

TEKS-ALIGNED · ENGLISH III

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# Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Chapters VI-IX

AP English Language & Composition Study Guide

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*Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845*

**Text used:** Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845). Chapters VI–IX cover Douglass's second stay in Baltimore with Hugh and Sophia Auld, his self-taught literacy, the death of Captain Anthony and the valuation of his human property, and Douglass's removal to St. Michael's under Thomas Auld — ending at the threshold of his year with Edward Covey.

**A note on the TEKS codes:** as in the Chapters I–V guide, this is organized around the eleven English III TEKS strands (19 TAC §110.38) at the strand level. Check your teacher's scope-and-sequence before citing a sub-letter code on an assignment.

**A note on language:** Douglass's own quotations of slaveholders in these chapters include the racial slur, sometimes spelled out in full in the 1845 text rather than dashed (the printer was inconsistent). For classroom consistency with the Chapters I–V guide, this guide renders it as "n—" throughout, regardless of how the 1845 edition set it. In discussion, refer to it rather than reading it aloud.

**Continuity note:** this guide assumes you've read (or have access to) the Chapters I–V guide. Several motifs tracked there — corrupted language, animalization, the whip, Douglass's writing hand, knowledge as control — continue directly into these four chapters, and the matrix in Part 3 extends the same table rather than restarting it.

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## PART 1 — Foundational Knowledge Before You Analyze

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### 1.1 Where the book turns

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Chapters I–V built the case that slavery is a *system*, not a matter of individual cruel men — Gore's portrait, the three murders, the plantation's economics. Chapters VI–IX shift the argument's center of gravity from what slavery does *to the enslaved* toward what slavery does *to everyone it touches*, enslaver included. This is the book's second major thesis, and it is set up deliberately: the closing lines of Chapter V told you that Sophia Auld's face was "a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions" — the first kind white face Douglass had ever seen. Chapter VI spends its opening paragraphs destroying that image. That destruction is not a plot event you note in passing; it is the argument.

### 1.2 Douglass's master strategy in these chapters: the corruption thesis

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Douglass's abolitionist opponents argued that slavery was regrettable but that individual "good" masters could practice it humanely. Chapters VI–IX dismantle that position from a new angle. Rather than showing you another Gore — a man cruel by disposition — Douglass shows you Sophia Auld, a woman with no prior exposure to slaveholding and "the kindest heart and finest feelings," and Thomas Auld, a man who "was not born a slaveholder," and traces in real time how the *position* of master corrupts each of them regardless of their starting character. The claim is structural, not psychological: it is not that slaveholders are bad people, but that unchecked power over another human being is itself corrosive, and no one's character survives it unaltered. This is the argument Douglass needs to reach his Northern readers who owned no slaves but might otherwise imagine themselves, transplanted south, as benevolent exceptions. He is telling them: you would not be.

### 1.3 A structural key: the literacy sequence as the book's intellectual spine

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If Chapters I–V have a single most-quoted passage, it is the songs. If the whole *Narrative* has one, it is Hugh Auld's speech in Chapter VI forbidding Sophia from teaching Frederick to read, and Frederick's response to it. Everything in Chapters VI and VII — the secret alphabet lessons, the bread traded for reading lessons from white boys, the *Columbian Orator*, the discovery of the word "abolition," the ship-timber letters — is one continuous argument about knowledge as the mechanism of both enslavement and liberation. You already met the germ of this idea in Chapter I ("He deemed all such inquiries... evidence of a restless spirit") and in Chapter III ("a still tongue makes a wise head"). Chapters VI–VII are where Douglass cashes it in.

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## PART 2 — Chapter-by-Chapter Analysis

### CHAPTER VI — The Corruption of Sophia Auld, and the Sentence That Explains Slavery

#### What happens

Douglass describes Sophia Auld's initial, unschooled kindness, then her rapid transformation under "the fatal poison of irresponsible power." She begins teaching him the alphabet; Hugh Auld discovers this and forbids it, delivering a speech on why literacy ruins a slave — a speech Douglass says taught him more than it warned him. He then contrasts city slavery with plantation slavery, conceding city slaves are generally better treated, before immediately supplying a counterexample: the brutal starvation and beating of two enslaved girls, Henrietta and Mary, by their mistress across the street.

#### The passages that get assigned

##### (a) The corruption of Sophia Auld — the chapter's argumentative spine

*"But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon."*

Three **parallel antitheses** in a row — eye, voice, face; each stated in its *before* form and then converted to its *after* form in the same clause. **Personification/metaphor:** power is a "poison," administered, working "infernally." Note the theological register (*angelic... demon*) — Douglass is not describing a woman who was secretly cruel all along; he is describing a possession, a transformation with an identifiable external cause. That cause is named exactly once, and it is not Sophia: it is "irresponsible power." This is the sentence the whole chapter, and arguably the whole second half of the book, is built to prove.

**Trap to avoid:** students often write that Douglass shows Sophia Auld was "never really kind" or that her kindness was fake. Wrong reading, and it undoes Douglass's actual argument. He is explicit that she was kind, that the change is a "downward course," a "first step." If her kindness were fraudulent, slavery would cost her nothing to hold; the whole point is that it cost her everything. Compare Ch. V's motif of Douglass writing — he is watching this decay happen to a woman he lived beside for years, and the retrospective narrator's grief is audible in "alas."

##### (b) Hugh Auld's speech — the accidental argument for freedom

*"If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy."*

This is **reported direct discourse** used the same way Douglass used Gore's defense in Ch. IV: he lets the slaveholder incriminate himself in his own words and refuses to add commentary. Notice the *chain of consequences* Hugh Auld himself lays out — reading leads to unmanageability leads to loss of value leads to freedom's pathway — presented as a warning but functioning, for Douglass, as a **sylllogism handed to him gift-wrapped**. Also notice the word "**discontented**" — Douglass will spend Ch. VII proving Hugh exactly right, and will make that irony explicit.

##### (c) "What he most dreaded, that I most desired" — antimetabole as argument

*"What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought."*

**Antimetabole** (reversed word order across clauses) stacked three times. Compare this directly to Ch. IV's antimetaboles describing Gore ("He was just the man for such a place, and it was just the place for such a man") — there, the device sealed Gore into a closed, mechanical portrait with no gap for mercy. Here, Douglass repurposes the *same device* to describe not a person but a perfectly symmetrical inversion of values: master and slave assign opposite moral weight to the identical fact. **Sophistication-point move:** naming that Douglass is *reusing his own toolkit* from earlier in the book, and asking what changes when the device describes a relationship instead of a man, is exactly the kind of cross-textual observation that earns the highest AP scores.

(d) "In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both." **Paradox**, delivered with total calm. Two opposite actions — teaching and forbidding — produce the identical result. This is the chapter's thesis in miniature: it doesn't matter whether the slaveholder is unusually kind (Sophia, at first) or unusually determined to suppress (Hugh); the *system* generates the same outcome regardless of the individual's disposition, because Douglass's hunger for literacy is not something either of them controls.

