
Frederick Douglass: Slave Narrative Comparison Essay

Did you know that some researchers have charged that the WPA interviewers edited out parts they found unimportant, but were critical to the enslaved person: religion, cruel plantation owners, lynching's, runaways, punishment and stories about serving in the Union Army. The formerly enslaved were more open and honest when the interviewer recording their stories was African-American. However, WPA only hired a few. In addition, if the interviewer was a white woman, they were apt to be more open than with a white man. The detailed autobiography inspired the abolition of slavery and its author would become one of the 19th century's most prominent African Americans. Frederick Douglass was one of his time's most prominent thinkers, advising leaders and lecturing thousands on a variety of causes, including women's rights and Irish home rule. When writing his autobiography, the intention of Frederick Douglass was not only to show how slavery degraded slaves, but also to show how the institution of slavery degraded slave masters. Harriet Jacobs' narrative bears rare testimony to the female experience of slavery, emphasizes the threat of sexual exploitation and directly appeals to women. She was well known for enhancing the lives of freed slaves, primarily through her fervent commitment to establishing education and free slave labor opportunities. Before the start of the Civil War, Harriet was actively involved with the abolition movement. She raised money for black refugees. This was her purpose in life. A comparison of the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs reveals similarities and differences in (content, structure, tone, style, audience, purpose, events, etc.)

First, there are similarities and differences in these narratives. One of the similarities is both mentioned the importance of being educated as far as learning how to read and write. Frederick Douglass believed that everyone was created in the same way. But he also believed that we were not only born free: we must become who we are. So he is incredibly important for education and self-improvement. The worst thing about slavery, he believes, is that through education it prevents people from improving themselves. In reality, he argues that things are completely opposite to slavery and training. By reading, he works to become independent by widening his horizons. Of course, he still has to flee physically, but it's his education that gives him the willpower to make it happen. Harriet Jacobs pain became her inspiration and voice for the freed slaves to fight slavery, promote education and civil rights. She fought for academic institutions and got them. Another common quality is both narratives show abuse at the hands of slaveholders, the risks of trying to escape. In the early chapters of *An American Slave*, highlight the status of slaves over his individual experience and the nature of slavery. 'I didn't have a bed,' he wrote. '[I'd] sleep on the cold, humid, clay floor with my head in [the corn bag] and my feet out' This shows how Douglass was treated while as a slave. Also in his 1845 narrative, Douglass does not provide the full details of his escape, for he fears that this information will be useful to slave owners seeking to thwart or recapture future runaways. This shows how scared he First, there are similarities and differences in these narratives. One of the similarities is both mentioned the importance of being educated as far as learning how to read and write. Frederick Douglass believed that everyone was created in the same way. But he also believed that we were not only born free: we must become who we are. So he is incredibly important for education and self-improvement. The worst thing about slavery, he believes, is that through education it prevents people from improving themselves. In reality, he argues that things are completely opposite to slavery and training. By reading, he works to become

independent by widening his horizons. Of course, he still has to flee physically, but it's his education that gives him the willpower to make it happen. Harriet Jacobs pain became her inspiration and voice for the freed slaves to fight slavery, promote education and civil rights. She fought for academic institutions and got them. Another common quality is both narratives show abuse at the hands of slaveholders, the risks of trying to escape. In the early chapters of *An American Slave*, highlight the status of slaves over his individual experience and the nature of slavery. 'I didn't have a bed,' he wrote. '[I'd] sleep on the cold, humid, clay floor with my head in [the corn bag] and my feet out' This shows how Douglass was treated while as a slave. Also in his 1845 narrative, Douglass does not provide the full details of his escape, for he fears that this information will be useful to slave owners seeking to thwart or recapture future runaways. This shows how scared he was of not only his owner but also all slave owners. Harriet was sexually harassed and physically abused when she was a teen for as long as she was a servant in Dr. Flint's household. This shows what she had to endure while a slave for Flint. Also, most of the time when slaves tried to escape and later were caught, they were whipped, shackled, hanged, pounded, burned, mutilated, branded, raped, and incarcerated as a punishment. In spite of these common aspects, these slave narratives also differ in many ways. One difference is their genders. This may be obvious and it is but it plays a big part in the different ways they were treated. Frederick Douglass was a strong male, so he had to do more labor intensive work unlike Harriet Jacobs. Also the way they were treated and punished was different because of their genders. Jacobs was punished with sexual harassment and was threatened. Frederick Douglass was caught once for trying to escape and he was sent to jail, but because of his friends, he was able to get out. Another way the narratives differ is that that Jacobs perceives slavery differently than Douglass. Jacobs wants to protect her children from slavery, this is the main reason why she wants things to change. She sees the situation through a mother's eye unlike Douglass, who had no children at the time. Douglass wanted freedom for all the slaves and not just him or his family. These similarities and differences in the narratives emphasize the unique, yet shared experiences of Douglass and Jacobs.

Further comparison of these two slave narratives also reveals similarities and differences of the emotions they had in their writings. Both writers have hatred of the harsh- treatment slaves had to endure. Douglass and Jacobs were both born into slavery so they had no say in what they wanted to do. Because of this they were bought by terrible families which mad Douglass want to kill himself and made Jacobs have children with another white man just so that her current owner would maybe sell her off. Although the narratives are similar in this way, their points of view also differ. Douglass wrote as a male slave and the brutality, while Jacobs wrote it in a woman point of view and gave us a look at how the women that were slaves experienced life. Jacobs wanted to protect her children because of her motherly instincts but Douglass wanted to run away just so that he could survive. As you can see, a comparison of the emotions and points of view of these narratives includes common and distinctive features.

Another feature of both of these narratives is their style. The style of both narratives is very similar. Both narratives have distinguishing characteristics such as forthright style; vivid characters; and striking dramatic incidents, particularly graphic violence and daring escapes. In addition to these common characteristics, the narratives also differ in the way the narratives were published. Harriet was on the fence about releasing her story, but Douglass released more than one version of his story. This feature highlights the variation in confidence between both authors.

In conclusion, a comparison of the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs

shows similarities and differences in style, beliefs, and points of view. Even though both authors had the odds stacked against them, they rose to the top. They both were, and still are influential and still make an impact on today's society. So even though the WPA might have not put in some crucial parts into the narrative, the book was still successful.

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