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The Life of Frederick Douglass

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave tells a story of Frederick Douglass. Frederick does not know who his father was, and he was separated from his mother at a very young age. That is why Frederick is searching for parenting figures and tries to replace family relationships he lacks in life.

A person that could be taken as a mother figure is Frederick's grandmother as he was living with her after he got separated from his mother. But there is another person that could be probably taken more as a mother figure. After Frederick was given to Hugh Auld, his wife Sophia Auld helped to make Frederick's life more bearable and gives him hope that he will become a free man. Sophia even teaches Frederick how to read before her husband forbids that. Frederick speaks of Sophia in a good way many times, such as here "I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen" (26). As Sophia was caring about Frederick so much, she definitely could have been a mother figure to Frederick.

The person that could be counted as a father figure is Hugh Auld. Hugh Auld is a husband of Sophia who could be counted as a mother figure. Even though Frederick is his slave, Hugh Auld is mostly kind to him. Frederick spends the most of his slave life with him and therefore Hugh Auld could have been a father figure to him.

People that could be qualified as brothers for Frederick are the poor white boys that taught Frederick how to read. These boys did not see Frederick as someone below them and did not treat him differently because of who he was. Frederick even mentions that “they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free” (29) which show that they were really kind to him and wished that he would become free one day. This shows that they could be taken as Frederick’s brother figures.

The slaves Frederick met at Mr. Freedland’s could be counted as other sibling figures. All of the slaves were acting like they were a family and were helping each other a lot. One of them called Sandy even tries to help him by telling him about a certain root that would protect him from whipping. What implies that the relationship was a sibling-like is that Frederick said he “never loved any or confided in any people more than my fellowslaves, and especially those with whom I lived at Mr. Freeland’s” (49) and he also said he believed they would have died for each other. That shows that they were more than friends and they could be perceived by Frederick as siblings.

Frederick’s life was lonely when he was growing up and he felt like a lesser man without knowing his origin and his parents. That is why he desired at least a family-like relationship. There were many family figures that helped him throughout his life. I think that in the end Frederick Douglass’s search for relationship is successful, as he finds all of the things that he ever wanted – freedom and family.

Works Cited

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Boston:
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