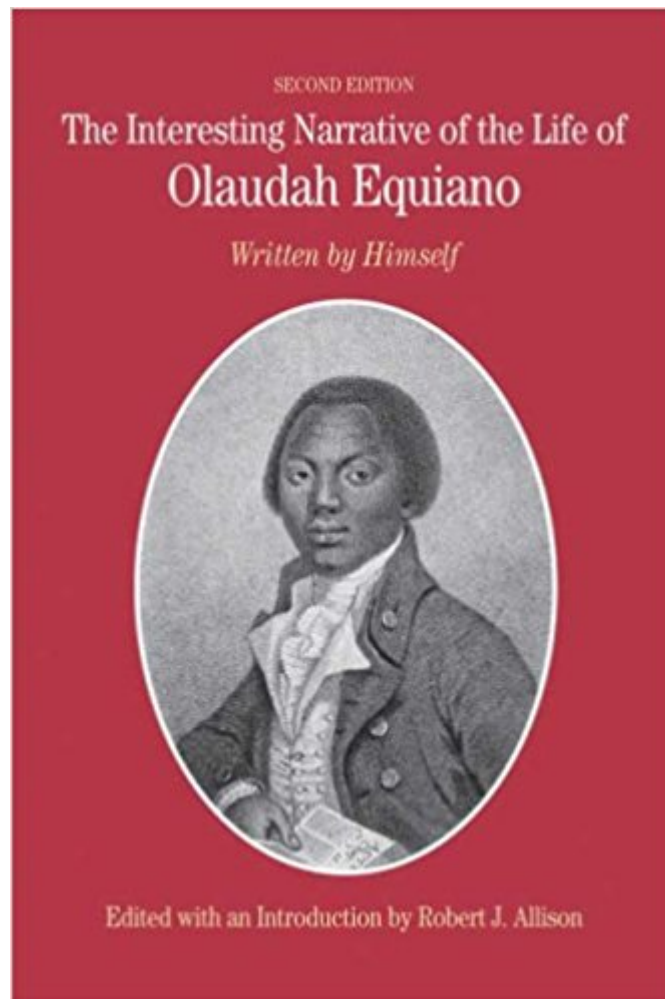


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# The Interesting Narrative Of The Life Of Olaudah Equiano: Written By Himself



## Synopsis

Widely admired for its vivid accounts of the slave trade, Olaudah Equiano's autobiography -- the first slave narrative to attract a significant readership -- reveals many aspects of the eighteenth-century Western world through the experiences of one individual. The second edition reproduces the original London printing, supervised by Equiano in 1789. Robert J. Allison's introduction, which places Equiano's narrative in the context of the Atlantic slave trade, has been revised and updated to reflect the heated controversy surrounding Equiano's birthplace, as well as the latest scholarship on Atlantic history and the history of slavery. Improved pedagogical features include contemporary illustrations with expanded captions and a map showing Equiano's travels in greater detail. Helpful footnotes provide guidance throughout the eighteenth-century text, and a chronology and an up-to-date bibliography aid students in their study of this thought-provoking narrative.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Prospective buyers of Mr. Allison's edition of Equiano's autobiography should be advised that although Mr. Allison says that his "edition follows the first American printing . . . (New York, 1791)" and that "the only significant changes . . . are the insertion of paragraph breaks and notes to the text," Mr. Allison does not warn the reader that he's silently combined parts of various editions of the autobiography to form a book Equiano himself never published. For example, if you compare the next-to-the-last paragraph (p. 195), in which Equiano mentions his marriage, to the passage on page 187, where he says his hand is free, you might get the impression that he's saying he's available for adultery or bigamy. But the fault lies not in Equiano, who changed the earlier passage

after he added the paragraph about his marriage in 1792. What Mr. Allison gives us is his text, not Equiano's. And he might have mentioned that the New York edition was published without Equiano's knowledge or permission. Readers should also not assume that all "facts" given are true. For example, on page 21, Gronniosaw's book was published in 1772 (not 1770), Marrant's in 1785 (not 1790), and Equiano died on 31 March 1797 (not in April).

Allison's combining passages from different editions deserves some criticism. But reviewers have overreacted & will dissuade some readers from experiencing this classic work. As a corrective, here's my review of the Dover Thrift Edition. Readers beware: here lies real adventure. Dover's Equiano has little scholarly apparatus, and doesn't really address recent assertions that he may not have been born in Nigeria. (Cf. V. Carretta, "Equiano the African," & debates in the journal "Slavery & Abolition.") But it presents the basic text at the lowest price, making a great work available to cash-strapped students. Even apart from his riveting descriptions of 18C slavery, OE saw more of the world than almost all other Africans and indeed most people up to his time, successfully negotiating countless challenging cross-cultural encounters. OE offers perceptive ethnographies of Igbo, Caribbean, North American, British and Miskitu Indian societies, as well as a moving conversion narrative in the classic Augustinian tradition of autobiography. This work offers endless riches for those studying many aspects of the modern world. Finally, it documents his later career as a leading abolitionist, a movement strongly influenced by this foundational text. Truly a book that made history.

I wanted to know about Olaudah Equiano after seeing the film 'Amazing Grace' ... in the film Mr. Equiano had written a book which looked like a hit, and I wondered if it was still around. Thanks for Kindle and , I found it, no problem ! There's no excuse for Western Slavery; he should never have been kidnapped and taken from his home, along with his sister. He never saw her again (except for once after the kidnapping), nor his parents ever again. He was extremely bright, learned English, learned how to write, how to be a sailor and worked his way into the trust of the company or men who owned him ... and was considered indispensable. He was keen enough to learn about how to turn a profit and then purchase his freedom, and to put out his story, which we enjoy today. I did have a hard time believing the episode with sea-horses, but then I'm no sailor and wouldn't know how they act in a herd (or a school?). There was no mention of meeting William Wilberforce, but he was introduced to the Christian religion and became one. Interesting, Two thumbs up. Richard J. Bennett

This is a must read, especially if you are Caucasian. Born in Louisiana, my family members live all over the state (having migrated down from Boston, through Virginia, the Carolina's, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. I have ancestry that not only owned and operated cotton plantations dating way back, but have traced back to find the first family on my fathers side to have owned and operated schooners and sailed them from Liverpool to Boston and Baltimore. Looking further into the sailing ships of the day and the most common "cargo" shipping to and from these and surrounding ports, brings Olaudah's story much more close to home. For me, it is heartwrenching to say the very least. The stories uncovered of my family recollections and mindframes are astonishing and in many ways appalling, to say the very least. If you find yourself not to have much of an opinion or knowledge of America's true beginning and who suffered most, read this book. Then, pick a number with more than two commas, and multiply Olaudah's story by that number (keeping in mind that as horrifying as many of the circumstances were in Olaudah's narrative, that his was unique and much less horrifying than the circumstances and ultimate outcome of the lives of most having come to America via sailing ships such as these in the early days).

I know I'll be struck down for saying so as an African scholar, but this book is as boring as anything I have ever read. It is of great use as a primary source, but is a tough go for every the hardest of academics.

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