#### (e) City slavery vs. plantation slavery — the concession that gets immediately withdrawn

*"A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation... There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation."*

**Concession** — a real one, not a rhetorical trick; Douglass genuinely believes this and will act on the belief (public exposure is a deterrent). But watch what happens in the very next paragraph.

#### (f) Henrietta and Mary — the counterexample that qualifies the concession

*"The head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering sores... So much was Mary kicked and cut to pieces, that she was oftener called 'pecked' than by her name."*

Douglass does not soften this to protect the claim he just made. A fourteen-year-old girl, starved to the point of "contending with the pigs for the offal thrown into the street," beaten by Mrs. Hamilton with a cowskin kept "always by her side." **The nickname "pecked"** is the chapter's most brutal single detail — a joke made at a child's expense by an entire neighborhood, language once again reduced to cruelty's convenience (compare Ch. II's "good overseer," Ch. III's "kind master" — the **corrupted-language motif** continues).

**Trap to avoid:** students often read this passage as contradicting (a). It doesn't — it qualifies it. Douglass's claim was comparative and statistical ("most... do give their slaves enough to eat"), not absolute; he explicitly flags Henrietta and Mary as "painful exceptions to this rule." The rhetorical function of the exception is to prevent his concession from being read as exculpation of city slaveholding generally. A student who misses this misses Douglass's characteristic move: concede accurately, then refuse to let the concession do more work than it has earned.

### Vocabulary — Chapter VI

| Word                       | Meaning in context                     | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>irresponsible</b>       | unaccountable to anyone, unchecked     | "irresponsible power" — the precise diagnosis: not power itself, but power with no one to answer to                                                     |
| <b>infernal</b>            | hellish, of hell                       | "commenced its infernal work" — continues the <i>hell of slavery</i> imagery from Ch. I's "blood-stained gate"                                          |
| <b>discord</b>             | harsh, clashing sound                  | Antonym of the "tranquil music" Sophia's voice once made                                                                                                |
| <b>crouching servility</b> | cowering, groveling submissiveness     | The posture Douglass had learned toward white people generally, which Sophia's presence made "out of place"                                             |
| <b>impudent</b>            | insolently disrespectful               | "did not deem it impudent... for a slave to look her in the face" — a right Sophia initially granted without thinking about it                          |
| <b>ell</b>                 | an old unit of length, about 45 inches | From the proverb "give an inch, take an ell" — Hugh's idiom for uncontrollable overreach                                                                |
| <b>unfit</b>               | render unsuitable, disqualify          | "unfit him to be a slave" — Hugh's word choice implies slavery is a <i>condition requiring qualification</i> , undercutting the idea that it is natural |
| <b>precepts</b>            | rules of conduct, instructions         | "she now commenced to practise her husband's precepts" — legalistic word for what is really cruelty                                                     |
| <b>odium</b>               | widespread disgrace or hatred          | "incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being a cruel master" — social shame, not moral conviction, is what restrains city slaveholders         |
| <b>lacerated</b>           | deeply torn or cut                     | "the cries of his lacerated slave"                                                                                                                      |
| <b>vestige</b>             | a visible trace or remnant             | "a vestige of decency" — Douglass's word choice concedes only a <i>trace</i> survives, not real humanity                                                |

| Word                            | Meaning in context                                        | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>emaciated</b>                | abnormally thin from starvation or illness                | "mangled and emaciated creatures"                                                                                    |
| <b>mangled</b>                  | severely cut or mutilated                                 | Recurrs for both Mary here and for Demby's body in Ch. IV — a word Douglass reserves for the worst physical violence |
| <b>festering</b>                | infected, oozing                                          | "nearly covered with festering sores"                                                                                |
| <b>offal</b>                    | waste parts, entrails discarded as garbage                | "contending with the pigs for the offal" — Mary reduced below even the trough-fed children of Ch. V                  |
| <b>lisp</b>                     | to speak with a slight impediment; here, to utter faintly | Reused from Ch. I ("if he lisp one word of disapproval") — the volume of protest slavery permits is always near zero |
| <b>exhorted</b><br>(look ahead) | urged strongly                                            | Anticipate this word for Ch. IX's Thomas Auld, who becomes an "exhorter"                                             |

### TEKS focus for Chapter VI

- **E3.8 Author's Purpose and Craft** — analyze antithesis, antimetabole, and paradox and explain how each advances Douglass's corruption thesis.
- **E3.5 Response Skills** — evaluate how a concession is qualified rather than contradicted by a following counterexample.
- **E3.4 Comprehension** — trace the causal chain Hugh Auld lays out, and explain why Douglass treats it as evidence *for* his own hopes rather than *against* them.

### Writing prompts

1. Analyze how Douglass's description of Sophia Auld's transformation advances his argument that slavery damages the slaveholder as well as the enslaved.
2. In reporting Hugh Auld's speech against his own education, Douglass treats his master's warning as an accidental gift. Analyze the rhetorical effect of this reversal.

## CHAPTER VII — Learning to Read, Learning to Write, and the Curse That Is Also the Cure

### What happens

Douglass describes, in careful stages, how he taught himself to read over roughly seven years: making secret teachers of poor white boys in exchange for bread; reading *The Columbian Orator*, including a dialogue in which a slave argues his own master into emancipating him, and a Sheridan speech on Catholic emancipation; being plunged into "unutterable anguish" by the literacy that reveals his condition without offering an escape; discovering the meaning of the word "abolition"; being advised by two Irish dockworkers to flee north; and finally teaching himself to write, first by copying letters chalked on ship timbers, then by using his young "master" Thomas's discarded copy-books.

### The passages that get assigned

#### (a) The inch and the ell, redeemed

*"Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the inch, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the ell."*

Douglass **reclaims Hugh Auld's own idiom** (Ch. VI) and turns it from a threat into a boast. This is worth naming explicitly as a rhetorical strategy in its own right: **appropriating the opposition's language**, the same move he used with the slaveholders' maxim in Ch. IV ("It is better that a dozen slaves should suffer... than that the overseer should be convicted") and with Gore's "unwhipped of justice." The oppressor's own words become the instrument of his refutation.

#### (b) The bread economy — a literalized metaphor

*"I used also to carry bread with me... This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge."*

**Extended metaphor**, and notice how literally it is built: real bread, physically traded, for a second thing Douglass insists on calling bread too — "*that more valuable bread of knowledge*." The metaphor is not decorative; it makes an argument about hierarchy of needs (intellectual hunger outranks physical hunger) while keeping both perfectly concrete. Compare Ch. V's pen-in-the-gashes image: Douglass repeatedly takes an ordinary object from slavery's economy (bread, a pen, a hymn) and makes it carry the book's abstract argument without ever losing its physical reality.

**(c) The two dialogues that taught him to argue: the Columbian Orator** The runaway-slave dialogue Douglass describes — in which "the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave," ending in the master's voluntary emancipation of the slave — is worth naming as **Douglass's own rhetorical education, staged for the reader**. He is showing you where he learned the very moves he has been using on you since Chapter I: concession-and-refutation, quoting the opposition's own words, converting the master's argument against itself. The Sheridan speech on Catholic emancipation gave him something different: "a bold denunciation... and a powerful vindication of human rights" — a *register* rather than a *method*, the sound of righteous anger made eloquent instead of merely felt.

