

Comparing the Self-Agency of Lane and Keckly, Teacher Version

Self-Agency refers to the ability of a person to make his or her own decisions and to take control of his/her own life. Both Lane and Keckly, although enslaved and legally under the control and domination of their masters, managed to set goals and successfully work toward achieving them; they made decisions and followed through on their decisions with action; they persevered and worked hard in the face of despair and enormous obstacles; and when things did not work out they were able to re-bound and to try again. Find examples of attitudes and behaviors that exemplify *self-agency* in the narrative excerpts.

Comparing Lane vs. Keckly	Lunsford Lane's Experience	Elizabeth Keckly's Experience
Cite two examples of self-agency in their lives and illustrate with quotations from the narratives.	<p>As a young boy Lane begins to plan/strategize: "I saw no prospect that my condition would ever be changed. Yet I used to plan in my mind from day to day, and from night to night, how I might be free."</p> <p>While a young boy he saw that by earning money he could eventually buy his freedom: "... the hope that then entered my mind of purchasing at some future time my freedom, made me long for money; and plans for money-making took the principal possession of my thoughts."</p> <p>Note: Any quotes that address decisions Lane made as a young slave to improve his circumstances, and working toward goals are examples of self-agency.</p> <p>As a young man his father introduced him to a way of flavoring tobacco and Lane capitalized on this idea. Any of the statements in the paragraph that opens with "After this I lit upon a plan which proved of great advantage to me..." that demonstrate decision making and taking action based on decision making and planning exemplify self-agency.</p> <p>After the death of his Master, Lane managed to ascertain from his mistress the privilege to "self-hire". Lane explains: "I hired my time of her,* for which I paid her a price varying from one hundred dollars to one hundred and twenty dollars per year."</p>	<p>Although a young slave without any authority she resists her master's proposal that Keckly's Mother be hired out to work to earn money: "The necessities of the family were so great, that it was proposed to place my mother out at service. The idea was shocking to me....I could not bear the thought of her going to work for strangers... I would rather work my fingers to the bone, bend over my sewing till the film of blindness gathered in my eyes; nay, even beg from street to street. I told Mr. Garland so, and he gave me permission to see what I could do."</p> <p>Her plan was successful and she achieved the goal of providing support for the family she worked for—indeed hers was the main income: "I was fortunate in obtaining work, and in a short time I had acquired something of a reputation as a seamstress and dress-maker. The best ladies in St. Louis were my patrons, and when my reputation was once established I never lacked for orders. With my needle I kept bread in the mouths of seventeen persons for two years and five months..."</p> <p>She effectively convinces her Master to allow her to purchase herself and</p>

	<p>He goes into a full time business as a “self-hired” slave and the quotes in the paragraph beginning with: "I commenced the manufacture of pipes and tobacco on an enlarged scale." that express decision making, planning and working toward goals exemplify self-agency.</p>	<p>her only son: "Some time afterwards he told me that he had reconsidered the question; that I had served his family faithfully; that I deserved my freedom, and that he would take \$1200 for myself and boy."</p> <p>Any statement that describes planning, goal setting and taking action toward achievement of a goal, as well as successfully rebounding from set-backs are examples that demonstrate self-agency.</p>
<p>How did each mask their self-agency? Support with quotes from the narrative.</p>	<p>Lane masked his self-agency by not appearing successful in his business activities. Both of these quotes address the necessity to mask one's self-agency as a business person: "During this time I had found it politic to go shabbily dressed, and to appear to be very poor, but to pay my mistress for my services promptly. I kept my money hid, never venturing to put out a penny, nor to let any body but my wife know that I was making any."</p> <p>And in the footnote, Lane states:</p> <p>"* It is contrary to the laws of the State, for a slave to have command of his own time in this way, but in Raleigh it is sometimes winked at...The master is subject to a fine. But generally...if the slave is orderly and appears to be making nothing, neither he nor the master is interfered with."</p>	<p>Keckly hides/masks her self-agency by presenting herself always to her Master and Mistress as a person who only has 'agency' with the permission/consent of her owners. When her master first denies her request to purchase herself, he tells her that she can walk across the river with her son and claim her freedom at any time in a slave state. Keckly responds by saying she will not exercise self-agency because of her legal status as a slave: "No, master, I do not wish to be free in such a manner. If such had been my wish, I should never have troubled you about obtaining your consent to my purchasing myself. I can cross the river any day, as you well know, and have frequently done so, but will never leave you in such a manner. By the laws of the land I am your slave--you are my master, and I will only be free by such means as the laws of the country provide." He expected this answer, and I knew that he was pleased. (Her master later consented to allow her to try to purchase herself and her son for \$1200).</p>