**AP English: Language & Composition**

Practice with Passage Analysis

Conduct a close reading of the following passage, excerpted from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.* Annotate the text as you read and reread. Then, in a well-written essay, explore the purpose of the excerpt and the writing strategies Douglass employ in composing it. Be as specific as possible.

Our knowledge of the north did not extend farther than New York; and to go there, and be forever harassed with the frightful liability of being returned to slavery---with the certainty of being treated tenfold worse than before---the thought was truly a horrible one, and one which it was not easy to overcome. The case sometimes stood thus: At every gate through which we were to pass, we saw a watchman---at every ferry a guard---on every bridge a sentinel---and in every wood a patrol. We were hemmed in upon every side. Here were difficulties, real or imagined---the good to be sought, and the evil to be shunned. On the one hand, there stood slavery, a stern reality, glaring frightfully upon us,---its robes already crimsoned with the blood of millions, and even now feasting itself greedily upon our flesh. On the other hand, away back in the dim distance, under the flickering light of the north star, behind some craggy hill or snow-covered mountain, stood a doubtful freedom---half frozen---beckoning us to come and share its hospitality. This in itself was sometimes enough to stagger us; but when we permitted ourselves to survey the road, we were frequently appalled. Upon either side we saw grim death, assuming the most horrid shapes. Now it was starvation, causing us to eat our own flesh;---now we were contending with the waves, and were drowned;---now we were overtaken, and torn to pieces by the fangs of the terrible bloodhound. We were stung by scorpions, chased by wild beasts, bitten by snakes, and finally, after having nearly reached the desired spot,---after swimming rivers, encountering wild beasts, sleeping in the woods, suffering hunger and nakedness,---we were overtaken by our pursuers, and, in our resistance, we were shot dead upon the spot! I say, this picture sometimes appalled us, and made us

“rather bear those ills we had

Than fly to others, that we knew not of.”

In coming to a fixed determination to run away, we did more than Patrick Henry, when he resolved upon liberty or death. With us it was a doubtful liberty at most, and almost certain death if we failed. For my part, I should prefer death to hopeless bondage.