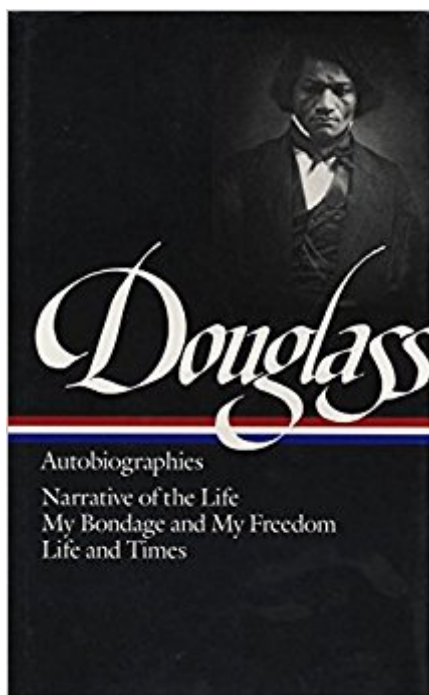


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# Frederick Douglass : Autobiographies : Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave / My Bondage And My Freedom / Life And Times Of Frederick Douglass (Library Of America)



## Synopsis

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. presents the only authoritative edition of all three autobiographies by the escaped slave who became a great American leader. Born a slave, Frederick Douglass educated himself, escaped, and made himself one of the greatest leaders in American history. Here in this Library of America volume are collected his three autobiographical narratives, now recognized as classics of both American history and American literature. Writing with the eloquence and fierce intelligence that made him a brilliantly effective spokesman for the abolition of slavery and equal rights, Douglass shapes an inspiring vision of self-realization in the face of monumental odds. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), published seven years after his escape, was written in part as a response to skeptics who refused to believe that so articulate an orator could ever have been a slave. A powerfully compressed account of the cruelty and oppression of the Maryland plantation culture into which Douglass was born, it brought him to the forefront of the anti-slavery movement and drew thousands, black and white, to the cause. In *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), written after he had established himself as a newspaper editor, Douglass expands the account of his slave years. With astonishing psychological penetration, he probes the painful ambiguities and subtly corrosive effects of black-white relations under slavery, then goes on to recount his determined resistance to segregation in the North. The book also incorporates extracts from Douglass's renowned speeches, including the searing "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, first published in 1881, records Douglass's efforts to keep alive the struggle for racial equality in the years following the Civil War. Now a socially and politically prominent figure, he looks back, with a mixture of pride and bitterness, on the triumphs and humiliations of a unique public career. John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison, and Harriet Beecher Stowe all feature prominently in this chronicle of a crucial epoch in American history. The revised edition of 1893, presented here, includes an account of his controversial diplomatic mission to Haiti. This volume contains a detailed chronology of Douglass's life, notes providing further background on the events and people mentioned, and an account of the textual history of each of the autobiographies.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This omnibus volume collects three noted autobiographical works by Douglass (1818-1895), the ex-slave who became one of the nation's most powerful advocates, on the stump and in print, for abolition and racial justice. His first work, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, published in 1845, seven years after his escape, set out the cruelties and hypocrisies of slavery, "thus putting it in the power of any who doubted, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of my story of being a fugitive slave." Ten years later, he increased the heat with *My Bondage and My Freedom* which, though it relies heavily on the earlier edition, also included samples of his speeches. "Not only is slavery on trial, but unfortunately, the enslaved people are also on trial," wrote Douglass regarding this book. After the Civil War, he continued to fight racial injustice through writings about slavery and his struggles during Reconstruction in *Life and Times*, which, though first published in 1881, is presented here in the updated 1893 edition. The volume includes a detailed and lengthy chronology of Douglass's life and work, as well as notes and an essay on the varieties of past Douglass texts contributed by Gates, who chairs the Afro-American studies department at Harvard. However, the book would have been more valuable with an introductory essay and a more extensive comparison of the three autobiographies. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Douglass (1818-95), a former slave, rose to become an abolitionist, writer, and orator. In this collection of his autobiographical writings, edited by Gates (humanities, Harvard Univ.), he gives an extensive overview of his life. The work includes *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845); *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855); and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881). In *Narrative*, Douglass comments on his birth, his parentage, his two masters,

and the brutality of slavery he witnessed. In *Bondage*, he reflects on his childhood, life on the plantation, and his runaway plot. *Life and Times* concludes the trilogy: it covers his early life as a slave, his escape from bondage, and his connection with the antislavery movement. This one volume containing Douglass's seminal works is highly recommended for black history collections.-  
Ann Burns, "Library Journal" Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

