

Relevant Unit Objectives

Module 2: Resistance and Self-Determination

This lesson addresses the following Essential Questions:

- What constituted an act of resistance of African Americans against the institution of slavery?
- Are some acts of resistance more effective than others?

Objectives of the Lesson

Aim

Is Frederick Douglass's method of resistance still relevant in today's society?

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explore the natural, political and moral grounds for resistance to evil.
- Read excerpts of a speech by Frederick Douglass highlighting elements of the speech that defines Frederick Douglass's philosophy of resistance.
- Generalize about why standing by and not resisting might be wrong in current situations in their fourth grade classroom.

Introduction

There is a saying in America that if you are not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

- If a friend of yours were being mean to someone else, what would you do?
- If you saw someone breaking the law, what would you do?
- Would you try to stop it, get someone to try and stop it, or stand by and do nothing because it is none of your business?

Instructional Procedures

Step One:

Teacher notes: in 1857, Frederick Douglass saw that despite a large abolition movement in America, many Americans who were against slavery were not taking action. He made a speech explaining the need for struggle.

Teacher distributes handout and asks students to think about the three quotes.

Discussion questions:

1. “If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters....”

What do you think Frederick Douglass is saying about the connection between struggle and nature?

2. “Power concedes nothing without a demand....”

If someone abuses their power over someone else, who is at fault, according to Frederick Douglass, the one in power, or the victim?

Just because someone is in charge, does it mean he or she will always make the right choice?

3. “In the light of these ideas, Negroes will be hunted at the North, and held and flogged at the South so long as they submit to those devilish outrages, and make no resistance, either moral or physical.”

Just because something is wrong, doesn't mean the person doing it will know that it is wrong. What is Frederick Douglass asking victims of injustice to do?

Step Two: Additional biographical information about Frederick Douglass

The teacher provides background information about Frederick Douglass found in middle/upper school MAAP lessons.

Conclusion

Have students revisit their original decisions about what to do if you see something wrong being done. Do you think Frederick Douglass would ever agree with standing by and letting it happen? Why or why not? Are his words still true today?

Materials

Handout 1: Frederick Douglass' Methods of Resistance

Handout 1: Frederick Douglass's methods of resistance

1. "If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters...."
2. "...Power concedes nothing without a demand...."
3. "...In the light of these ideas, Negroes will be hunted at the North, and held and flogged at the South so long as they submit to those devilish outrages, and make no resistance, either moral or physical."