



American Legends: The Life of Frederick Douglass

Charles River Editors

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A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, listeners can get caught up on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute. And they can do so while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

With the possible exception of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., no African American has been more instrumental in the fight for minorities' civil rights in the United States than Frederick Douglass (1818 - 1895), an American social reformer, orator, writer, and statesman. His list of accomplishments would be impressive enough even without taking into account the fact that he was born into slavery. It's believed his father was a white man, even perhaps his master Aaron Anthony. When Douglass was about 12, his slaveowner's wife, Sophia Auld, began teaching him the alphabet in defiance of the South's laws against teaching slaves how to read. When her husband Hugh found out, he was furious, reminding her that if the slave learned to read, he would become dissatisfied with his condition and desire freedom. Those words would prove prophetic.

Douglass is noted as saying that "knowledge is the pathway from slavery to freedom". He took that advice to heart, teaching himself how to read and write with his knowledge of the alphabet. On September 3, 1838, Douglass successfully escaped slavery, traveling by boat to Delaware, Philadelphia, and finally New York, all in the span of a day. Douglass found a "...new world had opened upon [him]".

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