

Liberty Task

Exemplar A

Prompt: The Constitution suggests that everyone has the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Yet, these rights were denied to many, and even today, not everyone in the USA enjoys equal protection of these. After reading George Moses Horton’s poem, “On Liberty and Slavery” and the excerpt from Frederick Douglass’ autobiography, write an essay that explains how the texts portray, or show, the timeless human longing for freedom or “liberty”. Be sure to cite evidence from both sources.

The excerpt from Frederick Douglass’ life and the poem, “On Liberty and Slavery”, by George Moses Horton show how both of these men long for freedom in their feelings and thoughts.

Douglass tells about how he read a story that inspired him. In this story, a slave argues with his master about why he should be freed. “The slave had some impressive responses - which had the desired though unexpected effect...” The slave was then set free, or emancipated. Douglass admired this man which suggests he must have wanted freedom too. Also, Douglass says that reading this slave’s words helped him to express his feelings and how much he detested his enslavers. He describes freedom as, “It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.” He must have been tormented thinking about freedom all of the time. He probably had some hope that he would someday be free since it was always on his mind.

Horton shows his longing for freedom with how he carefully chooses words to describe his thoughts. He says slavery deprives him “of all created bliss”. He thinks slavery takes away all happiness. According to the passage “there is no relief” from the chains of slavery. He is feeling the pain and rage all the time, with no break. Then Horton becomes more hopeful when he states that liberty could let his “grief in joys be drowned”. This means his sadness would end in joy if he could be free. He ends by wishing the “sacred sun to rise” on freedom. His longing is incredibly sad, but then hopeful too.

Both writers describe their longing for freedom through sharing their feelings and comparing slavery to nature. Douglass tells a story of a slave who used his words to describe his feelings about slavery. This helped Douglas describe how he felt too. Horton uses the words in his poem to show deep emotion. The words and feelings of these two authors help the reader to better understand the pain and hope of longing.

Exemplar B

Prompt: The Constitution suggests that everyone has the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Yet, these rights were denied to many, and even today, not everyone in the USA enjoys equal protection of these. After reading George Moses Horton’s poem, “On Liberty and Slavery” and the excerpt from Frederick Douglass’ autobiography, write an essay that explains how the texts portray, or show, the timeless human longing for freedom or “liberty”. Be sure to cite evidence from both sources.

The excerpt from Frederick Douglass’ life and the poem, “On Liberty and Slavery”, by George Moses Horton are both written by men who have experienced slavery. The longing these men feel for freedom is portrayed through their use of carefully chosen words while Douglas uses more stories and Horton uses more symbols.

In his autobiography, Douglass tells a personal story from a book he read that tells of a conversation between a slave and his master about freedom. Douglass explains that “ The slave had some impressive responses - which had the desired though unexpected effect...” The effect was that the master freed the slave. Douglass uses this story to show how much he too wanted to be free. He admired this man and felt so grateful to him because he gave Douglass an example of how to put a person’s feelings about freedom into words so well. The slave gave a “bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication, or justification, of human rights.” Douglass is then able to find his own words too, and to help the reader feel just how deeply he longs for freedom and is tormented by the anguish of slavery. He writes, “It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.” When he states that freedom looked at him from stars, breathed and smiled at him, he personifies nature to help him make his point.

Horton also uses beautifully chosen words to show his longing for freedom too. He uses opposite ideas when he says his “slavish chains” deprived him “of all created bliss”. This shows the difference between chains and happiness. Horton says he cannot feel any happiness as long as he is in chains. He repeats the same idea when he writes that there is not even any relief and no way to “to soothe the pain – to quell the grief.”. He refers to the hope of freedom as a way of drowning his grief with joy. It is the feeling of hope that helps his grief feel better. He then describes that back in Africa the dove of peace ‘cooed’ for liberty. He thinks even nature longs for freedom like he does. He ends by reminding the reader that liberty has been fought for with ‘blood’ in the past. This shows just how much he longs for freedom because he believes people are willing to be hurt or even worse in order to be free.

Both writers demonstrate their deep longing for freedom in shared ways such as through careful word choice and stories. Douglass uses a personal story of someone who inspired him and helped him to find his own words. Horton’s poem shows how important freedom is to him through how he describes it, shows even nature longs for it, and hints that people are willing to get hurt to try and achieve it. Words have power. Through their words, Douglass and Horton inspire others to care and to take action.

Exemplar C

Prompt: The Constitution suggests that everyone has the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Yet, these rights were denied to many, and even today, not everyone in the USA enjoys equal protection of these. After reading George Moses Horton’s poem, “On Liberty and Slavery” and the excerpt from Frederick Douglass’ autobiography, write an essay that explains how the texts portray, or show, the timeless human longing for freedom or “liberty”. Be sure to cite evidence from both sources.

Frederick Douglass’ autobiography and the poem, “On Liberty and Slavery”, by George Moses Horton portray the longing of both these men for freedom. Both use carefully chosen words, while Douglass uses more personal stories and Horton uses more symbols.

Douglass tells of a book he read that contained an exchange between a slave and his master on the topic of whether the slave should be free. Douglass explains that “The slave had some impressive responses - which had the desired though unexpected effect...” The master emancipated the slave after this conversation. This story of the slave who served as a role model deeply inspired Douglass. This slave’s “bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication, or justification, of human rights” helped Douglass to find his own words to convey how much he too wanted to be free. It also enabled Douglass to realize how much he loathed his enslavers. Since he admired this man and seemed to feel so grateful to him, he must have wanted freedom so much. Even more, Douglass also uses carefully chosen language to describe his anguish for freedom. “It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.” He repeats the word “it” two times describing how freedom looked at him from stars and smiled at him. He follows this by choosing two more phrases that personify the idea of freedom as ‘wind’ speaking to him and actually moving as part of a storm. Douglass appeals to the reader’s emotion when he does this because it makes the reader feel his longing.

In a similar way, Horton also uses beautifully chosen words and phrases to show his longing for freedom. He describes how the tyrants who put him in his slavish chains deprived him “of all created bliss” This creates a contrast between chains and happiness. He repeats the same idea of extreme language as he writes that there is no relief and no way to “to soothe the pain – to quell the grief.” He uses symbols referring to the hope of freedom as capable of drowning his grief with joy. He then refers back to Africa and uses another symbol of the dove of peace and how that dove ‘cooed’ for liberty while they were back in Africa. He reminds the reader that liberty has been achieved by blood in the past. This suggests he might even believe more blood should be lost to protect liberty.

Both writers establish their deep longing for freedom in shared ways such as through their strong use of language. Douglass uses a personal story of someone who inspired him through a book he read, while Horton uses symbols and references to earlier times to contrast his current life with what life had been in Africa. Language can be used in many different ways to share a person’s pain and longing and maybe even inspire readers to want to take action to help.