**(d) The central paradox of the chapter**

*"It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out."*

**Metaphor** (pit/ladder), and a direct rebuttal-in-advance of anyone who romanticizes education as automatically liberating. Pair this with:

*"In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast."*

This is the chapter's hardest sentence to teach, because it risks being misread as Douglass agreeing with the slaveholders' logic that ignorance produces contentment — which is the exact claim he spent Ch. III demolishing.

**Trap to avoid:** students often write that this passage shows Douglass regretting that he learned to read. It's the opposite kind of regret: he never once says he wishes he hadn't learned. He is describing the temporary agony of consciousness without power — a state, not a conclusion — and the retrospective narrator (see Ch. I's "two narrators" concept) is reporting the experiencing self's despair precisely so the reader feels the cost of the knowledge Douglass ultimately, unambiguously affirms was worth it. The next paragraphs pivot immediately to the discovery of the word "abolition" — hope, not retreat.

**(e) Discovering "abolition" — knowledge withheld as a map to knowledge sought**

*"I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about."*

Douglass **reverse-engineers meaning from context and prohibition itself**: the intensity with which a word is avoided becomes evidence of its importance. This is the **knowledge/ignorance-as-control motif** (tracked since Ch. I: "improper and impertinent... evidence of a restless spirit"; Ch. III's "still tongue") reaching its clearest statement yet — Douglass shows the *mechanism* by which the enslaved decode a system designed to keep them illiterate of exactly the concepts that would free them.

**(f) The Irish dockworkers — kindness Douglass cannot afford to trust**

*"White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters."*

Two Irish laborers advise him, unprompted, to run north. Douglass's response — performing incomprehension, "for I feared they might be treacherous" — is worth pairing with Ch. III's discussion of why enslaved people lie about their masters' kindness ("a still tongue makes a wise head"). Here it is Douglass's turn to practice the same self-protective concealment he analyzed in others. **Dramatic irony**: the reader, who trusts Douglass's narration, watches him refuse to trust two people who happen to be telling the truth — a small, exact illustration of what slavery costs a person's capacity for trust itself, foreshadowing the "Trust no man" motto he will adopt on actually reaching the North.

**(g) Learning to write — appropriating the ship-yard's own code**

*When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." ... I immediately commenced copying them...*

Douglass turns **the shipyard's labeling system** — literally the vocabulary of the vessels that carry his own labor's products to market — into a covert alphabet. Then, more audaciously, he uses his young master Thomas's own discarded copy-books, unsupervised, while Mrs.

Auld is at "class meeting," to perfect a handwriting nearly identical to his master's own. **Note the irony:** the tool of literacy is quite literally *borrowed from inside the master's house*, using the very lessons paid for to educate his enslaver's heir. Compare this to Ch. V's pen laid in the frost-gashes of his feet, and to the tear on the page in Ch. II — this is the third and most active installment of the **Douglass-writing motif**: no longer just the adult author remembering, but the child actively stealing the instrument of authorship from the family that owns him.

## Vocabulary — Chapter VII

| Word                               | Meaning in context                                                                  | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>stratagems</b>                  | schemes, tricks                                                                     | "compelled to resort to various stratagems" — reused from Ch. III's tarred fence; there it was the master's word for controlling slaves, here Douglass repurposes it for his own resistance          |
| <b>depravity</b>                   | moral corruption                                                                    | "she at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up" — training in cruelty, not innate wickedness, is what Douglass says was required                                                 |
| <b>precepts</b>                    | rules, instructions                                                                 | Reused from Ch. VI; Mrs. Auld now "practises her husband's precepts"                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>apt</b>                         | quick to learn, or here, shrewd/adept                                               | "She was an apt woman" — ironic praise: her aptitude is now aimed at suppression                                                                                                                     |
| <b>urchins</b>                     | small, often ragged children                                                        | "hungry little urchins" — affectionate, not contemptuous, in Douglass's usage                                                                                                                        |
| <b>unabated</b>                    | not diminished, undiminished                                                        | "read them over and over again with unabated interest"                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>denunciation</b>                | public condemnation                                                                 | "a bold denunciation of slavery" (of Sheridan's speech)                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>vindication</b>                 | a defense or justification                                                          | "a powerful vindication of human rights"                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>abhor</b>                       | to regard with disgust and hatred                                                   | "led me to abhor and detest my enslavers"                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>unutterable</b>                 | too intense to be expressed in words                                                | "unutterable anguish" — pairs with the <i>inexpressibility topos</i> from Ch. I                                                                                                                      |
| <b>the silver trump of freedom</b> | trumpet — a figurative call to awaken                                               | "had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness" — biblical/military register (a trumpet call), personifying an abstraction                                                                               |
| <b>abolition</b>                   | the act of abolishing (here: of slavery)                                            | The word Douglass has to reconstruct the meaning of by inference, since asking directly was too dangerous                                                                                            |
| <b>petitions</b>                   | formal written requests, here to Congress                                           | Evidence of an organized political movement Douglass is only just discovering exists                                                                                                                 |
| <b>treacherous</b>                 | likely to betray, deceptive                                                         | Douglass's fear regarding the Irishmen's kindness                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>larboard / starboard</b>        | left / right sides of a ship (larboard is the older term, later replaced by "port") | The shipyard vocabulary Douglass repurposes as his first written alphabet                                                                                                                            |
| <b>unpardonable</b>                | unforgivable                                                                        | "an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read" — reused sense from Ch. III's unpardonable inattention to Colonel Lloyd's horses; note the target has shifted from disobedience to literacy itself |

## TEKS focus for Chapter VII

- **E3.2 Vocabulary** — analyze figurative and extended metaphor (bread, pit and ladder, the silver trump) and its cumulative effect across a chapter.
- **E3.4 Comprehension** — trace the multi-stage process by which Douglass reconstructs the meaning of "abolition" from indirect evidence.
- **E3.6 Literary Elements** — identify the appropriation of an opponent's own language (the inch/ell reversal) as a recurring device across the *Narrative*, not a one-time joke.
- **E3.8 Author's Purpose and Craft** — evaluate how the retrospective narrator manages a passage (envying "stupidity") that could be misread as undercutting the book's own argument.

## Writing prompts

1. Analyze how Douglass's account of learning to write, using the ship-yard's letters and his young master's discarded copy-books, functions as more than a literal record of self-education.

2. Douglass writes that literacy brought him "a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy." Analyze how the surrounding passage manages the risk that a reader might mistake this for regret.
3. Compare the rhetorical strategy Douglass says he learned from *The Columbian Orator's* slave-and-master dialogue to a strategy he has already used earlier in the *Narrative* (Chapters I–V). Explain the connection.

