



Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Dover Thrift Editions)

By Harriet Jacobs

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The true story of an individual's struggle for self-identity, self-preservation, and freedom, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* remains among the few extant slave narratives written by a woman. This autobiographical account chronicles the remarkable odyssey of Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897) whose dauntless spirit and faith carried her from a life of servitude and degradation in North Carolina to liberty and reunion with her children in the North.

Written and published in 1861 after Jacobs' harrowing escape from a vile and predatory master, the memoir delivers a powerful and unflinching portrayal of the abuses and hypocrisy of the master-slave relationship. Jacobs writes frankly of the horrors she suffered as a slave, her eventual escape after several unsuccessful attempts, and her seven years in self-imposed exile, hiding in a coffin-like "garret" attached to her grandmother's porch.

A rare firsthand account of a courageous woman's determination and endurance, this inspirational story also represents a valuable historical record of the continuing battle for freedom and the preservation of family.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Published in 1861, this was one of the first personal narratives by a slave and one of the few written by a woman. Jacobs (1813-97) was a slave in North Carolina and suffered terribly, along with her family, at the hands of a ruthless owner. She made several failed attempts to escape before successfully making her way North, though it took years of hiding and slow progress. Eventually, she was reunited with her children. For all biography and history collections.

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Review

"A viable alternative to male slave narratives. The specific problems faced by female slaves are clearly portrayed."--Ray Doyle, *West Chester Univ.*

"My personal favorite...Jacobs confronts the contradictions inherent in the category 'the black woman writer.' By engaging these issues and negotiating a course through them, she anticipates the literary and ideological position of subsequent generations of black women writers."--Jean Fagan Yellin, *The Washington Post Book World*

"A corrective to those who have identified the slave narrative primarily as a male genre....This particular edition, with its introduction by Valerie Smith, sheds new light on the choices its heroine Linda Brent makes."--*The Women's Review of Books*

From the Inside Flap

This Modern Library Paperback Classics edition combines the two most important African American slave narratives into one volume.

Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, first published in 1845, is an enlightening and incendiary text. Born into slavery, Douglass became the preeminent spokesman for his people during his life; his narrative is an unparalleled account of the dehumanizing effects of slavery and Douglass's own triumph over it. Like Douglass, Harriet Jacobs was born into slavery, and in 1861 she published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, now recognized as the most comprehensive antebellum slave narrative written by a woman. Jacobs's account broke the silence on the exploitation of African American female slaves, and it remains crucial reading. These narratives illuminate and inform each other. This edition includes an incisive Introduction by Kwame Anthony Appiah and extensive annotations.

"From the Trade Paperback edition.

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