An American Slave In The Life Of A Slave Girl And Narrative Of The Life Of A Frederick Douglass

Nearing the end of legal slavery in the early 1830s, African American writers had started to become more prominent with their own literature that was later deemed the “slave narrative”. Two of the most persuasive novels in this genre were Harriet Jacobs’s Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and Frederick Douglass’s Narrative of the Life of a Frederick Douglass: an American Slave. These two novels were published about fifteen years apart, Douglass’s in 1845 and Jacob’s in 1861. Like other slave narratives that came before and after these, their narratives focused on the struggles that they had faced during their agonizing days as a slave. Their goals were also similar to other narratives, which was to bring awareness to put an end to slavery. Douglass and Jacobs did this by going back to their past and writing in great detail the suffering that them and other slaves like them had faced. Both of their narratives are in depth stories that they both felt were necessary to share to their country who legally refused to acknowledge them as human beings equal to the white colonists.

Douglass’s and Jacob’s narratives stood out from other slave narratives because, they found ways to tailor their stories to feel more personalized. They made these essays unique by giving them their own voices that narrated the journey that they were on and the lessons that they had learned from them. Although they were both raised during the Antebellum Period, Douglass and Jacobs came from a time where they were beginning to speak up for their own freedom. These two authors did just that by becoming political activists and creating a path for others to follow in their footsteps. For them, freedom from slavery meant so much more than just being physically free. It meant being free from the phycological torture that they faced daily and finally feeling empowered with the ability to take their lives into their own hands.

Frederick Douglass was born around 1818 in Maryland. After escaping Baltimore, Frederick Douglass became a speaker for the Massachusetts Antislavery society that eventually gave him the courage and practice to develop his narrative that was published in 1845. In his book, he used multiple rhetorical devices that were devolved by orations and sermons. The devices that he had used focused on dictation and repetition to further persuade his audience to agree with his ideals. Overall his narrative was the embodiment of everything that he has learned in his life. It was the culmination of his public speaking mastery and his preaching style of rhetoric. Douglass also knew his audience well and appealed to them with the Emersonian idealism at the time. He opened his audience’s eyes to what he had faced as a slave. He wrote about himself as somewhat of a struggling protagonist that has been cursed by the world so that his readers would root for him to overcome the odds. Douglass did this so that he could implement his moral principles and that audience would be more willing to listen. His story appealed to similar tales at the time who went on a journey that sent them from boyhood into manhood. This additionally reinstated the idea of a slaves will fight against his master and escape into a free American life.

Slavery was and still is inhumane. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs helped to further that idea by describing how harsh, immoral and unconstitutional it is. Their narratives leave an enormous impact on anyone who reads it because, of their dictation and how they made their audience truly experience the pain they had went through. Even though these memories hurt

Jacobs and Douglass to think about them, firsthand experience proved necessary to further the movement against slavery. When analyzing Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and Narrative of the Life of a Frederick Douglass: an American Slave the reader realizes the true reality of slavery and especially for the families that were born into it who did had no idea what life before slavery was. The reader is also introduced to life after slaver as an abolitionist fugitive slave writer. These people were political activist in their times trying to promote social change. They wanted freedom and equality because, they believed it could only be gained through literature.