## CHAPTER VIII — The Valuation, the Grandmother, and the Cost of Being Property

### What happens

Captain Anthony dies without a will; Douglass is sent back to the plantation to be appraised alongside livestock as part of the estate's division between Lucretia and Andrew. Douglass, by luck, is assigned to Lucretia and returned to the Aulds in Baltimore. Lucretia and Andrew both die shortly after; Douglass's grandmother, having outlived her enslaver and raised his fortune's labor force, is abandoned by his heirs to a hut in the woods to die alone. Thomas Auld remarries; a dispute between Thomas and Hugh results in Douglass being pulled from Baltimore and sent to live with Thomas at St. Michael's, where the narrative regrets a missed chance to have already escaped from the more porous city.

### The passages that get assigned

#### (a) The valuation — the ledger motif's cruelest instance

*"We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination."*

Note the **construction of the second sentence**: Douglass doesn't simply list humans, then animals. He *interlaces* them — horses/men, cattle/women, pigs/children — so that the sentence's own syntax performs the leveling it describes. This is the same **form-mirrors-content** move the Ch1–5 guide flagged in Gore's chain syllogism and the songs' chiasmus; here the device is word order inside a list rather than a repeated grammatical shape, but the effect is identical: the reader cannot read the sentence without experiencing, briefly, the flattening Douglass is accusing the system of. This is the **animalization motif's** most literal, least metaphorical instance yet — not a comparison ("like so many pigs") but an actual bureaucratic act, backed by law and an appraiser's clipboard.

#### (b) Master Andrew's cruelty to Douglass's brother

*"he turned to me, and said that was the way he meant to serve me one of these days,—meaning, I suppose, when I came into his possession."*

Andrew's assault on a small child is reported with Douglass's characteristic **restraint and precise detail** (the boot, the stamping, the blood from nose and ears), then followed by the threat aimed at Douglass himself. This functions as **suspense and stakes-raising**: the valuation isn't an abstract indignity, it is a lottery with a documented monster as one of the possible outcomes. When Douglass says only "Thanks to a kind Providence, I fell to the portion of Mrs. Lucretia," the flatness of the sentence is doing exactly what the flatness of "Mr. Gore's defence was satisfactory" did in Ch. IV — the calm register measures the size of the danger just avoided.

#### (c) The grandmother — the chapter's emotional and argumentative center

*"She had rocked him in infancy, attended him in childhood, served him through life, and at his death wiped from his icy brow the cold death-sweat, and closed his eyes forever. She was nevertheless left a slave—a slave for life—a slave in the hands of strangers..."*

**Anaphora/cumulative syntax** ("rocked... attended... served... wiped... closed") builds an inventory of a lifetime of labor and tenderness, all delivered in service to a man who leaves her nothing in return. The **logos** here is precise: Douglass is making an *economic and moral accounting* argument — she "had been the source of all his wealth; she had peopled his plantation with slaves" — before revealing the payment: abandonment to "a little hut" in the woods to die alone. This is the **base ingratitude** argument, and it works the same way the Ham argument worked in Ch. I: accept the slaveholders' own premises (loyal service should be rewarded; family owes its elders care) and show that their own conduct violates those premises far more than Douglass's.

#### (d) The Whittier quotation — allusion as testimony

*"Gone, gone, sold and gone / To the rice swamp dank and lone..."*

Douglass quotes John Greenleaf Whittier's abolitionist poem "The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to Her Daughters Sold into Southern Bondage" directly, unmediated by any transition beyond "They are, in the language of the slave's poet, Whittier." This is an **allusion functioning as corroborating witness**: a white Northern poet's imagined grief is offered as validation that Douglass's own account is not an isolated case but a *recognized pattern*, already mourned in the North's own literature — a variation on the strategy of borrowing the audience's own authorities that Ch. I used with the Ham argument and Ch. II used with Cowper.

(e) "Will not a righteous God visit for these things?" A **rhetorical question** in the prophetic register (compare Amos, Jeremiah), aimed directly at a Christian readership. Douglass does not answer it. The refusal to answer is itself the point — he is not offering comfort, he is issuing an indictment and letting the reader sit with it unresolved.

**Trap to avoid:** students often write that this passage is simply "sad" or "emotional," missing that it is built on the same **logos-first, pathos-released-only-after** structure as the rest of the Narrative. Douglass spends two full paragraphs establishing the grandmother's economic and filial claim on Thomas Anthony's heirs before allowing himself the extended apostrophe and the Whittier quotation. The pathos is earned by an argument, not substituted for one.

#### (f) The regret, and a seed planted for later

"I then had to regret that I did not at least make the attempt to carry out my resolution to run away; for the chances of success are tenfold greater from the city than from the country." "On my passage, I paid particular attention to the direction which the steamboats took to go to Philadelphia... I deemed this knowledge of the utmost importance."

Two small, easy-to-skip sentences that are doing real narrative work. The first is **direct statement of thesis** about geography and escape (city > country), which the whole second half of the book will bear out. The second shows Douglass, even as a captive passenger with no immediate plan, **gathering intelligence** — noting travel routes purely because information itself might someday be leverage. If your class continues into Chapters X–XI, this is the first data point in an escape plan that becomes explicit and elaborate; even within Chapters I–IX alone, it's worth noting as evidence that the literacy Ch. VI–VII won him is already changing how he *observes* the world, not only what he can read.

### Vocabulary — Chapter VIII

| Word                              | Meaning in context                               | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>valuation</b>                  | official assessment of monetary worth            | The chapter's central bureaucratic horror, stated as flatly as an accounting term because that is exactly what it is                                          |
| <b>indelicate</b>                 | lacking in decency or tact                       | "the same indelicate inspection" — an understatement for what amounts to an inspection of living human bodies as livestock                                    |
| <b>profligate dissipation</b>     | reckless, wasteful self-indulgence               | Describing Andrew's ruinous drinking and mismanagement                                                                                                        |
| <b>callous</b>                    | hardened, unfeeling from repeated exposure       | The other slaves' backs, "made familiar with the bloody lash," in contrast to Douglass's own comparatively "tender" back                                      |
| <b>ingratitude</b>                | failure to show due gratitude                    | "base ingratitude" — the chapter's explicit moral charge against the Anthony heirs                                                                            |
| <b>destitute</b>                  | utterly lacking, deprived                        | Applied to the grandmother's isolation                                                                                                                        |
| <b>augmented</b>                  | increased, made greater                          | Describing the anguish that grows as Douglass grows "reflective and intelligent" — a callback to Ch. VII's paradox of literacy                                |
| <b>manifestation</b>              | a visible, outward showing                       | Providence's "manifestation," reused from Ch. V — note Douglass's providential vocabulary continuing even amid this chapter's bitterest material              |
| <b>desolate</b>                   | deserted, bleak, abandoned                       | The grandmother's hut and, by extension, the "desolate" quality of her final years                                                                            |
| <b>execrate</b><br>(reused sense) | to curse or denounce                             | Not used directly here but worth reviewing from Ch. III as background for the private/public split this chapter's heirs display (public piety, private greed) |
| <b>sundered</b>                   | violently separated                              | Reused from Ch. III's road anecdote; here applied to the entire family broken apart by the valuation and division                                             |
| <b>apostrophize</b>               | to address an absent or abstract entity directly | The rhetorical mode of the "Will not a righteous God visit" passage — direct address to God, over the reader's shoulder                                       |

| Word              | Meaning in context               | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>impassable</b> | unable to be crossed or overcome | "The barrier betwixt himself and brother he considered impassable" — Thomas's rift with Hugh, which directly causes Douglass's removal from Baltimore |
| <b>forthwith</b>  | immediately                      | Recurr several times in this chapter, at moments of sudden, unappealable command — the word's abruptness mirrors the powerlessness it describes       |

