

1. Slavery and the Implications of “Telling It Like It Is”

- “The Liberator” newspaper letter, first person account of Douglass’s beating in Pendleton, Indiana, September, 1843.
- Excerpt from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (autobiography), 1845, p.50, 51.

Suggested curriculum uses: Examine and take notes on the excerpt from Douglass’ autobiography as an example of speeches he gave to publicize the physical, social, and psychological horrors of slavery. What were the repercussions he endured as a result of speaking out?

Content questions: Teachers develop for classroom use.

The Liberator
October 13, 1843

The Hundred Conventions

**Letter from William A White.
Newccastle, (Ind.) Sept 22d, 1843**

Dear Friend:

Instead of writing to you of the great gathering of anti-slavery friends at Oakland, as I promised, I must write of a pro-slavery mob which opposed us at Pendleton, and which is most painful to think of, for it presented us men, not acting as reasonable creatures, but rather like devils in human form; men actuated by the passions of brutes, and using the intellects of men to carry out those passions.

We arrived at Dr. Fussell's in Pendleton, on the evening of the 14th, and there learned that a mob had threatened to come down from Columbus, a miserable, rum-drinking place, about six miles distant, and break up the meeting. The people in Pendleton are not anti-slavery, but are willing to hear the question discussed. In the morning we held our meeting in the Baptist church. Frederick spoke, and there was no interruption, though I observed a great number of men, such as do not usually attend our meetings. As we started for our meeting in the afternoon, we learned that we could not have the church, as the trustees feared the building would be injured. When we arrived on the spot, we found a mob of thirty or more people collected, very much excited, and learned that Dr. Cook, a citizen of the town, had attempted, by addressing them, to allay the excitement. Many of the mob were much intoxicated, and their threats most violent. As the *Church* had given us over to them, they felt encouraged to go all lengths. We went in among them, and talked in a conversational way for some time, when Bradburn mounted the steps, and commended speaking without interruption; but we were soon driven home by a shower, and our first day's meting was over.

In the evening there was a meeting of the citizens of the place, in which resolutions disapproving the course of the mob, and expressing a determination to resist it were offered, and after a few words from Bradburn and myself, unanimously passed. A good feeling pervaded the meeting, and we hoped we should have no more trouble.

The next morning being pleasant, we held our meeting in the woods, where seats and stands had been arranged. At the opening of the meeting there were only seven of the mobocrats present, and we trusted they had seen the resolutions passed the evening before, which were posted in various parts of the town, and would not trouble us; but the fact was, though the citizens had passed the resolves, they were not decided, and it was known that one or two leading men in the town secretly winked at the doings of the mob. We opened the meeting with a song, after which I made a few remarks, and was followed by Bradburn. While he was speaking, the mob continued to collect, but were quiet. At a given signal, they all withdrew, and left us for the time. The audience now numbered one hundred men, and thirty women. In a few moments we heard a shout, and saw the mob coming through the woods, thirty or more in number, two and two, armed with stones and eggs, and led on by a fellow in a coon skin cap, tail and all, as a representation of the great Whig party, and another barefooted man, with nothing but a dirty shirt and pantaloons on, and the former half off his shoulder, as a representative of the democracy of the country. The audience immediately on their appearance rose, and were about to retreat. I requested them to be seated, which some of them did. All the women sat down; but some of the men withdrew; and it is but justice to the women to say, that throughout the whole they showed themselves the more courageous party, as they ever have done. The cry now was 'surround them;' and the mob went up behind the audience, and in front of the stand, and the coonskin man ordered us to be off. This command was followed by a volley of eggs and stones, after which there was a lull for a moment, as the mob seemed at a loss what to do, as their arguments had produced no impression. A parley now took place, and Dr. Cook attempted to address the mob; but they would not hear him, and continued to approach the stand. A man named James Jackson asked us why we did not go to the South and preach. Bradburn replied to him, and Jackson was making an answer when I invited him to take the stand, which he did, and make a most ridiculous spectacle,

interlarding his speech with copious oaths, and ending off by saying he could not talk, but he could fight—that he had too much good blood in his veins to let us go on, [unreadable text], and at this time, if the citizens of Pendleton had taken a decided stand, all would have been well. One of the mob named Rik, while Jackson was speaking, came up to the stand, an saying that 'he saw that nothing was going to be done without he did it,' seized hold of the table, overturned it, and began to pull the stand to pieces. The mob joined in, and commenced pushing the audience back and knocking them down. Micajah White, a warm friend, was knocked down, with another friend named Graham. Frederick Douglass who, at the time, was safe among the friends, not seeing me, though, I was knocked down, and seizing a club, rushed into the crowd. His weapon was immediately snatched from him, and he finding he had attracted their anger against himself, fled for his life, and ten or more the mob followed, crying, 'Kill the nigger, kill the damn nigger.' I hope never to look upon so fearful a sight, as poor Frederick flying before these hell-hounds, panting for his blood. It was fearfully true picture of the flight of the fugitive slave, and it was fitting it should take place on the soil of this pro-slavery State. The leader of the mob soon overtook him, and knocked him down and struck him once with a club, and was raising it the second time to level a blow which must have been fatal had it fallen, but I, by dint of hard running, came up in time to throw myself upon him, and stop him in his murderous purpose. One of the wretches hurled a stone which struck me in the back of the head, and but for my hat would have done me a severe injury. I turned to go to Frederick, and three more struck me in front, but doing no decided injury. By this time, the crowd came up, and farther [sic] violence was stopped. Frederick was taken up, and though at first he seemed to have been severely injured, he soon recovered, and was able to lecture the next day. Dr. Vaughan, a warm friend, was also hurt. Bradburn was not hurt. The mob themselves I do not much blame; they were tools in the hands of designing men. When you learn that a member of the Methodist church, and another of the Baptist were among the leaders of the mob, you will see where some of the responsibility rests. I was also told that a Mr. McAllister, of Columbus, a member elect of the Legislature, secretly encouraged the proceedings. When the the [sic] so-called *wise* and *good* of the land countenance such things, what can we expect of the ignorant drunken men? The wretches threatened to march into town and pull down Dr. Fussell's house in the evening,

and the citizens armed themselves, and owing to this circumstance, the mob did not make their appearance. Dr. Fussell behaved nobly, and the western abolitionists have to endure now, all that was suffered by abolitionists with us three years since. This mob has opened the eyes of many here, for as one man said, they see which side the devil is on. W.A. White

Excerpt from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (autobiography), 1845, p.50, 51.

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony--a title which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay. He was not considered a rich slaveholder. He owned two or three farms, and about thirty slaves. His farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself. Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slave- holding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.