Slave narratives compose one of the most influential and extensive traditions in African American literature and culture. A sub genre of the African American autobiography, the slave narrative has proven to be one of the most effective weapons against American slavery. In fact, in antebellum America, the fugitive slave narrative was the most popular genre of the period with some seventy or so narratives published from 1760 to the end of the Civil War in 1865.

The three decades between 1830 to 1860 saw the slave narrative evolving into a militant literature as it unravels the moral and social corruption of America and it is no coincidence that the American abolitionist movement was also at the height of its popularity during this period. Many writers in the nineteenth century like William Wells Brown, Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass and others started their literary careers with autobiographical narratives of their lives.

The chapterisation of the thesis will be as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction
Chapter II: Educating the Self
Chapter III: Articulating the New Self
Chapter IV: Authenticating the Self
Chapter V: Conclusion
Chapter-I: Introduction

Born on a farm in Tuckahoe of a slave mother, Harriet Bailey and an unknown white man, Frederick Douglass is given the name Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey by his mother, a name which evokes the commanding examples of European, Classical and American national patriarchs and also a name which gives him a sense of identity and self worth. Growing up, Douglass ultimately claims February 14, 1817 as his birth date on the ground that once he heard his mother called him her ‘Valentine’. His search for his father however proves futile because the harsh slaveholding laws of the time forbid slave mothers from revealing the names of the white men who father their mulatto children. When rumours started floating that his master is also his father, it is assumed that Captain Aaron Anthony must have fathered him. McFeely on the other hand offers an enticing alternative in his biography on Frederick Douglass when he points out that when Douglass speaks of his master, he is usually referring to Thomas Auld, who owned him at the time of his escape to the North. This explanation would explain Auld’s complex relationship with Douglass.

Frederick Douglass has always tried to portray himself as a man of heroic proportions and he is driven to better himself by any means possible. His sense of abandonment by the people closest to him, namely
his mother and grandmother, awaken in him a desire to prove his worth to the world but it also makes him wary of forming close relationships. This adds to his aura of a distant heroic figure. Even his death is fitting of the aura that he has created for himself, “...he began to mimic one of the day’s grandiloquent speakers, rising from his chair and then sinking to his knees in a heroic gesture.”

Before we can discuss Slave Narratives mention must be first made of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Slavery already existed in Africa long before the arrival of the first Europeans but it had none of the horrors of American and European slavery. In Africa slaves were generally well treated by their masters because most were either debtors, members of other tribes or erring members of their own tribe but of course slave treatment can also differ from place to place and master to master.

The Portuguese were the first to export slaves out of Africa in the mid-fifteenth century and the Americans started sending their slave ships to Africa by 1636. The iterativeness of the trade is reflected in the 11, 698,000 or so Africans exported to the New World during the Transatlantic Slave Trade which lasted from 1518 to 1870 despite the abolition of the international slave trade in 1807. The slave trade in Africa corrupted Africans to such an extent that even familial ties could not provide a shield against being sold away to slave traders. For those
captives the shock and fear of capture was compounded by the horror of
the Middle Passage in the notorious slave ships. Dorothy and Carl J.
Schneider intriguingly ascribe the sadism and cruelty of the sailors to the
fact that most of them were forced or tricked into working on a slave
ship.

The first Africans who set foot in North America in 1619 were
some twenty Blacks who were brought ashore near Jamestown, Virginia
after they were seized from a captured Spanish slave ship. It is significant
that the early arrivals were hired as indentured servants but by 1660
Blacks were forced into chattel slavery as seen from surviving Virginia
county court records from 1652, "...sold to John Pott 'one negro girle
named Jowan; aged about ten years and with her issue and produce
during her (or either of them) for their Life tyme. And their successors
forever'."11

The banning of the International Slave Trade in 1807 led to the rise
of the domestic slave trade in America which in turn led to the slave
becoming almost like a cash crop. The Oxford English dictionary before
the sixteenth century described the colour black as "Deeply stained with
dirt; soiled, dirty, foul....Foul iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked...."12 It is no surprise then that blackness for the white man came
to be associated with everything sub-human thereby making it easier for him to debase, humiliate and enslave a race of people.