### TEKS focus for Chapter VIII

- **E3.6 Literary Elements** — analyze allusion (the Whittier quotation) as a strategy for corroborating testimony with an external, trusted authority.
- **E3.8 Author's Purpose and Craft** — analyze how word order within a list (valuation passage) can enact the argument a sentence is making.
- **E3.5 Response Skills** — evaluate the logical structure underlying an emotionally charged passage (the grandmother section) and identify where argument precedes pathos.
- **E3.4 Comprehension** — identify the narrative "seeds" planted in this chapter (the steamboat route, the regret over not escaping from the city) and explain their function for the reader who continues past Chapter IX.

### Writing prompts

1. Analyze how the syntax of the valuation passage in Chapter VIII reinforces Douglass's claim about the dehumanizing logic of slavery.
2. Douglass builds an extended argument about his grandmother's abandonment before allowing himself an emotional appeal. Analyze how the ordering of logos and pathos in this passage serves his purpose.
3. Compare Douglass's account of his own near-miss with Master Andrew to an earlier passage in the *Narrative* (Chapters I–V) where a moment of extreme danger is reported in unusually flat, restrained language. What effect does the restraint produce in each case?

## CHAPTER IX — A Mean Man, a Converted Man, and the Road to Covey

### What happens

Douglass, now able to date events precisely, moves to St. Michael's to live under Thomas Auld in March 1832. He experiences real hunger for the first time in years, and offers an extended, almost comic character portrait of Thomas Auld as a weak, imitative, would-be slaveholder. Thomas undergoes a religious conversion at a camp meeting in August 1832, which — against Douglass's hopes — makes him crueler rather than kinder, and Douglass documents the hypocrisy of the surrounding religious community, including the violent breakup of a Sabbath school and Thomas's brutal treatment of a disabled enslaved woman named Henny. The chapter ends with Douglass, after repeated conflicts with Thomas (climaxing in the matter of an escaped horse), being hired out to Edward Covey, a man with a fearsome reputation for "breaking" young slaves.

### The passages that get assigned

#### (a) Thomas Auld's portrait — Gore's mirror image

*"He might have passed for a lion, but for his ears. In all things noble which he attempted, his own meanness shone most conspicuous... He was not even a good imitator."*

Compare this directly and deliberately to Ch. IV's portrait of Gore. Gore's portrait built through **anaphora and isocolon** into something genuinely terrifying — a man perfectly, seamlessly suited to cruelty. Thomas Auld's portrait uses many of the same techniques (parallel clauses, a catalogue of traits) to produce the opposite effect: **contemptuous comedy**. "He might have passed for a lion, but for his ears" alludes to Aesop's fable of the donkey who dresses in a lion's skin and is given away by his ears and his braying voice — Douglass is calling Thomas Auld an ass in a lion's skin without using the word, trusting his readers' classical education to complete the insult.

**Trap to avoid:** students often read this portrait as pure comic relief and move on. It isn't relief — it's argument. A man this hollow, this "compelled to be the copyist of many," this dependent on borrowed authority, still holds the power of life, food, and the whip over other human beings. The joke doesn't soften the danger; it sharpens Douglass's point that slavery grants any man — however unfit, however ridiculous — total power, which is precisely why the institution, not the individual, must be the target.

## (b) "Adopted slaveholders are the worst" — a claim in tension with Chapter VI

*"Captain Auld was not born a slaveholder. He had been a poor man, master only of a Bay craft. He came into possession of all his slaves by marriage; and of all men, adopted slaveholders are the worst."*

Set this beside Sophia Auld's corruption in Ch. VI. Both Thomas and Sophia acquire power over enslaved people without having grown up expecting it; both are changed by it. But Douglass's assessment of the *outcome* differs — Sophia is destroyed (the loss of something valuable); Thomas is merely confirmed in a native "meanness" that slaveholding gives him license and opportunity to exercise ("if there were any other element in his nature, it was made subject to this"). **Sophistication-point move:** the two chapters are not making identical claims about corruption — one is a tragedy of a good person ruined, the other a case of a mediocre person's worst qualities being handed unlimited scope. A strong essay can hold both readings in tension rather than flattening them into "slavery corrupts everyone the same way."

## (c) Religion as license, not restraint

*"Prior to his conversion, he relied upon his own depravity to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding cruelty... I believe him to have been a much worse man after his conversion than before."*

This is Douglass's most direct thesis statement yet on a theme that runs across the whole book and that he will expand into a formal distinction in the Narrative's Appendix (outside these chapters, but worth flagging if your class reads that far): the difference between "the slaveholding religion of this land" and "the Christianity of Christ." Here the claim is delivered in miniature and demonstrated immediately by two pieces of evidence:

## (d) The preachers who are stuffed while the slaves starve

*"They used to take great pleasure in coming there to put up; for while he starved us, he stuffed them."*

**Antithesis**, compressed to eight words, with **starved/stuffed** doing all the work as a matched, opposite pair. Note that Douglass singles out one exception — Mr. Cookman, who "could not come among us without betraying his sympathy for us" — a small but important piece of **ethos-protecting concession**: Douglass is not indicting Christianity as such, or every individual minister, only the system that lets most of them look away.

## (e) Scripture weaponized

*"I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—'He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'"*

An **allusion** to Luke 12:47, quoted by Thomas Auld as a direct justification for violence — and quoted with **savage irony**, because the verse in context describes a servant who *knowingly and deliberately* disobeys, while the woman Thomas whips (later named as Henny) is disabled from an early burn injury and can do "very little but bear heavy burdens." The scripture does not fit the case; Thomas applies it anyway. This is **proof-texting exposed**: scripture lifted out of context and forced onto an unrelated situation to manufacture religious cover for cruelty — compare directly to Ch. I's Ham argument, where Douglass showed how scripture could be *honestly* engaged to refute slavery; here he shows the opposite process, scripture *dishonestly* deployed to defend it.

## (f) Henny — the grandmother's structural echo

*"She was to master a bill of expense; and as he was a mean man, she was a constant offence to him... my benevolent master, to use his own words, 'set her adrift to take care of herself.'"*

Compare directly to Ch. VIII's grandmother, abandoned once judged "of but little value." Both women are disabled or elderly; both had their worth calculated purely by labor capacity; both are discarded — one to a lonely hut, one "adrift" with nothing — the moment that calculation turns negative. Douglass's own **bitter irony** in calling Thomas "benevolent" (quoting the word straight from Thomas's own mouth) matches the earlier chapter's flat, ironic reporting of slaveholders' self-congratulation ("Mr. Gore's defence was satisfactory").

