines 14–23, underline what Lincoln says will be an effect of the end of slavery.

On the morning of March 4, 1865, Frederick Douglass joined a festive crowd of 30,000 spectators at the U.S. Capitol to witness Abraham Lincoln's second **inauguration**. Weeks of rain had turned Washington's unpaved streets into a sea of mud, but despite the wet and windy weather, the crowd was in a mood to celebrate. Union troops were marching victoriously through the South. Everyone knew that the war was almost over. When Lincoln's tall figure appeared, "cheer upon cheer arose, bands blatted upon the air, and flags waved all over the scene."

inauguration:

- Douglass found a place for himself directly in front of the speaker's stand. He could see every crease in Lincoln's careworn face as the president stepped forward to deliver his second inaugural address.

The Civil War had cost more than 600,000 American lives. The fighting had been more bitter and lasted far longer than anyone could

have imagined. The “cause of the war” was slavery, Lincoln declared. Slavery was the one institution that divided the nation. And slavery was a hateful and evil practice—a sin in the sight of God. “This mighty scourge of war” was a terrible retribution, a punishment for allowing human bondage to flourish on the nation’s soil. Now that slavery was abolished, the time had come “to bind up the nation’s wounds” and “cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Following the “wonderfully quiet, earnest, and solemn” ceremony, Douglass wanted to congratulate Lincoln personally. That evening he joined the crowd heading to attend the gala inaugural reception at the White House—a building completed with slave labor just a half century earlier. “Though no colored persons had ever ventured to present themselves on such occasions,” Douglass wrote, “it seemed, now that freedom had become the law of the republic, and colored men were on the battlefield, mingling their blood with that of white men in one common effort to save the country, that it was not too great an assumption for a colored man to offer his congratulations to the President with those of other citizens.”

At the White House door, Douglass was stopped by two policemen who “took me rudely by the arm and ordered me to stand

2. ◀ **REREAD** Reread lines 14–23. If slavery was the “cause of the war,” what were the effects of slavery? Be sure to cite explicit textual evidence in your response.

3. ▶ **READ** ▶ As you read lines 24–62, continue to collect and cite textual evidence.

- Circle the reason Douglass feels justified in attending the inaugural gala.
- Explain in the margin what happens when Douglass tries to enter the White House.
- Underline what Lincoln says to Douglass in lines 47–62.

back.” Their orders, they told him, were “to admit no persons of my color.” Douglass didn’t believe them. He was positive that no such order could have come from the president.

40 The police tried to steer Douglass away from the doorway and out a side exit. He refused to leave. “I shall not go out of this building till I see President Lincoln,” he insisted. Just then he spotted an acquaintance who was entering the building and asked him to send word “to Mr. Lincoln that Frederick Douglass is detained by officers at the door.” Within moments, Douglass was being escorted into the elegant East Room of the White House.

Lincoln stood among his guests “like a mountain pine high above all others.” As Douglass approached through the crowd, Lincoln called out, “Here comes my friend Douglass.” The president took
50 Douglass by the hand. “I am glad to see you,” he said. “I saw you in the crowd today, listening to my inaugural address. How did you like it?”

Douglass hesitated. “Mr. Lincoln, I must not detain you with my poor opinion when there are thousands waiting to shake hands with you.”

“No, no” said the president. “You must stop a little Douglass; there is no man whose opinion I value more than yours. I want to know what you think of it.”

“Mr. Lincoln, that was a sacred effort,” Douglass replied.

60 “I’m glad you liked it!”

And with that, Douglass moved on, making way for other guests who were waiting to shake the hand of Abraham Lincoln.

4. ◀ REREAD Reread lines 47–62. Explain how Lincoln makes Douglass feel welcome. Cite specific textual evidence in your response.

jubilant:

A month later, on April 9, 1865, generals Grant and Lee met at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia, where Grant accepted the surrender of Lee's Confederate army. After almost four years of savage fighting, the Civil War had ended. "Guns are firing, bells ringing, flags flying, men laughing, children cheering, all, all **jubilant**," Gideon Welles, Lincoln's secretary of the navy, recorded in his diary.

70 Throngs of people collected around the White House, calling for the president. When Lincoln appeared, he asked the band to play "Dixie," a popular minstrel tune that had become associated with the Confederate cause. "It is one of the best tunes I have ever heard," Lincoln told the crowd. He joked that the tune was now "a lawful prize," since "we fairly captured it." So the band played "Dixie," then struck up "Yankee Doodle."

