

## Quiz A: RI.4.6

Read the passages. Then answer the questions.

“Douglass’s Escape from Slavery”

Library of Congress

- 1 Can you believe that a train conductor held the fate of Frederick Douglass’s entire life in his hands? Douglass described his daring escape on a train ride from Baltimore to Philadelphia in his autobiography, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881). For the journey, Douglass disguised himself as a sailor wearing a red shirt, a tarpaulin hat, and a black scarf tied loosely around his neck. He also had to be able to talk like a sailor... Besides a disguise, what else do you think Douglass needed?
- 2 Along with the other black passengers, Douglass had to show his “free papers”—a document proving he was free and could travel—along with his ticket. Because Douglass was a runaway slave, he didn’t have free papers. Instead, he had borrowed what was called a Seaman’s Protection Certificate, which proved that a sailor was a citizen of the U.S.
- 3 Douglass described his nervousness when the conductor came by to collect tickets and look over papers: “My whole future depended upon the decision of this conductor.”
- 4 This is how the conversation went when the conductor reached Douglass in the crowded train car.  
“I suppose you have your free papers?”  
“No sir; I never carry my free papers to sea with me.”  
“But you have something to show that you are a freeman, haven’t you?”  
“Yes, sir, I have a paper with the American eagle on it, and that will carry me around the world.”
- 5 A quick glance at the paper satisfied the conductor and he took Douglass’s fare and went on to the other passengers. This moment was one of the most anxious Douglass had ever experienced. What do you think would have happened if the conductor had looked carefully at the paper?
- 6 If the conductor had looked closely, he would have noticed that Douglass did not match the description of the person on the form and he would have been required to send him back to slavery in Baltimore. Not only would this have been terrible for Douglass but also the friend, from whom he borrowed the Seaman’s Certificate, would have been in serious trouble. Later, when Douglass wrote his first autobiography in 1845, he didn’t include the way in which he escaped because some of the people who had helped him could have gotten into trouble... By the time Douglass wrote his revised autobiography in 1881, he included the real description of his daring escape.
- 7 In my clothing I was rigged out in sailor style. I had on a red shirt and a tarpaulin hat and black cravat, tied in sailor fashion, carelessly and loosely about my neck. My knowledge of ships and sailor’s talk came much to my assistance, for I knew a ship from stem to stern, and from keelson to cross-trees, and could talk sailor like an “old salt.”