**Trap to avoid:** students often treat the grandmother (Ch. VIII) and Henny (Ch. IX) as two separate, unrelated sad stories. They are a deliberately built pair. Naming the parallel — the **profitability motif** first planted with the plantation's account-book language in Ch. II ("allowance," "allowance-day") and now completed in these two disposals — is exactly the kind of cross-chapter pattern tracking that earns the AP sophistication point.

### (g) The Sabbath school broken up by church officials

"Messrs. Wright Fairbanks and Garrison West, both class-leaders... rushed in upon us with sticks and stones, and broke up our virtuous little Sabbath school, at St. Michael's—all calling themselves Christians!"

The men who physically assault a group trying to learn to read the New Testament are **church officers**, "class-leaders" — the same title Thomas Auld himself will earn after his conversion. This is not incidental cruelty; it is the institution defending its own foundation of enforced ignorance, carried out by its most devout members. **Verbal irony**, sharpened by the exclamation point Douglass rarely uses: "all calling themselves Christians!"

### (h) The horse, the food, and Douglass's wit as resistance

"My reason for this kind of carelessness, or carefulness, was, that I could always get something to eat when I went there."

A lighter passage, deliberately placed near the chapter's end. Douglass lets his master's horse "run away" repeatedly to William Hamilton's farm because Hamilton, unlike Thomas, feeds his slaves properly — a small, sly act of engineered "carelessness" that is really calculated self-preservation. **Antanacsis**-adjacent wordplay ("carelessness, or carefulness") signals Douglass's own amusement at his trick, and briefly restores the **trickster register** last seen in Ch. V's washing-off-the-scurf episode — useful for showing students that Douglass's restraint is a choice of register, not the only mode he is capable of.

### (i) The chapter's cliffhanger — Covey introduced

"Mr. Covey had acquired a very high reputation for breaking young slaves, and this reputation was of immense value to him... Added to the natural good qualities of Mr. Covey, he was a professor of religion—a pious soul—a member and a class-leader in the Methodist church. All of this added weight to his reputation as a 'nigger-breaker.'"

Note the reappearance of "**class-leader**" — the exact title held by the men who broke up the Sabbath school and, soon, by Covey himself. Douglass is building toward the book's most sustained set piece (Ch. X, outside this guide's scope) by making sure his reader distrusts piety *specifically among overseers* well before Covey ever appears on the page. The closing line of Ch. IX — "for I was sure of getting enough to eat, which is not the smallest consideration to a hungry man" — closes the chapter on the same hunger-as-motive note that opened it, and ironically undercuts any hope the reader might have that this new arrangement will go well.

## Vocabulary — Chapter IX

| Word                 | Meaning in context                                                                       | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>gnawings</b>      | persistent, painful sensations (here, of hunger)                                         | "the painful gnawings of hunger" — physical, almost animal diction for a want Douglass had escaped for seven years                                                           |
| <b>aggravated</b>    | made more severe or serious                                                              | "the most aggravated development of meanness" — insufficient food ranked, even among slaveholders, as an extreme failure                                                     |
| <b>depravity</b>     | moral corruption                                                                         | Reused from Ch. VII; here describing what Thomas relies on <i>before</i> his conversion, then supplements <i>with</i> religion after                                         |
| <b>inconsistency</b> | failure to act according to consistent principle                                         | "forever the victim of inconsistency" — Thomas's defining flaw as a would-be authority figure                                                                                |
| <b>presumptuous</b>  | overstepping one's proper bounds                                                         | One of Rev. Hopkins's justifications for whipping (in the wider neighborhood context Douglass is describing), applied to any slave who suggests a better way of doing things |
| <b>exhorter</b>      | one authorized to urge others toward religious devotion, a lay preacher's assistant role | Thomas Auld's rapid rise to this office after conversion — institutional reward for a man Douglass has just spent pages ridiculing                                           |
| <b>sanction</b>      | official or moral approval/support                                                       | "he found religious sanction... for his slaveholding cruelty" — the chapter's central charge against Southern religion                                                       |

| Word                              | Meaning in context                                                                    | Nuance / why Douglass chose it                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>imposture</b>                  | a fraudulent claim to be something one is not                                         | Anticipates the Appendix's language ("A slaveholder's profession of Christianity is a palpable imposture") — useful to flag if your class reads that far                                                                                         |
| <b>arraigned</b><br>(context)     | formally accused before a court                                                       | Not used directly in Ch. IX, but worth reviewing from Ch. IV as background for how thoroughly Henny's abuse escapes any legal consequence, exactly like Mrs. Hicks's                                                                             |
| <b>lacerated</b>                  | deeply cut, torn                                                                      | Reused from Ch. VI, now describing the young woman Thomas whips and justifies with scripture                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>impassable / impassably</b>    | see Ch. VIII entry                                                                    | Continuity word marking the Hugh–Thomas rift that put Douglass in St. Michael's in the first place                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>class-leader</b>               | a lay officer in the Methodist church responsible for a small devotional group        | Appears three times across this chapter (the Sabbath-school attackers, Thomas Auld himself, and — by anticipation — Covey); tracking this single title across its repetitions is one of the highest-yield close-reading exercises in the chapter |
| <b>breaker / "nigger-breaker"</b> | slaveholders' term for an overseer skilled at forcing enslaved people into submission | Introduced here as Covey's reputation; the term itself treats a human being as livestock requiring "breaking," continuing the <b>animalization motif</b> into its next chapter                                                                   |
| <b>forthwith</b>                  | immediately                                                                           | Continuity word from Ch. VIII, again marking sudden, unappealable commands                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>carefulness / carelessness</b> | wordplay: Douglass's deliberate "mistakes" that serve his own interest                | His own coinage-like joke, worth flagging as evidence of the trickster register discussed in item (h)                                                                                                                                            |

### TEKS focus for Chapter IX

- **E3.6 Literary Elements** — analyze how repeating a single title ("class-leader") across different figures builds an implicit argument without direct statement.
- **E3.8 Author's Purpose and Craft** — analyze how comic or ironic register (the Thomas Auld portrait, the horse anecdote) can serve the same persuasive purpose as Douglass's more solemn passages.
- **E3.5 Response Skills** — evaluate Douglass's use of a misapplied scriptural allusion as evidence of religious hypocrisy, and distinguish this from his own use of scripture in Chapter I.
- **E3.4 Comprehension** — trace the parallel structure linking the grandmother (Ch. VIII) and Henny (Ch. IX) as a deliberate authorial pattern, not two isolated anecdotes.

### Writing prompts

1. Analyze how Douglass's portrait of Thomas Auld in Chapter IX both resembles and departs from his portrait of Mr. Gore in Chapter IV, and explain what the differences reveal about Douglass's purpose in each case.
2. Douglass writes that Thomas Auld became "a much worse man after his conversion than before." Analyze the evidence Douglass provides for this claim and evaluate its persuasiveness for a religious Northern audience.
3. Compare the abandonment of Douglass's grandmother (Chapter VIII) to the abandonment of Henny (Chapter IX). Analyze how reading the two passages together, rather than separately, strengthens Douglass's argument about slavery's economic logic.

