

Thesis:

In his letter to Thomas Auld, Frederick Douglass employs logos through the use of diction with a frank yet insinuating tone to establish his moral argument of equality among all men as well as to expose American society as flawed and hypocritical.

Supporting Body Paragraph:

Douglass humbly but firmly establishes his right to address Mr. Auld, his former master, as an equal through his use of precise diction and logical reasoning. He first stresses his “great liberty” he takes to speak to Auld in a “public manner;” his use of grandiose language such as “great liberty” for a menial public confrontation both conveys sarcasm towards the lowly position he once held as a slave—which contributes to the insinuating word choices he uses to reveal a deeper and harsher meaning—as well as to introduce his argument for the rights he does hold. Douglass later exposes the sins of Auld, as well as all slaveholders, to portray himself as worthy to present his argument; his analogy of a criminal and the process in which they are handled provides a cunning way in which Douglass condemns Auld. Since he was a slaveholder Douglass insinuates Auld to be “guilty of theft, robbery, or murder,” the diction of the analogy subtly connecting Auld to common and recognized crimes. Finally, Douglass frankly declares that “[they] are two distinct” yet “equal persons.” Coupled with the argument he portrays before and after of God and nature both defining Auld and Douglass as human, Douglass uses this as a logical synopsis of his moral argument that men are equal. After his is established, Douglass justifies his past and present actions as far for he “took nothing but what belonged to [him],” being his own person and does not owe Auld anything.

Thesis:

Frederick Douglass employs ethos to condemn slavery and set an example for a moral and equal society and to affirm his humanity and his beliefs of equality in a letter addressed to his former slave master, Thomas Auld.

Supporting Body Paragraph Excerpt:

His diction is incisive and reserved throughout his letter, but it conveys his passion as he states that he will “assail the system of slavery.” Douglass purposefully chooses the word “assail” in order to show his anger and determination toward ending slavery. Douglass compares and refers to slavery in an array of ways in order to express the degree of brutality and immorality slavery causes. In his book he refers to slavery as a “fatal poison” and states that it has “dehumanizing effects” on both the slave and slave master. He continues to express this brutality in his letter when he states that slavery is a “horror of trafficking in the souls and bodies of men.” The choice of the word “horror” is an example of the strong diction Douglass uses in order to emphasize his beliefs about slavery.

Thesis:

In the letter addressed to Mr. Thomas Auld, Frederick Douglass employs logos and ethos to convey his belief that all men are created equal because they are simply human and to discuss the immorality of the institution of slavery.

Supporting Body Paragraph Excerpt:

Douglass's belief that all men are equal is buttressed by his claims that no man should have the right to control another. By informing Mr. Auld that he and Douglass "are distinct, equal persons" the concept of equality is illuminated. Douglass makes the logical argument that there is no natural difference between himself and Mr. Auld because they are both human and they are both created by God, yet they are "separate beings." Douglass also discusses the "long and intimate . . . relation . . . between [Mr. Auld] and [himself]" in order to explain the separate but equal division between the two of them through the logical use of diction. By choosing to use their names individually rather than use the phrase "us," Douglass establishes the direct equality between himself and Auld.

Body Paragraph Excerpt:

Douglass sets up a logical argument with the use of parallelism and strong diction to exhibit why slavery is wrong and as human beings we should be treated equally. The way Douglass exposed his relationship with Mr. Auld is seen as taboo and extremely rude, according to slaveholders. However, Douglass justifies his actions by claiming that a man "guilty of theft, robbery, or murder has forfeited the right to concealment and a private life." He also uses strong diction with the word "ferret" when he claims the "public have a right to ferret them out." The use of the word "ferret," which means to look persistently for something, instead of simply search, emphasizes the severity of these crimes. The fact that Auld is a slave master doesn't make him an exception but father makes his crime worse as the institution of slavery has made him capable of committing horrendous crimes on other human beings. Douglass is bringing this fact to light with the hopes of exhibiting how slavery dehumanizes.

Body Paragraph Excerpt:

Douglass also illuminates the conflict of interest amongst religious slaveholders in order to draw attention to slavery's immorality. The parallelism of the second paragraph in which both Mr. Auld and Douglass are "men" and "God created both" builds the power of Douglass's declarations through his succession of short sentences. As Douglass refers to slavery as the "trafficking" of "souls" as well as the "bodies" of men, the reader realizes the deeper repercussions of slavery. It is not only their labor the slave master exploits but also their very spirit and being that God granted them. Therefore, Douglass calls upon the "guilty nation" of religious men who own slaves to "repent" and admit their wrongs. Douglass's diction relates to religion, and thus more strongly emphasizes the inhumanity of the institution of slavery.

Body Paragraph Excerpt:

Douglass implies his personal values by criticizing the system that the slave master has created to rob slaves of their natural human rights. Douglass uses repetition with “you and myself” and “I am myself; you are yourself” to emphasize that he no longer has a relationship with Mr. Auld and that he is not Mr. Auld’s property. He used “you and I” instead of “us” because he is an entirely separate individual who is capable of being independent. Douglass also only refers to Mr. Auld as “Sir” twice and for the rest of the letter, he refers to him as “you.” Douglass uses “I” much more than “you.” This symbolizes his power over Mr. Auld now that he does not belong to him anymore.