

# The Life of Olaudah Equiano (Dover Thrift Editions: Black History)

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Slave narratives are powerful indictments of the horrors of slavery and oppression, invaluable not only for the stories they tell but also for the consistently high quality of their literary style. This book by Olaudah Equiano is one such story. A compelling account that has gripped and fascinated readers since its original London publication in 1789, the narrative describes Equiano's formidable journey from captivity to freedom and literacy. Charting a passage that takes him from life as an Igbo prince in what is now eastern Nigeria to the New World, Equiano begins with a description of his native land that includes particulars of the dress, agriculture, industry, commerce, rituals, superstitions, and religious ceremonies of his country. In stark and poignant detail he gives a compelling account of his kidnapping and his ordeal aboard the slave ship, his service in the French and Indian wars, as well as many other of his vicissitudes and adventures until he finally settles in England, where he becomes a key figure in the British abolitionist movement. Skillfully written with a wealth of gripping detail, this volume powerfully illustrates the nature of the black experience in slavery, making it essential reading for students of African-American history and anyone interested in the struggle for equal rights and human dignity.

Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745 - 31 March 1797), known in his lifetime as Gustavus Vassa, was a prominent African in London, a freed slave who supported the British movement to end the slave trade. His autobiography, published in 1789, helped in the creation of the Slave Trade Act 1807 which ended the African trade for Britain and its colonies. Equiano knew that one of the most powerful arguments against slavery was his own life story. He published his autobiography in 1789: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*. It became a bestseller and was translated into many languages. The book began with a petition addressed to Parliament and ended with his antislavery letter to the Queen. The tens of thousands of people who read Equiano's book, or heard him speak, started to see slavery through the eyes of a former enslaved African. It was a very important book that made a vital contribution to the abolitionists' cause.

#### Other Books

Voices against slavery, Anthony Benezet, Elizabeth Heyrick, Baroness Cox, David Livingstone, Granville Sharp, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, Olaudah Equiano, Samuel Sharpe, William Wilberforce.

Equiano's Travels, Heinemann, 1996. EQUIANO, O., *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, Dover Publications, 1999. EVERETT, S., *History of Slavery*, Bison Books, 1978. HEYRICK, J.D., Harriet Beecher ..."