Slave narratives which are the autobiographical narratives of former slaves first made their appearance in the United States in the early Eighteenth century. These writings are the most extensive and influential traditions in African-American literature and culture. Slave narratives are divided into three categories – Narratives which have been ghostwritten by whites, those which have been dictated by illiterate slaves to white editors and those authored by the slaves themselves.¹³

Many slave narrators like Olaudah Equiano, Elizabeth Keckly, William Wells Brown, Harriet Jacobs, Henry Box Brown and Frederick Douglass have all exposed the inhumanity of American slavery through their writings. The women’s experience differs greatly from that of the men because they were also victims of sexual exploitation at the hands of their masters and overseers. Their writings are also revelations of their inherent intelligence and aptitude when they are able to fashion their own flight from slavery.

With the publication of Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, in 1845 the Slave Narrative reached its pinnacle. What makes the *Narrative* unique is Douglass’s style of self-presentation. In all his three
autobiographies, *Narrative* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass His early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (1881), Douglass has written about slavery and exposed the truth about the Northern States concerning their deep rooted racism and dislike of slaves.

When the African slave first arrived in America he was divested of his culture and reduced to a condition termed 'social death'. It is increasingly seen in Nineteenth century America however that it is the American born slave who is better able to cope with slavery because they have a wider support system and are more knowledgeable about European ways.

Slaves below the Mason-Dixon line were denigrated to an unimaginable extent. Symbols of civilization like education and politics were closed to slaves and even Christianity which they were allowed to embrace was subverted to the conventions of slavery. This was possible because white people believed that Blacks are inferior intellectually, morally and spiritually.

Above the Mason-Dixon line things were no better because resentment against Black people was escalating due to the ever increasing numbers of fugitive slaves who were ready to work at any job for lesser
wages. This conflict between the two races has endured because this relationship is symbiotic - a fact which many whites refuse to believe.

As a child Frederick Douglass is protected from the inhumanity of slavery by his grandmother but as he grows older the realization of his status as a slave comes to him in degrees. With this understanding comes the awareness that his mother is a shadowy figure in his life because slaveholding laws in Maryland hold that slave children must be separated from their mothers after completing a year of their life. As an adult Douglass realizes that this practice breaks all bonds between a mother and her child as he himself admits “I cannot say that I was very attached to my mother”. Of his father, “I knew nothing” Douglass writes abruptly since slave laws have effectively reduced the father to a nonentity since children follow the mother’s condition and in the case of white fathers, “Father he might be, and not husband, and could sell his own child without incurring reproach. if in its veins coursed one drop of African blood.”

Most Americans have seen Blacks usually portrayed as stock figures such as the character of ‘Sambo’ but fugitive slaves like Sojourner Truth and Douglass are determined to reveal the truth about slavery, from the slave songs which are commonly believed to reflect the slave’s contentment and happiness when in fact the opposite is true, to the
fall out of such repressive laws as the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, the gag rule of 1836 and the Dred Scott decision of 1857. James M. Whitfield's poem *America* (1853) a bitter parody of the patriotic hymn *America the Beautiful* encapsulates not only the horrific plight of Black slaves but also the apathy of the United States government:

```
America it is to thee,
Thou boasted land of liberty,
It is to thee I raise my song,
Thou land of blood, and crime and wrong.
```

(line 1-4)

**Chapter-II: Educating the Self**

Black slaves who decide to break away from the shackles of slavery take various and multiple routes to freedom. Though some buy their freedom from their masters through hard labour, some gain their freedom through acts of courage and daring. For Frederick Douglass, his road to freedom lay through education and his awareness of this fact becomes the driving force, pushing him to find ways and means to better himself intellectually.

Douglass’s childhood friendship with Daniel Lloyd, Col Lloyd’s youngest son, gives him the opportunity to see life on the other side of the fence. Douglass deliberately sets out to learn the language of his masters because it is a mode of liberation as well as a form of power. Through this contact, Douglass’s eyes opened to the disparity that exists between
White masters and their Black slaves and the desire to overcome his disadvantages is born. He, therefore, makes a conscious effort to drop the slave dialect and appropriate the formal English language spoken by the Llyods and their friends realizing even at this young age that how speaks will open or close doors for him in the future.

