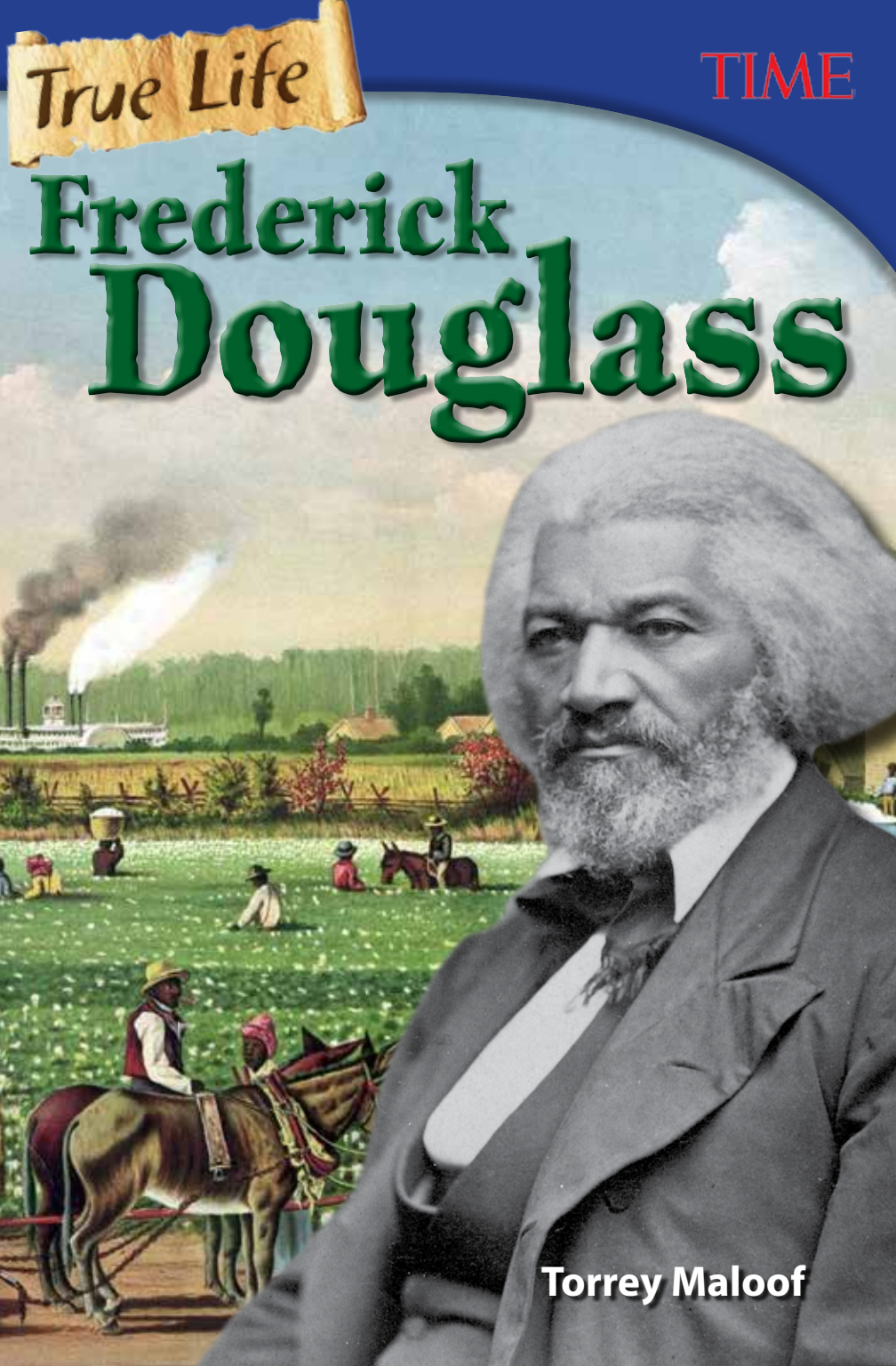
True Life

TIME

Frederick Douglass



Torrey Maloof



For teachers' inspection ONLY

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Visions of Freedom

There's something fascinating about his eyes. There is fierceness and determination mixed with focus and courage, but if you look closely, there is also agony and grief. This depth and intensity draws you in and makes you want to know more about this **enigmatic** man. The eyes belong to Frederick Douglass and they tell a story—*his* story.