President Lincoln regarded Douglass as "one of the most meritorious men, if not the most meritorious man, in the United States". Douglass thought it grossly unfair that black Union troops were getting paid less than whites. He went to the White House and managed to meet Lincoln in private to present his argument. Lincoln agreed and told Douglass that he would sign any executive order and any other documents necessary to assure that it would be done. They became friends and, to my knowledge, he was the first black man to be invited to the White House for a social engagement. He attended the evening celebration at the White House following Lincoln's second inaugural. Douglass spent his first 20 years of life as a slave and was totally self-educated. He purchased his freedom (with some financial assistance) and wrote two best selling autobiographies before the age of 20. Thereafter, he edited his own newspaper and gave brilliant orations in the days when great orators were famous. Douglass's home overlooking Washington is now an historic landmark open to the public. As an old man he sat in his rocker on the front porch and greeted an endless string of young black men asking him how they could further the civil rights movement. His only advice was to "agitate", "agitate" and "agitate". As a kid I recollect walking around with an "I Like Ike" sign. Winston Churchill was around then and was occasionally interviewed. Eleanor Roosevelt was a driving force in Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign. We kids thought her voice was very strange. The only name for niggers was niggers, who lagged closely behind Jews and Catholics in the society from which I came. It's amazingly wonderful how much society has changed during my own lifetime. Diversity is America. But it seems to me that 20th century historians writing about the civil rights movement are negligent, at best, by marginalizing, and even overlooking, the sublime accomplishments of Frederick Douglass, the man voted by President Lincoln as the most meritorious man in the United States.

This book should be required reading for all schools, for all people. This is one of the most moving and mentally, spiritually, and emotionally impacting books that I have ever read. Frederick Douglass has the ability to communicate the experiences of him and other enslaved people that put you right in the time and place. He causes you to feel the very breath of the people, know the depth of their

pain and humiliation, and the utter injustice and indignity of slavery. His mastery of the English language is beyond the ordinary, and in itself is a clear indication of the profundity of the lies of slavery and racism, lies Douglass refused to allow to define him.

I am almost finish with this book and I must say that it is gripping! The harshness that Frederick Douglass was witness to, the struggle to be recognized as a man, to get an education. This is a must read if you would like to learn more about America's treatment of slaves and blacks in general. As an American veteran, this kind of history means so much to me. I am also doing lots of reading about the origins of all people who came to this country and to broaden your horizon I would invite you to do the same.

.. . if I've never read this book, I always have the so called black race in my thoughts for they suffered the same pain we so called Mexicans did.. Fred Douglas inspires to self educate yourselves in every way according to reality, because that's what will help us survive through kingdoms that don't belong to us..

Read Frederick Douglass instead of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Though white abolitionists were clearly on the right side and were doing better than most Southerners and non-abolitionists, they were still hella racist. Also, read the better, non-caricatured version of Sojourner Truth's famous "Ain't I A Woman?" Speech. <http://pedagogy.dukejournals.org/content/10/3/511.full.pdf+html>

My husband is a Frederick Douglass fan and loves this item! It includes a multitude of Douglass' speeches and writings. My husband had two other titles that he was to read ahead of this one. He wanted to drop those two and begin reading this immediately! ...And the title was in great shape!

Thank you!

Brilliant account of the life and times of Douglas

You get to hear the first hand accounts of one of the greatest Americans to ever live--not an exaggeration! You can critique about content, style, or whatever--but to me the story of slave to his zenith is one of the most inspiring stories ever and exactly what America is all about.

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