Frederick Douglass’s stay with Hugh and Sophia Auld in Baltimore opens a Pandora’s Box for him when he is introduced to the English alphabet by his mistress. Sophia’s act of reading the Bible and then teaching Douglass his letters stands as a conundrum especially when we consider the Draconian laws that were passed, prohibiting the mastery of letters by Blacks after the Stono Rebellion of 1739. The mystery behind Sophia’s action lies in her roots since she comes from a Northern working class background with no knowledge about the workings of slavery as practiced in the South. Perhaps Sophia wanted to see how far this intelligent slave boy can progress if given the right tools. It is Hugh Auld who unwittingly creates a craving for education in Douglass when he puts a stop to the lessons on the ground that education will do Douglass no good, but a great deal of harm.

An interesting aspect of slavery in the United States is that since for most slaves their situation is the only condition they know, this state of living becomes tolerable to them. Of course this is not a generalization
of the whole community because America’s slave history is dotted with numerous slave rebellions. Interestingly, Douglass never takes part in a slave revolt though John Brown, the abolitionist invited him to join the raid in Harper’s Ferry in 1859. A reason is because Douglass realizes that the plan is doomed to failure. Later in life Douglass condones violence as a means of achieving freedom because in the middle of the Civil War he confesses that “from the first, I, for one, saw in this war the end of slavery”. At the same time too he believes that education is the road to freedom because it is the slave’s ignorance and illiteracy which keeps him in fetters.

In a direct subversion of the White man’s law, Douglass seizes an education through trickery and bribes using the streets of Baltimore as a school room. He surreptitiously adds to his growing store of knowledge by challenging the little white boys to a game of who knows the most words. Oddly enough Douglass attributes his love for learning to his sable, unprotected and uncultivated mother and not to his unknown Anglo-Saxon father.27

James McCune Smith, a Black physician and abolitionist labels Douglass a “Representative American Man” because he reveals a tenacity and intellectual courage that is unique. A self-made man, Douglass is able to overcome all obstacles in his quest for education. During his stay with
Covey the slave breaker, Douglass is made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery and during this period his literary pursuits are all but forgotten. It is only when he is sent to live with Mr. Freeland at the end of the year that Douglass feels alive once again and his slumbering passion for reading and education is reawakened. Within a short time Douglass is running a discreet Sabbath school for his fellow slaves who want to break free from the darkness they have been forced to occupy.

What separates Douglass’s three autobiographies from the other slave narratives is that his books are not just narratives of his experiences but they are also critiques of the institution of slavery. Douglass bitterly critiques the Christmas holiday week where slaves are encouraged to entertain their masters through athletic feats and drink themselves into a stupor so that during this idle period thoughts of rebellion and running away will be furthest from their mind.

A book which greatly influenced Frederick Douglass was “The Columbian Orator” since this book gave speech to Douglass’s innermost thoughts. The book marked a turning point in Douglass’s life because it was able to mould and shape the impressionable young slave to the man he finally becomes. It is this kind of education which provides Douglass with the necessary confidence and presence of mind to make
his escape to the North where he is able to make a new life for himself, a life of dignity and self-respect, where for the first time he is his own man.

Chapter-III: Authenticating the New Self

Frederick Douglass sets foot in New York on September 4th 1838, a free man and filled with an ecstasy indescribable. The euphoria however doesn’t last long because after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1793, New York became one of the most dangerous cities in the ‘free’ North for fugitive slaves. Arrival in the free states of the North did not signal the end of all the Black man’s problems because he is threatened by something more insidious and potentially more dangerous psychologically. In the Souls of Black Folk W. E. B. Du Bois writes about how the negro is confronted by his ‘twoness’ – an American and a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two warring ideals in one body. Douglass is made to forget his twoness when he first joined the Garrisonians since he is a novelty as a fugitive slave lecturer. He is however brought face to face with his twoness when he is advised by Collins, a fellow Garrisonian, to have, “a little of the plantation manner of speech...”29 To Douglass’s commendation he refuses saying that he must speak, “just the word that seemed to me the word to be spoken by me”.30

All that the American Negro desired is to be both Black and American but this is something that white America is not ready to accept.
Since it will not allow him to merge his double self, America finds it easier to relocate him to a place far away because it believes in the adage, "out of sight, out of mind". Under the relocation programme of the American Colonisation Society freed Blacks were sent to Liberia in Africa and some went to Haiti, but the failure of these programmes suggests the degree to which these Blacks were American in their identity and cultural expectations. This inability to adjust to a new life is an indication of how much of America the Black man has imbibed within himself and it stands as a testament to Douglass’s proclamation, "Individuals immigrate – nations never". In support of his belief in integration, Douglass fights for integration in public schools because for him Black separatism is not the answer to the problem of colour.

