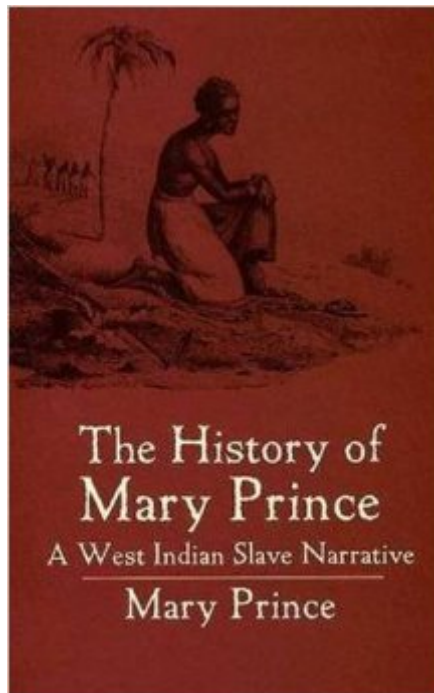


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The History Of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative (African American)



Synopsis

Born in Bermuda to a house slave in 1788, Mary Prince suffered the first of many soul-shattering experiences in her life when she was separated from her parents and siblings at the age of twelve. Subjected to bodily and sexual abuse by subsequent masters, she was bought and sold several times before she was ultimately freed. The first black woman to break the bonds of slavery in the British colonies and publish a record of her experiences, Prince vividly recalls her life in the West Indies, her rebellion against physical and psychological degradation, and her eventual escape in 1828 in England. Her straightforward, often poetic account of immense anguish, separation from her husband, and struggle for freedom inflamed public opinion during a period when stormy debates on abolition were common in both the United States and England. This edition also includes a substantial supplement by Thomas Pringle, the original editor, as well as another brief slave account: "The Narrative of Asa-Asa, a Captured African." Essential reading for students of African-American studies, Mary Prince's classic account of determination and endurance aids in filling the many gaps in black women's history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an excellent memoir, albeit painful to read in certain parts. This is a must-read for history buffs--particularly those interested in the Caribbean and the system of slavery in the British colonies.

Mary Prince dictated her history to a white woman in England, where she finally claimed her

freedom after a life of horrendous abuse under several masters. Her narration is part of an anti-slavery pamphlet that contains other fascinating documents as well: a letter from her last master viciously defaming her character and a presentation of evidence to refute this calumny by Thomas Pringle, Secretary of Britain's Anti-Slavery Society. Among other events, Mary's history includes daily beatings by sadistic masters who, while entrusting her with considerable responsibility, punished the tiniest fault with insane cruelty. It describes her ten-year stint working long hours in the salt ponds of Turk's Island, labor that broke her health. It shows her growing attraction to religion and her attempts to receive spiritual instruction. I found this book compelling on two levels: as a detailed personal account of the appalling oppression of black slaves in the West Indies - and as a look at the compassionate work of anti-slavery activists. Those who opposed slavery had to have their wits about them, for the slave owners were greatly debased by their unholy power over other humans and would stoop to any chicanery to defend their position. Mary Prince's history triggered a lawsuit and countersuit when it was published in 1831. It was instantly in great demand by the public and was of great value to the Anti-Slavery Society in their campaign against the slave trade. I recommend this book both as a classic of Black history and an unforgettable story.

I'm reading this with my 12-year old daughter, and we both are really enjoying it -- if "enjoying" can be applied to the context of witnessing through literature the torture and enslavement of human beings as their oppressors smugly walk around with absolutely no accountability for their heinous deeds. My daughter chose to read this book in her free time today. It is very engrossing. The first part of this book is about the life of Mary Price. The second is what happens when an abolitionist in England champions her cause, and how returning home as a free woman to her husband is made impossible by her vindictive "master." The final section is the firsthand account of a boy in Africa kidnapped into slavery and what happens to him after his ship is blown to England instead of to his intended destination. I highly recommend this book in general. I would also recommend it other parents wanting to help educate their middle schooler about the history of the enslavement of African peoples by the West. The stories are too disturbing for elementary school children, and the vocabulary would be too advanced.

Wow. This is the first female slave narrative published in the UK. I am so glad that God gifted Mary with such a sharp mind and equal courage. She is truly a heroine for all oppressed people. This book reveals the workings of the slave trade, the misery of slaves, and the strategies some of them were able to use to break free. These types of narratives should be required reading for education

systems around the world. This particular edition is printed in a nice size, with clear, readable text, which makes the book much more approachable.

A very touching story about a female slave. I felt her pain when she described the abuse she received and the hardships she faced. I don't know why English teachers and professors don't recommend it more.

This book will interest anyone who has read *Belle*, which explores in some depth the condition of slavery in the eighteenth century. I gave this book four stars because it not only informed but caused considerable thought about the institution of slavery.

This book is a great primary source read that gives an in-depth image of the life of Mary Prince. From the transporting between colonies and England, to the violence endured, and being passed from family to family - Mary Prince remains hopeful of her situation and also for her future as a wife. The book directly engages the reader and provides not only information about the life of a Black female slave, but also humanizes Mary as a woman rather than just a slave as many accounts and even history tends to classify them as.

Books of this nature tend to place slavery in a light that is often unseen or unheard of. That of which comes directly from the enslaved. I highly recommend this book.

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