Timed Writing Three – Douglass AP Free-Response 11/13/18

In the third paragraph of his 1845 autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass reinforces his purpose by altering his style. He hopes to convey to the reader how his views on slavery fluctuated throughout his enslavement, drifting towards one extreme then backing off. He implements rhetorical questions and changes in tone, syntax, and diction to further support his purpose in the third paragraph.

Unlike the other paragraphs in this passage, the third paragraph contains a multitude of rhetorical questions – questioning God, His plan, and what Douglass’ next actions should be. He yearns for answers to questions such as “Is there any God?” and “Why am I a slave?”, revealing just how extreme his thoughts were during that time. The abundant use of rhetorical questions, among other factors, influences a change in tone as well. Between the second and third paragraphs of the passage, the tone shifts from a more flowy, calm tone to one that is sharp and full of desperation. The first two paragraphs detail where and when this change in thinking occurred, barely touching on the inner thoughts of Douglass. In the third paragraph, however, sharp, indignant words, exclamations of grief, repetition, and parallel structures manipulate the tone into one of a desperate cry of “why me?” Changes in syntax and diction play a major role in switching the tone. Diction becomes less elaborate, and syntax becomes choppier. Short, parallel sentences and exclamations riddle the third paragraph, distinguishing it stylistically from the other paragraphs and reinforcing the maelstrom of thought Douglass went through during enslavement.

Each of these three factors weave together to create a paragraph that is stylistically set apart from the rest of the passage. This difference reinforces Douglass’ rhetorical purpose as a whole by reflecting inner turmoil in written form. This mastery over tweaking of style allows Douglass to convey how “[his] natural elasticity was crushed” and “[his] intellect languished” in a more powerful and concise manner than would be achieved by paragraphs that all share the same style.