In his journey to freedom and manhood, Douglass attributes his fight with Covey as the beginning of the creation of a new self. In the beginning Douglass submits to Covey's brutality until his spirit is broken but a day came when enough is enough and he fights back. He declares that this battle with Covey is the turning point in his career as a slave because it revives in him the expiring embers of freedom and it gives him a sense of his manhood.

When a man is pushed to the edge of the cliff, sometimes his leap of death ends in a rebirth for him. This is what happens to Douglass.
because after the fight with Covey he announced, "I was nothing before; I WAS A MAN NOW". With the Garrisonians, Douglass is able to metamorphose from a voiceless slave to an orator and influenced by John Brown he begins to think that slavery can only be destroyed through bloodshed.

As he progresses Douglass reveals a remarkable level of maturity since he refuses to divulge his route of escape so that others may follow him. He also refuses to name the white boys who contributed to his education in Baltimore in case white society ostracizes them. When a people are able to criticize itself it reveals its maturity as a society. It is significant that Douglass exposes the faults and weaknesses of the slaves themselves when he points out that slaves not only boast about being born in the United States but they also quarrel among themselves and boast about the relative goodness of their respective masters. What is even worse is that they are also capable of ill-treating and starving their own just as Douglass suffered at the hands of Aunt Katy when a child in Aaron Anthony’s house. In the North some free Blacks work in tandem with slave catchers to kidnap their own and send them back to their masters for a reward.

Colour prejudice among the sable population is a problem and the issue is considered as a bit of dirty laundry. Douglass’s second marriage
to a red-headed woman in 1884 leads to accusations that he is ashamed of his own race. To his children, his marriage is not only like a formal repudiation of them but it is also like a confirmation of their sense that they being darker than he were of less value.

Racial attitudes in the North were extraordinarily complex. Though most whites do not accept the idea of Black equality and social segregation was common, yet whole towns would pour out into the streets in protest if a fugitive slave was seized. This attitude also explains the Garrisonian’s behaviour to Douglass, especially when they counsel him to give only the facts and to leave the philosophy to them. White America carries a preconceived notion that Blacks are incapable of any constructive thought or action and they doubted Douglass’s authenticity as a slave since they are confronted by someone who is literate and a master of oratory. The Narrative is written as an answer to all the doubting Thomases. Throughout his life, Douglass is always brought face to face with racism but each time he is always able to transcend it. We witness racism at its worst when Douglass is appointed Marshall of the District of Columbia but without the honour of presenting guests to the President of the United States during formal receptions. A reason is because it is unthinkable that a former slave will perform such an honour.
In his speech entitled "What is to the Slave the Fourth of July", Douglass celebrates the principles of the founding fathers but at the same time he goes on to contrast the immeasurable distance between the conditions of Whites and Blacks in the United States. But he asserts that, "progress is yet possible", which implies that there are still miles to go towards achieving a black heroic identity. Douglass does emerge as the most visible, persuasive and influential African American of the nineteenth century, a life, ironically, that could have happened only in America.35

Chapter-IV: Authenticating the Self

All art involves self-projection to a certain extent and in the novel or the drama, the writer projects his own personality into the character that he creates. As a result, self-projection is inevitable in literature and in almost every age autobiographical writing is evident. The diary, journal, memoir and letters all fall under autobiographical writing but each is different from the other.

A diary is a faithful and minute recording of a person’s daily life, but unlike the journal which usually has a specific object, the diary is sometimes not very coherent. Though the memoir and the autobiography are closely related to one another yet the memoirist concentrates more on
recording public events rather than the 'self' whereas the autobiographer illumines the author's inner self.

The term autobiography was coined in 1809 when Robert Southey commented on the life of Portuguese painter Francisco Veirira.\textsuperscript{36} The word autobiography can be described in terms of three constituent elements – autos (self), bios (life), and graphe (writing).\textsuperscript{37} In America it is only in recent years that the autobiography has received scholarly attention since before it was derided as an inferior kind of literature.

