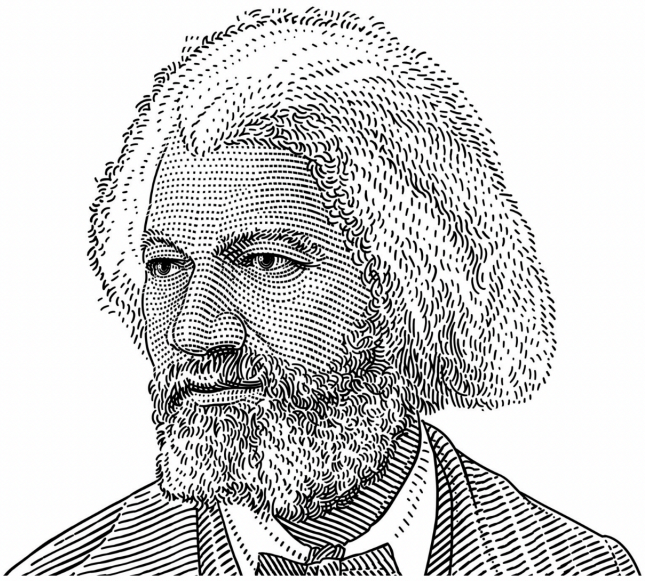
Middle School Lesson Plan
Heroes of Progress, Pt. 48: Frederick Douglass



Lesson Overview

Featured article: "Heroes of Progress, Pt. 48: Frederick Douglass" by Alexander C. R. Hammond

This lesson introduces students to the life and work of Frederick Douglass, a brave 19th-century American hero who valued fairness, kindness, and respect. Students will learn about the importance of courage and the power of sticking up for someone who needs help—and that human dignity can never be taken away. Students will be encouraged to celebrate their strengths and values. They will practice respectful, courageous communication and acts of kindness. And they will remember that they are valuable and have strength.

Time Required: Two 40-minute periods

> **Day One**—Students will explore the life and courageous actions of Frederick Douglass and practice everyday kindness in role-playing scenarios that let them experience what it feels like to stand up for others in everyday situations, just as Douglass did.

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Day Two—Students will create the "I Am Unbreakable" art project, helping them identify their strengths and reminding them that no one can take away their dignity.

Essential Question: How can we be brave enough to do what is right, be kind to others, and stay true to ourselves, even when it's hard?

Day One

Materials

- Frederick Douglass Presentation Slides
- Student Vocabulary sheet (Note: There is a box next to each word and definition if you would like to prompt students to draw an illustration of the vocabulary word.)
- Student informational handouts with comprehension questions (homework)
  640 Lexile 740 Lexile 840 Lexile

Classroom Setup and Preparation

This lesson can work in any classroom arrangement where students can participate in whole-class discussions and partner activities. Teachers may use traditional seating but may consider using small groups or a circle format if that better supports the lesson's collaborative nature**.** Also, copies of sentence stems should be available to enhance student participation, and previously co-created class norms should be posted and refreshed before the discussion takes place. The student self-evaluation can be used for students to reflect on their discussion performance.

Lesson Flow

Part One

- **Step One**
  In this lesson, students will learn about the life and work of Frederick Douglass, a brave 19th-century American hero who valued fairness, kindness, and respect. Share with students that they will learn about his belief in human dignity, the importance of courage, and the power of sticking up for someone who needs help. They will learn to celebrate their strengths, values, and habits and will practice respectful, courageous communication and acts of kindness.

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- **Step Two**
  Explain the Essential Question and prepare students for today's vocabulary using this vocabulary sheet.

- **Step Three**
  Play the Heroes of Progress video on Frederick Douglass.

- **Step Four**
  Using this slide deck, explain the details of Douglass' life and work.

Part Two

- **Step One**
  Ask students, "What kind of person was Frederick Douglass?" Share that for over 50 years, Frederick Douglass spoke to crowds more than 1,000 times and wrote newspapers, books, and letters. Many of his writings can still be read today. By studying his words and hearing from those who knew him, we can see that he was a brave, kind, and truthful person.
    - Explain that first, they will look at a few of his actual quotes and actions. (Note: These quotations are in the Frederick Douglass Presentation Slides.)
    - Then, they will engage in a project exploring his values.