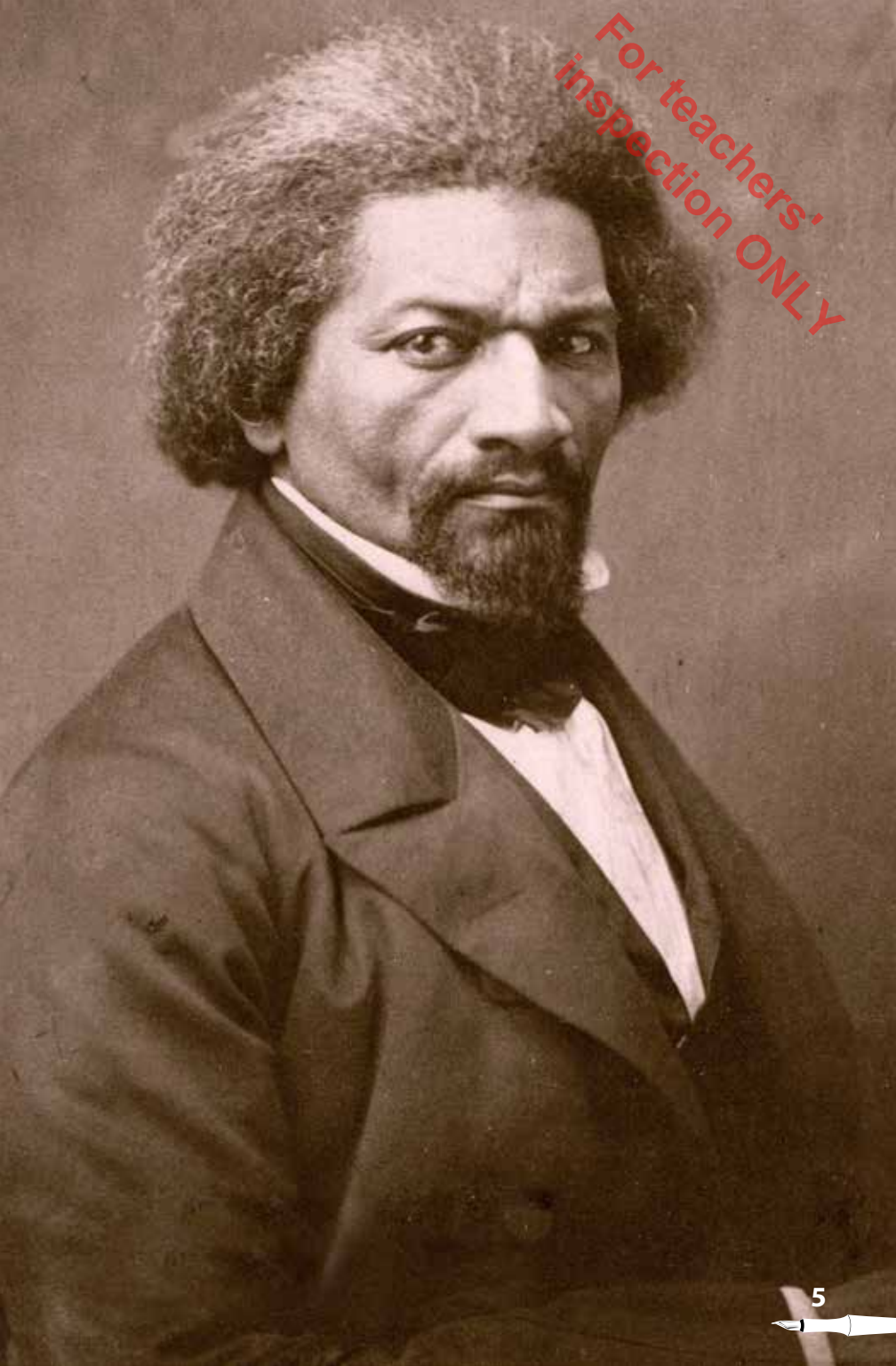
Douglass saw visions of freedom, not just for him but for all African Americans. Douglass was the most photographed man of the nineteenth century. He made it a point to have his portrait taken multiple times throughout his life; however, this was not out of **vanity** or a desire to be well known. Douglass was a man on a mission. That mission was to change the world and make it a fairer and more equal place for all who inhabited it—especially African Americans.

In the days before digital-image software, Douglass understood that the camera could not lie; it captured the truth. Frame by frame, it imprisoned history and locked in a reality that could not be changed with racist or spiteful words. Through his portraits, through his eyes, Douglass knew he could show African Americans for what they truly are—humans.

If I Were President

What would Douglass have done in the nineteenth century if he were president? He once wrote on this very subject.

I would employ every means supplied to the President by the constitution of the United States, to secure to every citizen of the United States, without regards to race, color, sex or religion, equal protection of the law. No citizen, however poor or despised, should be able to say at the close of my administration that he had suffered any injustice or had been in any way oppressed or injured by any act of mine while acting as President of the United States.



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There were people Douglass encountered during his lifetime who had deeply influenced him. Some of them supported him and kept him safe. Others strove to tear him down and hurt him. There were close friendships that encouraged him to do amazing things. And there were also experiences of brief but harsh interactions that infuriated him and drove him to take action. All these different types of people and relationships most certainly affected Douglass. However, the life he created for himself was built on the choices he made, not choices someone else made for him.

A nurturing grandmother, a cruel slave master, an **abolitionist**, and a United States president are just a few of the many people who shaped the life of Frederick Douglass. Yet it was Douglass's own intellect and **fortitude** that made him one of the greatest writers, speakers, and activists of his time. This is the true-life story of Douglass as seen through his eyes and the eyes of those who influenced and inspired him along the way.

