



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide

June 26th, 2025 at 6 PM CT

Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](https://www.abhmuseum.org/) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about this book.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Many of Douglass' speeches focus on the hypocrisy of the Christian religion when it comes to slavery. What are some of the contradictions he points out? What was organized religion's role in both enabling and protecting slavery and in the abolition movement? See pages 2, 3, 9, 10, 14, 15, and 120.
2. In his speeches, he often calls out the North and implicates them in the system of slavery. Why do you think he was compelled to do this? How does he complicate the view that slavery and racism is a problem of the South alone? See pages 5, 6, 13, 22, 23, and 24.
3. In his speech, "What to the slave is the 4th of July?," Douglass calls out the hypocrisy inherent in celebrating a holiday when not all are free. Why do you think Douglass was originally asked to speak on this occasion? How did he use the opportunity? What can we learn from this speech to apply to our present struggles for justice? See pages 20, 29, 31, 32, 34, 36, 44, and 46.

4. We teach (and have taught) about the 4th of July in schools, but how does this compare to learning and teaching about Juneteenth? How do these two holidays in conversation with one another complicate the narrative of progress, freedom, and liberty in this country? See pages 28, 29, 31, 56, and 57.
5. Why does Douglass think protecting free speech is so important in this country? In his view, what does free speech have to do with the abolition of slavery? Why is it important that we continue to fight to protect this right today? See pages 49, 50, 52, 53, 89 and 95.
6. The importance of being honest and truth-telling (and the pursuit of truth in this country) is something Douglass reiterates throughout his speeches. How does this relate to the work of places like ABHM and the struggle to teach honest history today? Who are some other individuals that were dedicated to historical truth-telling, past and present? See pages 17, 25, 26, 34, 36, and 98.
7. In his speeches, Douglass argued that the right to vote is fundamentally American, and he was also concerned with women's suffrage. How were the causes for the Black vote and the vote for women interconnected? Do you agree that the right to vote is central to this country? See pages 53, 54, 55, 57, 94, 95, and 99.
8. How does Douglass remember Lincoln and John Brown in his speeches? How should we remember these men today? What can we learn from them? See pages 61, 62, 65, 67, 72, 74, 76, 77, 78, and 79.
9. ABHM selected this book to align with [Civic Season](#). What do Douglass' speeches teach us about civics, citizenship, and government? See pages 57, 88, 89, 90, 92, and 94.
10. How else does Douglass help us understand our current political climate and the tools we have to preserve democracy today? See pages 88, 97, 112, 127, and 134.