

**Perspectives on slavery from the characters themselves:
George and Tom, from Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Madison Washington, from
Douglass's novella, Heroic Slave**

DOCUMENTS: Uncle Tom's Cabin and Madison's Soliloquy

FOCUS OF SUBJECT AREA

- Three perspectives of slavery: abolitionist, colonist and anti-abolitionist.
- Use of characters to explain the authors' purposes and challenge notions of slave attitudes and heroism

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Students will compare the different approaches toward freedom and heroism according to George and Tom, from Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Madison Washington, from Heroic Slave.

Students will connect these beliefs to the 18th century dialogue on slavery.

STRATEGIES

Students will accomplish the instructional objectives by:

- reading Uncle Tom's Cabin, and sections of the Heroic Slave including Washington's soliloquy
- participating in group activity and class discussion
- completing reflection sheet.

OVERVIEW OF LESSON ACTIVITIES

This lesson culminates a month-long study of Uncle Tom's Cabin and the issue of slavery and social change. Prior to this lesson, students have studied social reactions toward slavery including abolitionism, colonization and anti-abolitionism, read the novel and discussed the characters of Uncle Tom and George. Students are also familiar with Frederick Douglass and his work as an abolitionist.

ASSESSMENT

Students will complete character chart and reflection questions.

LESSON PLAN

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

1. What is freedom?
2. What is heroism?
3. What does it mean to be an American?

MATERIALS

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Madison Washington's soliloquy

Graphic Organizer/Reflection sheet

OPENING THE LESSON

- Summarize the three perspectives on slavery: abolitionism, colonization, anti-abolitionism
- Have students list characteristics of each perspective.

PROCEDURE

- Divide students into groups of 3-4
- Students read the soliloquy and George's letter and then summarize as a group.
- Students complete perspective handout
- Large group discussion about students' reactions and findings
 - Connection to abolitionism, anti-abolitionism and colonizationism
 - Connection to modern ideas of heroism, freedom and the use of violence

CLOSE/ASSESSMENT

Individually, students complete reflection question.

Madison Washington's soliloquy from Fredrick Douglass's Heroic Slave

"What, then, is life to me? it is aimless and worthless, and worse than worthless. Those birds, perched on yon swinging boughs, in friendly conclave, sounding forth their merry notes in seeming worship of the rising sun, though liable to the sportsman's fowling-piece, are still my superiors. They *live free*, though they may die slaves. They fly where they list by day, and retire in freedom at night. But what is freedom to me, or I to it? I am a *slave*--born a slave, an abject slave,--even before I was made part of this breathing world, the scourge was plated for my back; the fetters were forged for my limbs. How mean a thing am I. That accursed and crawling snake, that miserable reptile, that has just glided into its slimy home, is freer and better off than I. He escaped my blow, and is safe. But here am I, a man,--yes, *a man!*--with thoughts and wishes, with powers and faculties as far as angel's flight above that hated reptile,--yet he is my superior, and scorns to own me as his master, or to stop to take my blows. When he saw my uplifted arm, he darted beyond my reach, and turned to give me battle. I dare not do as much as that. I neither run nor fight, but do meanly stand, answering each heavy blow of a cruel master with doleful wails and piteous cries. I am galled with irons; but even these are more tolerable than the consciousness, the *galling* consciousness of cowardice and indecision. Can it be that I *dare* not run away? *Perish the thought*, I *dare* do anything which may be done by another. When that young man struggled with the waves *for life*, and others stood back appalled in helpless horror, did I not plunge in, forgetful of life, to save his? The raging bull from whom all others fled, pale with fright, did I not keep at bay with a single pitchfork? Could a coward do that? No,--*no*,--I wrong myself,--I am no coward. *Liberty* I will have, or die in the attempt to gain it. This working that others may live in idleness! This cringing submission to insolence and curses! This living under the constant dread and apprehension of being sold and transferred, like a mere brute, is *too* much for me. I will stand it no longer. What others have done, I will do. These trusty legs, or these sinewy arms shall place me among the free. Tom escaped; so can I. The North Star will not be less kind to me than to him. I will follow it. I will at least make the trial. I have nothing to lose. If I am caught, I shall only be a slave. If I am shot, I shall only lose a life which is a burden and a curse. If I get clear, (as something tells me I shall,) liberty, the inalienable birth-right of every man, precious and priceless, will be mine. My resolution is fixed. *I shall be free.*"

Perspectives on slavery:

Character	George	Tom	Madison
Background			
What does each man want?			
How does he intend to achieve his goal?			
How would he define freedom?			
How would he define heroism?			

Reflection – CHOOSE 2:

1. Speculate: While Madison and Tom remain constant in their opinions on freedom, George's views change over the course of the novel. Why do you think that happens?
2. In your opinion, which one of these men is a hero? Why?
3. According to Stowe and Douglass, what does it mean to be an American? How do these authors show that slaves could be "real" Americans?

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