

## FOR INCOMING JUNIORS TAKING AP LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

**Assignment:** Read *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. You can purchase a copy, check your local library OR see if there is a copy to check out from BSM (limited copies available).

### PART I: AS YOU READ...

Douglass's *Narrative*, on one hand, relates his experiences as a slave. However, his *Narrative* has a central purpose: to argue against slavery and persuade readers to take up the abolitionist movement. Although he uses several strategies in his argument, one frequent technique is his use of appeals. In classical rhetoric (the art of persuasion), there are 3 basic types of appeals:

**LOGOS:** an appeal to logic and rationality

**PATHOS:** an appeal to emotion

**ETHOS:** an appeal based on the speaker or writer's character and/or credibility.

As you read, annotate the text, indicating places where Douglass appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos. If you have your own purchased copy of the narrative, write in the book. Otherwise, use post-it notes or take notes with page numbers of relevant passages. Your annotations will be checked the first day of school.

Note: for more information, you can read the definitions at <http://pathosethoslogos.com>

### PART II: AFTER YOU READ:

Literacy is a crucial step in Frederick Douglass's journey to freedom. Consider, for instance, his comments about his relationship with reading and writing.

"... I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out."

"Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he

was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read.”

“The paper came, and I read it from week to week with such feelings as it would be quite idle for me to attempt to describe. The paper became my meat and my drink. My soul was set all on fire. Its sympathy for my brethren in bonds--its scathing denunciations of slaveholders--its faithful exposures of slavery--and its powerful attacks upon the upholders of the institution--sent a thrill of joy through my soul, such as I had never felt before!”

## **Your job, then, is to consider—and write—YOUR OWN literacy narrative.**

**ASSIGNMENT:** Describe the experiences you have had in your life so far that have influenced your development as a reader/writer (2-3 typed pages, MLA format).

### **Advice:**

- **Be concrete:** No matter what experience you choose to write about, your task as a writer is to *show* that experience and make the reader feel as if he or she is there. You don't want your essay to be like everyone else's, so search for experiences that are unique to your development.
- **Choose the right details:** Your essay will flop if you try to tell about every experience you have had. Choose only those that are most significant and influential.
- **Experiment:** Do **not** use the traditional five-paragraph essay format. Experiment with form. For example, you could write a series of self-contained vignettes. Taken together, these vignettes should work together to form a whole.
- **Pay attention to introductions and conclusions...and don't be boring about it:** Make the beginning seem like the beginning and the end seem like the end. Avoid gimmicks (“Websters defines ‘writer’ as...”). Start by throwing the reader in to the middle of a moment. Be highly specific. Think about whether or not your first words and first sentence are engaging to your audience (assume your classmates are your audience).

**THE PAPER IS DUE ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS. IT MUST BE TYPED AND PRINTED OUT.**