## PART 3 — Cross-Cutting Motifs (Chapters VI–IX, Continuing the Table From Chapters I–V)

### TEKS E3.4 Comprehension · E3.6 Literary Elements

| Motif                                   | Ch. VI                                                                              | Ch. VII                                                                                             | Ch. VIII                                                                              | Ch. IX                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Knowledge / ignorance as control</b> | Hugh Auld's speech names literacy as the "pathway from slavery to freedom"          | The bread-for-reading economy; discovering "abolition" by inference                                 | Gathering steamboat-route intelligence while a captive passenger                      | Sabbath school violently suppressed by class-leaders                                                 |
| <b>Animalization</b>                    | —                                                                                   | —                                                                                                   | The valuation: "horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children"                  | Covey the "nigger-breaker"; Henny reduced to "a bill of expense"                                     |
| <b>Corrupted language</b>               | "discontented and unhappy" as Hugh's warning against literacy                       | "abolition" as a forbidden, undefined danger-word                                                   | "benevolent," "manifestation" applied without irony to abandonment's cause            | "benevolent master... set her adrift"; "class-leader" attacking a Sabbath school                     |
| <b>Contested Christianity</b>           | —                                                                                   | The Columbian Orator's arguments as rhetorical training                                             | Providence invoked to explain a fortunate outcome (Douglass to Lucretia)              | Scripture (Luke 12:47) misapplied to justify whipping Henny; preachers "stuffed" while slaves starve |
| <b>The whip / the lash</b>              | Henrietta and Mary beaten by Mrs. Hamilton with a cowskin                           | —                                                                                                   | —                                                                                     | Henny whipped and tied up for hours; scripture cited as justification                                |
| <b>Family destroyed</b>                 | —                                                                                   | —                                                                                                   | The valuation divides families; the grandmother abandoned after a lifetime of service | Henny discarded once judged unprofitable — grandmother's structural echo                             |
| <b>Douglass writing</b>                 | —                                                                                   | Ship-timber letters; copying Thomas's copy-book in secret                                           | —                                                                                     | —                                                                                                    |
| <b>Individual → system</b>              | Sophia's corruption: the <i>position</i> of master corrupts regardless of character | Two dockworkers' isolated kindness v.s. a whole system of "legalized kidnapping" (forward-pointing) | The valuation as bureaucratic, impersonal system — no single villain, only a ledger   | Thomas Auld's <i>institutional reward</i> (class-leader) for cruelty newly sanctioned by religion    |

**New thread worth its own column if your class builds a fuller matrix:** *Reciprocal corruption (slavery damages the slaveholder)*. Planted in Ch. V's description of Sophia's "kindly emotions," executed in Ch. VI (Sophia), and given a second, contrasting case in Ch. IX (Thomas). This is the second half of the *Narrative*'s central claim and deserves to be tracked as carefully as the motifs inherited from Chapters I–V.

## PART 4 — Douglass's Style Toolkit, Continued

### TEKS E3.8 Author's Purpose and Craft

Use the *device name + effect + purpose* formula, as in the Chapters I–V guide. A device named without an effect earns nothing on the AP exam.

| Device                                                | Example from Ch. VI–IX                                                                            | Effect / Purpose                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Antithesis (paired transformation)</b>             | "That cheerful eye... became red with rage; that voice... changed to... harsh and horrid discord" | States the <i>before</i> and <i>after</i> of a single trait in the same breath — makes corruption visible as a discrete event, not a vague decline    |
| <b>Antimetabole</b>                                   | "What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated."               | Reuses a device from Gore's portrait (Ch. IV) to describe a symmetrical inversion of values between master and slave                                  |
| <b>Reported direct discourse (self-incrimination)</b> | Hugh Auld's speech against literacy                                                               | Lets the opposition convict itself in its own words — the same strategy as Gore's defense and the slaveholders' maxim in Ch. IV                       |
| <b>Appropriation of the opponent's language</b>       | "Mistress... had given me the inch, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the ell"       | Converts a threat into a triumphant boast, turning the master's own idiom into evidence against him                                                   |
| <b>Extended, literalized metaphor</b>                 | "that more valuable bread of knowledge"                                                           | Keeps an abstraction (knowledge) tethered to something concrete (bread) throughout a passage, rather than abandoning the concrete image after one use |
| <b>Paradox held without resolution</b>                | "I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress" | Refuses to let the reader settle on a single tidy cause for Douglass's literacy — sophistication lives in the unresolved tension                      |
| <b>Interlaced list / syntax mirroring content</b>     | "horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children"                                             | Word order performs the leveling the sentence describes — form enacts argument                                                                        |
| <b>Cumulative anaphora (service catalogue)</b>        | "She had rocked him... attended him... served him... wiped... and closed his eyes forever"        | Builds an inventory of unpaid labor and devotion before revealing the payment: abandonment                                                            |
| <b>Allusion as corroborating witness</b>              | The Whittier poem quoted directly in Ch. VIII                                                     | Borrows a trusted Northern, white, literary authority to validate testimony a skeptical reader might otherwise discount                               |
| <b>Misapplied scriptural allusion, exposed</b>        | Luke 12:47 quoted to justify whipping a disabled woman                                            | Shows scripture wrenched from context to manufacture religious cover — the corrupt mirror of Douglass's own honest use of scripture in Ch. I          |
| <b>Comic/ironic register as argument</b>              | "He might have passed for a lion, but for his ears"                                               | Ridicule does not soften the danger of a powerful fool; it sharpens the case against a system that arms such men regardless of merit                  |
| <b>Repetition of a single title across figures</b>    | "class-leader" applied to Sabbath-school attackers, Thomas Auld, and (by anticipation) Covey      | Builds an implicit argument about institutional religion through pattern alone, without ever stating the thesis directly                              |
| <b>Rhetorical question, deliberately unanswered</b>   | "Will not a righteous God visit for these things?"                                                | Refuses to supply comfort; leaves the reader to sit with the indictment                                                                               |
| <b>Trickster wit as resistance</b>                    | The horse "escaping" to a farm where Douglass gets fed                                            | A lighter register that still serves the book's argument: even small, sly self-preservation is a form of resistance under total powerlessness         |

## PART 5 — Practice and Assessment

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TEKS E3.5 Response Skills · E3.9–E3.10 Composition · E3.11 Inquiry and Research

### 5.1 AP-style rhetorical analysis prompts (40 minutes each)

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1. In Chapter VI, Douglass describes the transformation of Sophia Auld under "the fatal poison of irresponsible power." Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Douglass makes to advance his claim that slavery corrupts the slaveholder as well as the enslaved.
2. In Chapter VII, Douglass reports Hugh Auld's speech forbidding his education. Analyze the rhetorical choices Douglass makes in reporting this speech, and explain how those choices serve his larger purpose.
3. In Chapter VIII, Douglass describes the valuation of his old master's human property alongside livestock. Analyze how Douglass's syntax and diction in this passage reinforce his argument about the dehumanizing logic of slavery.
4. In Chapter IX, Douglass describes Thomas Auld's religious conversion and its effects. Analyze how Douglass uses this episode to advance a claim about the relationship between institutional religion and slaveholding cruelty.