Black American literary tradition with its roots in Africa began with the oral tradition and these stories about the experience of capture and enslavement were passed on from mouth to mouth. Black American autobiography is a continuation of this creative literary tradition and this genre not only fulfills their need for a rhetorical mode to do battle against racism but it is also capable of having a mass impact on the conscience of ante-bellum America.

Black autobiography actually has its roots in the Slave Narrative because the convention of such writing is to focus more on the escape from bondage to freedom. Experienced abolitionists recognize that autobiography or first person narrative is the most effective tool in their fight against slavery in the South because they offer an in-depth and intimate look into a world which before stood as an enigma.
A charge often leveled against slave narratives is that they often degenerate into propagandistic material for the abolitionists with their excessive scenes of whipping, beatings, deprivation and sexual violence against women. Early historians have believed that this genre is weak in factual substance, yet John W. Blassingame asserts that these accounts not only have a ring of truth but they can also be verified by independent sources. In autobiography the nature of truth is very complex because the autobiographer presents the truth of life as seen from inside. It is because of this that slave narratives have been accepted with great skepticism and resistance especially since this genre is an arm of abolitionist propaganda. Frederick Douglass’s determination that his story must be believed as the truth makes him reveal his master’s identity and the place of his birth. Though he knows that it is reckless to reveal such details, yet his conviction that the Narrative will be worthless without such revelations pushes him on to a full disclosure of all his particulars.

In White autobiography, truth is viewed very differently. White autobiographers do not have to prove the authenticity of their writings since their sincerity is assumed. Thoreau declares at the beginning of his experience at Walden Pond, “I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life”. This statement exposes the bias of white readers because Douglass on the other hand
goes to great lengths to establish the authenticity of his story. In White autobiography, literary egoism may be praised as self-reliance but in Black autobiography the same is termed as impudence.

It is interesting to see that though Douglass conforms to the traditions of the slave narrative in his first autobiography by having Garrison and Wendell Phillips, two white abolitionists, write the preface, yet in his two later books he has Black men to do the honours. James McCune Smith, a Black physician and abolitionist and George L. Ruffin, the first Black American to graduate from Harvard Law School in 1869 and the first to serve on the Massachusetts State legislature.

An interesting aspect of Douglass’s three autobiographies is that he often makes no mention about certain people and incidents in his life. His childhood friendship with Daniel Lloyd, Col Lloyd’s youngest son, is only given a brief mention and he makes no mention at all of his courtship of Anna Murray in Baltimore, before announcing their marriage in New York a few days after his escape. Douglass deliberately plays down his association with Daniel Lloyd because within its boundaries he was the lowly, ignorant slave boy, an impression which does not sit well with the image that he now wants to show the world. His wife Anna, an illiterate, dark-complexioned and coarse woman did not fit into Douglass’s world filled with outspoken and militant personalities. By
keeping silent about them Douglass tries to uphold only his heroic qualities.

The continuation of slavery and human bondage has given rise to various forms of protest and Black autobiography is one of them. Black protest started on the slave ships with the slave rebellions and it matured into the act of seizing an education in the face of white opposition. Other forms of protest range from a deliberate work slowdown to oratory and religion, when Black slaves inscribe Christianity with certain African forms of worship such as the calling out which is very popular in Black churches.40 A recurring theme in most Black autobiography is the Black man’s protest against the cruelty and injustice imposed on him by white America, a theme which is relevant even in twentieth century America. This is indicative of the collective failure of the American nation in providing basic civil and human rights to a race of people whose forefathers were forcibly brought across the ocean against their will.

For Douglass a potent weapon against the debilitating effects of slavery is a deliberate misreading of what the slave holder stands for. As Douglass puts it,” What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated”.41 Douglass has always done the opposite of what others want him to do but for him the act of misreading is not an act of social commentary or moral criticism, it is an act of self-creation.
It is only through autobiography that Douglass feels he can authenticate his own self because this is the only genre which can provide him with the platform to reveal to the world the man that he is, a hero.

