

Dean Gladish

Annotated Bibliography

Douglass, Frederick. "Learning to Read and Write." *50 Essays: A Portable Anthology*. Ed.

Samuel Cohen. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. 100-101. Print. In this excerpt from his autobiography, Douglass narrates his life during the time in which he learned to read and write. In these pages, Douglass depicts the change that took place within his family's mistress as a result of slavery. He describes how his family's warm-hearted mistress had originally treated him with humanity, instructing him in reading and writing. He then recounts how slavery, by way of its depravity, later transformed her humanity and kindness into fury and violence. Douglass recalls that his mistress refused to teach him to read as she had taught him before, exemplifying this change by including an example of her refusal to allow him to read a newspaper. He finally concludes that slavery and education are incompatible with each other. Douglass' analytical and candid tone serves to answer the ontological question of whether a person is inherently good, bad, or both by examining the influence of slavery on a good person's moral constitution. In the excerpt, Douglass relates the inhumane nature of slavery and its destructive consequences on the individual.