

### **from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (3)**

1 From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate  
2 room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of  
3 having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All  
4 this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in  
5 teaching me the alphabet, had given me the inch, and no precaution could  
6 prevent me from taking the ell.<sup>1</sup>

7 The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most  
8 successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I  
9 met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers.  
10 With their kindly aid, obtained<sup>2</sup> at different times and in different places,  
11 I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I  
12 always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand  
13 quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry  
14 bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I  
15 was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many  
16 of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to  
17 bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that  
18 more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the  
19 names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude

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1 a former measure of length (equivalent to six hand breadths) used mainly for textiles, locally variable but typically about 45 inches.

2 get, acquire, or secure (something)

20 and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure  
21 me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offense  
22 to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the  
23 dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and  
24 Bailey’s shipyard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I  
25 would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would  
26 be when they got to be men. “You will be free as soon as you are twenty-  
27 one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you  
28 have?” These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the  
29 liveliest sympathy, and console<sup>3</sup> me with the hope that something would  
30 occur by which I might be free.

## Marking the Text

### Instructions

*Of the fifteen annotations explained below, you must do ten of them. The five that are bold are required. You choose the other five yourself.*

1. Line 1: What is “this time”?
2. Lines 2, 3: Make an inference in the margin about about why the mistress suspected he had a book.
3. Line 6: Make an inference in the margin about what he means by “taking the ell” when given an inch.
4. Line 7: Make an inference in the margin about what this plan is about.
5. **Line 9: What is the antecedent of “these”?**
6. Line 10: What is the antecedent of “their”?
7. **Line 10: What is obtained? What does this phrase modify?**
8. Lines 12, 13: What does he accomplish by doing one part of his errand quickly?
9. Line 14: What is the antecedent of “which”?
10. **Line 17: Make an inference about who these “urchins” are in the text.**
11. **Line 21: What is the antecedent of “them”?**
12. **Line 22, 23: Mark the portion of the text that indicates why mentioning the boys’ names might embarrass them.**
13. Line 24, 25: What is the antecedent of “them”?
14. Line 25: Mark the text to indicate two places that Douglass explains what he says to the boys.
15. Line 30, 31: Make an inference in the margin about what the boys’ words show about their understanding of slavery.

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3 comfort (someone) at a time of grief or disappointment.