### 5.2 Thesis templates (adapt — never submit verbatim)

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- *Weak*: "Douglass uses imagery and irony to show that slavery is bad for everyone."
- *Better*: "By tracing Sophia Auld's transformation through a sequence of paired antitheses — the eye, the voice, the face, each given its 'before' and 'after' in the same breath — Douglass locates the cause of her cruelty not in her character but in the 'irresponsible power' slavery hands her, building his claim that the institution corrupts the master as thoroughly as it degrades the slave."
- *Better*: "By reporting Hugh Auld's warning against literacy in Hugh's own words and then reversing his idiom against him — 'no precaution could prevent me from taking the ell' — Douglass converts his master's threat into evidence for his own hope, demonstrating that even the slaveholder's attempts at suppression become material for the case against him."
- *Better*: "By interlacing human and animal nouns in a single unbroken list — 'horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children' — Douglass makes his sentence's own syntax perform the very leveling that a legal valuation inflicts on human beings, so that the reader briefly experiences, rather than merely learns about, the logic he is condemning."

**The sophistication point** usually comes from one of these: - Naming a device Douglass is *reusing* from earlier chapters and asking what changes when it is redeployed on new material (the antimetabole in Ch. IV vs. Ch. VI is a strong example). - Holding two readings in productive tension rather than flattening them (Sophia's corruption as tragedy of a good person ruined vs. Thomas's as license for a mediocre person's worst qualities). - Tracing a pattern across chapters that the text never states outright (the grandmother/Henny parallel; the repeated title "class-leader"). - Showing how comic or ironic register can do the same persuasive work as Douglass's more solemn passages, rather than assuming intensity of tone equals rhetorical power.

### 5.3 Argument prompts (Q3 style)

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1. Douglass argues that "irresponsible power" corrupts whoever holds it, regardless of that person's prior character. Write an essay that argues your position on whether unchecked power over another person inevitably corrupts the one who holds it.
2. Douglass writes that gaining literacy brought him "a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy" before it brought him any means of escape. Write an essay that argues to what extent knowledge of an injustice, absent any immediate power to correct it, is worth acquiring.

### 5.4 Close-reading checks (short answer)

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1. Why does Douglass say he owes his literacy "almost as much" to Hugh Auld's opposition as to Sophia Auld's early kindness?
2. What is the effect of interlacing human and animal nouns ("horses and men, cattle and women") in the valuation passage, rather than listing all the humans first and all the animals after?
3. Explain why Douglass calls Thomas Auld "not even a good imitator." What is Thomas imitating, and why does Douglass think he fails at it?
4. Identify two places in Chapters VI–IX where Douglass quotes a slaveholder's or minister's exact words without adding commentary. What does he gain by declining to editorialize?

5. Why does Douglass single out Mr. Cookman as an exception among the preachers who visit Thomas Auld's house?
6. What does the repetition of the title "class-leader" across three different figures in Chapter IX suggest about Douglass's argument, even though he never states the connection outright?
7. Explain the parallel between the grandmother's abandonment (Ch. VIII) and Henny's (Ch. IX). What single motif from Chapters I–V does this parallel complete?
8. Why does Douglass say he "envied" his fellow slaves' "stupidity" in Chapter VII? Is this consistent with the book's larger argument about the value of knowledge?

## 5.5 Research extensions (E3.11)

- Maryland's estate law and the treatment of enslaved people as divisible chattel property in a decedent's estate — what a formal probate valuation actually involved in the 1830s.
- John Greenleaf Whittier and the broader tradition of abolitionist poetry that Douglass draws on in Chapter VIII; compare the full text of "The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to Her Daughters Sold into Southern Bondage" to Douglass's use of it.
- The Methodist Episcopal Church's institutional relationship to slavery in antebellum Maryland, including the office of "class-leader" and the church's eventual 1844 schism over the issue.
- *The Columbian Orator* (Caleb Bingham, 1797) as an actual schoolbook — its contents, its popularity in early American education, and what it suggests about the rhetorical training available to a literate American of Douglass's generation.
- Compare this section of the 1845 *Narrative* to the corresponding chapters of *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), where Douglass, writing as a free man a decade later, expands considerably on both Sophia Auld's corruption and the religious hypocrisy of Thomas Auld's community.

## Quick TEKS Alignment Summary

| Strand (English III, §110.38)          | How Chapters VI–IX serve it                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>E3.1 Oral Language</b>              | Socratic seminar on the Sophia Auld / Thomas Auld comparison; oral defense of a thesis on the corruption motif                                  |
| <b>E3.2 Vocabulary</b>                 | Extended/literalized metaphor (bread, ladder and pit); continuity vocabulary tracked across chapters ("class-leader," "forthwith," "lacerated") |
| <b>E3.3 Self-Sustained Reading</b>     | Continued independent reading of the <i>Narrative</i> with an annotation log tracking the reciprocal-corruption and profitability motifs        |
| <b>E3.4 Comprehension</b>              | Tracing multi-chapter parallels (grandmother/Henny) and inferential reasoning (reconstructing "abolition" from context)                         |
| <b>E3.5 Response Skills</b>            | Evaluating logical structure beneath emotionally charged passages; distinguishing honest from dishonest scriptural argument                     |
| <b>E3.6 Literary Elements</b>          | Allusion (Whittier, Aesop, Luke 12:47), motif tracking, syntax-as-argument                                                                      |
| <b>E3.7 Genres</b>                     | The slave narrative's use of borrowed literary authority (poetry, scripture, classical allusion) to corroborate testimony                       |
| <b>E3.8 Author's Purpose and Craft</b> | Reused and redeployed rhetorical devices (antimetabole, appropriated language); tonal register (comic vs. solemn) as a rhetorical choice        |
| <b>E3.9–E3.10 Composition</b>          | Rhetorical-analysis essay with a thesis that holds two readings in tension rather than flattening them                                          |
| <b>E3.11 Inquiry and Research</b>      | Maryland estate/probate law; the Methodist Church and slavery; <i>The Columbian Orator</i> ; comparison to <i>My Bondage and My Freedom</i>     |

## The one thing to remember

Chapters I–V showed you a system built out of cruel individuals and cold bureaucracy. Chapters VI–IX show you the system reaching backward to remake the people who run it — a genuinely kind woman turned into someone who "seemed to be disturbed" by ordinary decency, and a genuinely mediocre man handed enough unearned power to become, in Douglass's flat and devastating phrase, "not even a

good imitator" of the tyranny he now wields. The book's argument has widened: it is no longer only *what is done to Douglass*, but *what the doing does to everyone who touches it* — including, the closing image of Chapter IX quietly warns you, to the "pious soul" now waiting to "break" him.