Five days later, as Lincoln sat watching a play with his wife at Ford's Theater in Washington, the president was shot in the head by actor John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln died early the next morning, April 15, 1865.

80 "A dreadful disaster has befallen the nation," Frederick Douglass told a memorial service in Rochester that afternoon. "It is a day for silence and meditation; for grief and tears."

For Douglass, Lincoln's death was "a personal as well as a national **calamity**." He felt that he had lost a friend, and how deeply he mourned that day for Abraham Lincoln, "I dare not attempt to tell. It was only a few days ago that I shook his brave, honest hand, and looked into his gentle eye and heard his kindly voice."

calamity:

5. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 63–87, continue to cite textual evidence.

- Circle words that indicate the sequence of events. List the events in the margin.
- Underline Douglass's response to the news of Lincoln's death.

6. **REREAD** ◀ Reread lines 80–87. In what way is Lincoln's death a "calamity" for Douglass? In what way is it a calamity for the nation?

A few months later Douglass received in the mail a long, slender package from Washington, D.C., along with a note from Mary Todd
90 Lincoln. Her husband had considered Douglass a special friend, she wrote, and before he died, he had wanted to do something to express his warm personal regard. Since he hadn't had the chance, Mary had decided to send Douglass her husband's favorite walking stick as a memento of their friendship.

When Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, Frederick Douglass, in his mid-forties, was America's most influential black citizen. For the rest of his long life, he continued in his speeches and writings to be a powerful voice for social justice, denouncing racism and demanding equal rights for blacks and whites alike. During the Reconstruction
100 era¹ of the 1870s and 1880s, when many of the rights gained after **emancipation** were snatched away in the South, Douglass spoke out against lynchings, the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Jim Crow laws² that were devised to keep blacks in their place and away from the ballot box.

As he traveled widely, lecturing on social issues and national politics, Douglass spoke often about Abraham Lincoln. During the war, he had criticized the president for being slow to move against slavery, for resisting the enlistment of black soldiers, for inviting blacks "to leave the land in which we were born." But with
110 emancipation, and in the aftermath of the war, Douglass had come to appreciate Lincoln's sensitivity to popular opinion and to admire the political skills Lincoln employed to win public support. "His greatest mission was to accomplish two things: first, to save the country from dismemberment and ruin; and, second, to free his country from the great crime of slavery. To do one or the other, or both," Douglass said, Lincoln needed "the earnest sympathy and the powerful cooperation of his fellow countrymen."

In the 1870s, Douglass moved with his family to Washington, D.C., where he edited a newspaper, held a succession of federal

¹ **Reconstruction era:** the period after the American Civil War when the Southern states were under the federal government's control.

² **Jim Crow laws:** the practice of separating African Americans from whites in the South during and after Reconstruction.

emancipation:

7. **READ** ▶ Read lines 88–139. In the margin, paraphrase what Douglass says about Lincoln in lines 112–117. Continue to cite evidence.

120 appointments, and clearly enjoyed his exalted position as an elder statesman of America's black citizens. And he continued to denounce injustice and inequality with the undiminished fervor of an old warrior.

His last home was a large, comfortable house called Cedar Hill, perched high on a hilltop looking down at the Anacostia River and the U.S. capital beyond. Cedar Hill had a spacious library, large enough to hold Douglass's collection of some two thousand books. From time to time, as he picked a book from his shelves and settled down to read, he must have recalled those distant days in Baltimore
130 when he was a young slave named Frederick Bailey, a determined boy who owned just one book, a single volume that he kept hidden from view and read in secret.

Lincoln had read and studied the same book as a young man in New Salem. That was something they had in common, a shared experience that helped each of them rise from obscurity to greatness. "He was the architect of his own fortune, a self-made man," Douglass wrote of Lincoln. He had "ascended high, but with hard hands and honest work built the ladder on which he climbed"—words that Douglass, as he was aware, could easily have applied to himself.

8. ◀ **REREAD AND DISCUSS** Reread lines 128–135. With a small group, discuss the author's purpose for including the information about the shared book. What point is Freedman making about a childhood experience common to both men?

SHORT RESPONSE

Cite Text Evidence What effect did Lincoln have on Douglass's life? In what respect did Douglass carry on Lincoln's work? **Cite text evidence** in your response.
