Frederick Douglass and Rhetorical Devices

Using the text select passages, cite page numbers, and write in a journal format. On the left side of the page write the text. On the right side explain or interpret Douglass’ purpose and/or intent for using the technique.

1. Chapters 1 & 2: Douglass’ tone toward the ambiguity of his birth and father. 3 Citations.
2. Chapter 2: Tone toward Severe’s death. 1 citation and tone statement.
3. Chapters 1-4: Tone toward various masters. 4 citations, 4 tones. Omit Severe and Gore
4. Chapter 4, paragraphs 3 and 4: Explain the metaphorical name of Gore. No left side entry other than the man’s name.
5. Chapter 6: Imagery depicting the transformation of Mrs. Auld. Explain the effect of the imagery.
6. Chapter 7: Douglass’ epiphany concerning the state of his life.
7. Chapter 9 & 10: Cite and explain the irony of the “Christian” slaveholder. Include the imagery of the horses’ treatment and the use of the verb, to break. Include Covey’s “pious” reputation.
8. Chapter 10: The irony of “holidays.”
9. Chapter 11: Tone toward the Underground Railroad. Tone toward self in the state of freedom.
“It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass.” (15)

This quote comes at the end of the first chapter. Because of his organization, our introduction to slavery parallels his. We begin the chapter innocent and naive, like him as a child, and when we witness the beating of the slave woman that he describes with vividness right before this quote, we also are “struck with [the] awful force” of the visual he gives us. He ushers the reader through “the blood-stained gate” at the end of this chapter and there is no going back. We are also now “doomed to be a witness” to the cruel acts of slavery that he was forced to witness.

Additionally, you have a lovely, inescapable metaphor here. Slavery becomes a “hell” that one enters by force. It is not a condition that some people just happened to be “born into” deservingly, as was thought at the time. They are born free and then ushered through the gates as soon as they become conscious of what is happening to them.