Chapter-V: Conclusion

Though the sheer force of his character, Douglass is able to emerge as a spokesman for his people and during the American Civil War, he is able to successfully lobby President Abraham Lincoln on two fronts – to abolish slavery and to let Blacks fight in the war as soldiers. However during his long career as a voice for his people Douglass has had to face a number of hurdles but each time he always emerges unscathed. His tenure as President of the Freedmen’s Savings and Trust Company in 1874 ended with the closure of this bank, but many people understood that it was humanly impossible for Douglass to turn around the fortunes of this irresponsibly managed bank overnight.

White western philosophers like Hegel, Kant and Hume have dismissed the sable race as inferior to the white race in intelligence, morality and spirituality but this comes as no surprise because white men have always wondered whether the African is a species of man or not. In their writings, slave narrators have been able to prove that they are more than a mere species of man, through their writings they have shown that they are not so obtuse as to be unconscious of the wrongs committed
against them. Frederick Douglass’s autobiographies stand as proof to these statements. Douglass makes no claim to literary greatness inspite of the high critical acclaim that his books have generated. One of the reasons why his writings were so popular is because they struck a chord with the mood of the age, an age characterized by reformist movements – women’s rights, peace, public school education and others.

A discussion of Frederick Douglass will not be complete without mentioning his speeches. His brilliant command and use of language, his intellectual brilliance quickly made him one of the more popular speakers in antislavery meetings. Some of his more popular speeches are, *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July*, *Self-Made Men*, *Lessons of the Hour* and others. Many times Douglass was able to control an unruly crowd through the sheer magnetism of his voice, “Full, rich and deep came the sonorous tones, compelling attention, drowning out the catcalls as an organ would a penny whistle.”

Frederick Douglass’s disposition is that he never makes the mistake of considering his education as completed. This fascination with education will remain with him throughout his life. His intellectual superiority is even more amazing when we consider that he has never had a day’s formal schooling. To Douglass, education is a continuous process and not to be limited within the four walls of a classroom.
James McCune Smith has correctly said that Douglass is more than an American hero. He is a Black American hero as well as the Father of the Civil Rights Movement in America. Douglass has been able to provide a Black perspective through his writings because his thoughts have come from within him and they are embellished in his own words. Douglass presents his life as a symbol of Black success but he is not without his critics who have accused him of having been co-opted by affluence, self-interest, political debts and undue regard for white acceptance. However it cannot be denied that Douglass has an appeal that is not limited to his own race or to Americans alone. He has the ability to touch the conscience of mankind as a whole.

In his writings, Douglass has projected himself not only as a leader of his people but also as a kind of Moses. Because he is truly a hero, a man who upholds his principles no matter what, later Blacks from Booker T. Washington to W. E. B. Du Bois have all sought “to appropriate into their own autobiographical self-portraits the African American culture hero first created and projected by Frederick Douglass”.44
End Notes


2 Originally from Spanish ‘mulato’ meaning hybrid. The first-generation offspring of a black and a white person.


4 Ibid., p. 381.


6 Ibid., p. 3.

7 Signifies the western hemisphere: the hemisphere that includes North America and South America.


9 The Atlantic crossing between Africa and the Americas where countless enslaved Africans died en route.

10 A labourer under contract by an employer usually works for 3-7 years, very like a slave, except it's for a specified amount of time.


12 Ibid., p. 57.


15 The boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania, a symbolic dividing line between the North and the South before the American Civil War.


17 Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time*, (Hartford: Park Publishing Co, 1881), p. 15.

18 Ibid., p. 15.

19 The typical plantation slave, docile but irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble but a liar and a thief.

20 The law guarantees the right of a slaveholder to recover an escaped slave.
The U.S House of Representatives passes the Gag rule which prevents any antislavery petition or bill from being introduced, read or discussed.

A ruling by the U.S Supreme Court that people of African descent can never be US citizens.


Hugh Auld is Thomas Auld’s brother.


A popular collection of classic poems, dialogues, plays and speeches that Douglass uses as a model for his own speeches.


Ibid., p.362.


Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape From Bondage, and His Complete History to The Present Time, (Hartford: Park Publishing Co, 1881), p.293.


After discovering that the institution is insolvent, Douglass tries to reorganize it with the help of John Sherman, chairman of the Senate Finances Committee, but in June the trustees vote to close the bank. The bank’s failure causes thousands of freed people to lose their savings.