Impactful Influences

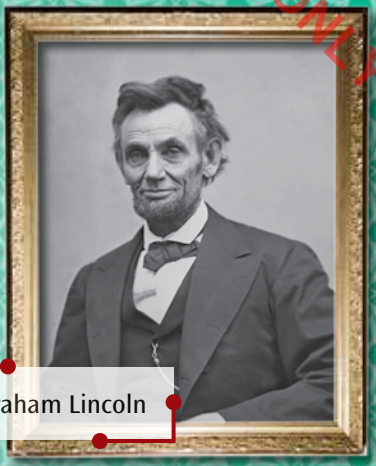
The people shown to the right are some of those who played critical roles in Douglass's life. Their influences—whether positive or negative, helpful or hurtful—strongly impacted the course that his life took and the choices he made.

- Is there anyone not shown in the images to the right that you think should have been included?
- Why do you think there are no photographs of the other influential people from Douglass's life?

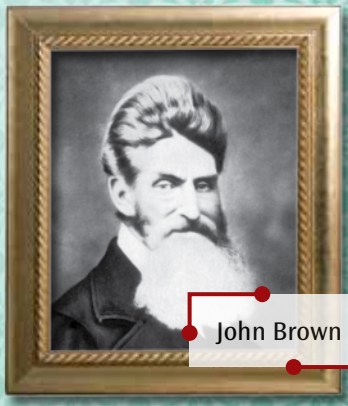
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Susan B. Anthony



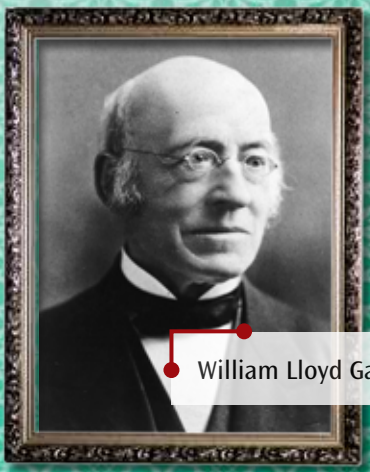
Abraham Lincoln



John Brown



Elizabeth Cady Stanton



William Lloyd Garrison

Sheltered and Shattered

"I wished to remain little forever, for I knew the taller I grew the shorter my stay."

—Frederick Douglass

It was the love and care of his grandmother that made a young Douglass feel sheltered and secure as a small child, even amidst the cruel reality of slavery. He wished to stay in her protective presence forever. But he knew that one day the violence and injustice of the world in which he lived would rip him from her caring arms.



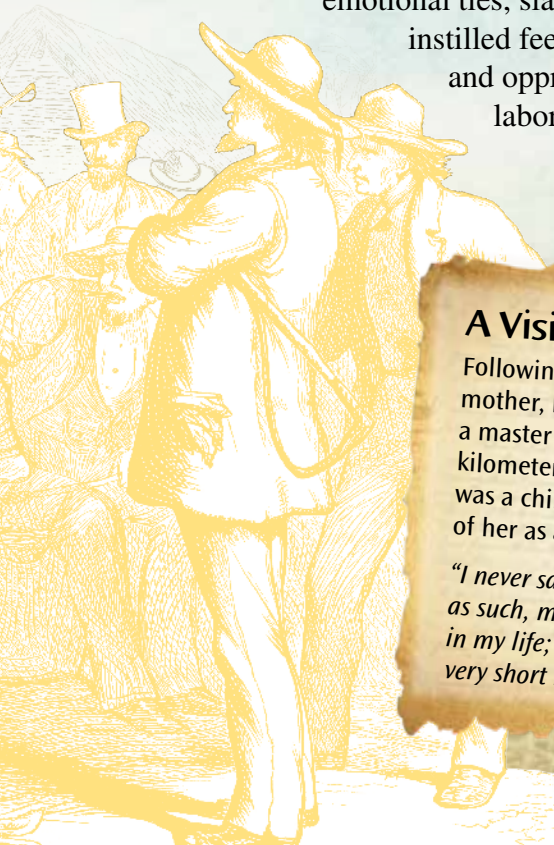
an illustration of a slave auction

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Born into Slavery

Official records, such as marriage, death, or birth certificates, were not kept for enslaved people, although some slaveholders may have kept their own unofficial documents. Consequently, Douglass did not know the day, let alone the year, in which he was born. It is believed he was born around 1818. His father was a white man, and all rumors pointed to his father being the master of a Talbot County, Maryland, plantation where Douglass was born. Douglass saw his mother, an enslaved woman named Harriet Bailey, only a handful of times as a child. The two were separated when Douglass was an infant. Slave masters believed this forced separation would break the bond between mother and child. By breaking these emotional ties, slaveholders more easily instilled feelings of isolation, despair, and oppression in their enslaved laborers.



A Visitor in the Night

Following Douglass's birth, his mother, Harriet, was sent to work for a master who lived 12 miles (19.3 kilometers) away. She died when he was a child, so Douglass did not think of her as a mother.

"I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night."

Reader's Guide

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1. Why did slave masters separate mothers and children? What impact did this have on Frederick Douglass?
2. Why did Douglass continue to educate himself after Sophia Auld stopped teaching him?
3. What aspect of Douglass's life is most interesting to you?
4. What events led Douglass to form a friendship with President Abraham Lincoln?