- **Step Two**
  Share that he was respectful, even when he disagreed. When Frederick Douglass escaped slavery, he wrote a letter to his enslaver, Thomas Auld. On September 8, 1848, Frederick Douglass wrote clearly and with respect as he told Mr. Auld how he truly felt, but he did so politely. Use the table below to explain to students how Douglass wrote clearly and with respect.

Frederick said . . .	**Frederick meant . . .**
"I entertain no malice towards you personally."	"I don't hate you."
"Indeed, I should esteem it a privilege to set you an example as to how mankind ought to treat each other."	"I want to show you how we should all be kind to each other."

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“I am your fellow man but not your slave.”	“We are both people. I am not owned by you.”

- Ask students to think-pair-share about the following questions: Which of these statements do you think was the most powerful? Why?

- **Step Three**
  Explain how Frederick Douglass wanted everyone to be treated fairly. He wrote in his newspapers about the unfairness of slavery. Although he was no longer enslaved, he stood up for others who were still being treated badly.
  - Ask students to think-pair-share about the following question: Have you ever had to stand up for yourself or someone else?

- **Step Four**
  Frederick Douglass wanted to work with people to help make the world a better place. He said**,** “I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong.” He meant**,** “I will work with anyone to do what’s right, but if someone is doing something bad, I won’t join them.”
  - Ask students: Have you ever had to decide whether to spend time with a friend who was doing something you knew was wrong? What did you do?

- **Step Five**
  Share with students that Frederick Douglass was true to himself. In his book, he wrote, “I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and incur my own abhorrence.” He meant, “It is better to be honest about who I am, even if people make fun of me, than to be fake and hate myself.”
  - Ask students to think-pair-share about the following question: What can we learn from Frederick Douglass?

Day Two

Materials

- Frederick Douglass Presentation Slides
- Student copies of the “I Am Unbreakable! Art Project Student Shapes” (or students can design their own shapes)
- Student copies of the “Positive Inner Traits” handout
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Collage materials, stickers, glue sticks, etc.

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Lesson Flow

- **Step One**
  Begin by displaying the Day Two slides from the Frederick Douglass Presentation Slides. Explain, “Yesterday we discussed how Frederick Douglass modeled bravery and kindness in his life. Today we will focus on Frederick Douglass’ idea that it is important to try to stay ourselves, even when it is hard.

- **Step Two**
  Tell students that Frederick Douglass said, “The soul that is within me no man can degrade.” Then ask, “What does that mean to you?” After discussing, explain that Frederick knew that nobody can take away our self-respect or our dignity, no matter how they treat us. We have strengths that make us special and strong. We are all valuable and worthy, simply for being who we are.

- **Step Three**
  Engage students in a guided brainstorm. Ask, “What qualities make a person strong inside? We will write them together.” As students brainstorm a list of ideas, write students’ ideas on the whiteboard or slide presentation, reminding students that these inner traits belong to us and cannot be taken by others.

- **Step Four**
  Ask students to think-pair-share about the following questions:
    - How can we remember that we are valuable when others treat us unfairly?
    - Why is it important to remember our values and stay true to ourselves when life is hard?

- **Step Five**
  Have students complete the “I am Unbreakable Art Project.” Distribute student copies of the “I Am Unbreakable! Art Project Student Shapes” and “Positive Inner Traits” handouts. Tell students to choose a shape representing their strongest inner traits.
    - **Star**—Shining and unique
    - **Heart**—Caring and Kind
    - **Shield**—Protection and strength

  Ask students to choose **their** top three to five strongest traits to write on **their** shape. Share that if **they** are stuck and need help finding the right words, **they** can use the “Positive Inner Traits” handout to give some ideas. Have students decorate their shape using the materials available to represent their best

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character traits in a way that feels true to who they are and makes them feel good.

- **Step Six**
  After students have finished their artwork, explain that students who want to share their art can do so in an orderly way. After students have shared their art, discuss as a class how our inner strengths can help us stand up for what is right and true in ourselves.

  Optional: Display a "We Are Unbreakable" Class Mural
  Students' decorated shapes can be mounted on a large piece of mural paper to create a collaborative mural. Students can also write a sentence on the mural paper to help them remember that nobody can take away their inner strength and dignity. The mural can hang in the classroom throughout the year to remind students that their value belongs only to them.

Optional Extension Ideas

- Take a virtual field trip to see Frederick Douglass' home.
- Explore the National Park Service's Frederick Douglass virtual museum exhibit.

(Note: After exploring these resources, students can write about what they learned in an informative essay.)

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