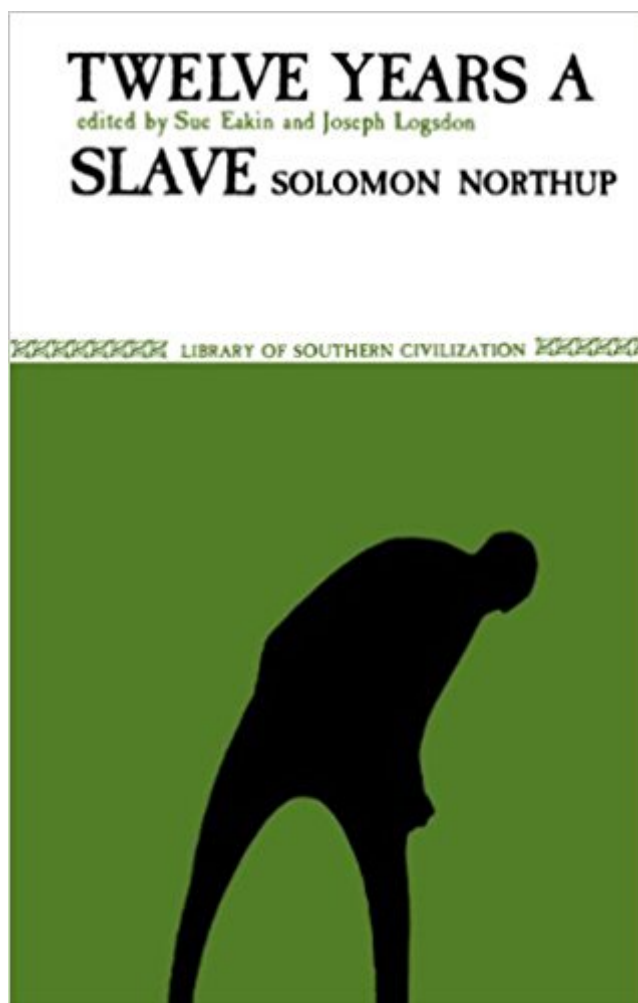


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Twelve Years A Slave (Library Of Southern Civilization)



Synopsis

Solomon Northup was a free man, the son of an emancipated Negro Slave. Until the spring of 1841 he lived a simple, uneventful life with his wife and three children in Upstate New York. Then, suddenly, he fell victim to a series of bizarre events that make this one of the most amazing autobiographies ever written. Northup accepted an offer from two strangers in Saratoga, New York, to catch up with their traveling circus and play in its band. But when the chase ended, Northup had been drugged, beaten, and sold to a slave trader in Washington, D.C. Subsequently, he was shipped to New Orleans, where he was purchased by a planter in the Red River region of Louisiana. For the next twelve years Northup lived as a chattel slave under several masters. He might well have died a slave, except for another set of bizarre circumstances which enabled him to get word to his family and finally regain his freedom. These elements alone -- the kidnapping, enslavement, and rescue -- are sufficient for a sensational story. But Northup provides more. He was a shrewd observer of people and events. His memory was remarkable. He described cultivation of cotton and sugar in the Deep South. He detailed the daily routine and general life of the Negro slave. Indeed, he vividly portrayed the world of slavery -- from the underside. Originally published in 1853, Northup's autobiography is regarded as one of the best accounts of American Negro slavery ever written by a slave. It is reprinted in full here for the first time, as the initial volume in The Library of Southern Civilization. Northup's account has been carefully checked by the editors and has been found to be remarkably accurate. To his own narrative of a long and tragic adventure, Professors Eakin and Logsdon have added significant new details about Northup and the plantation country where he spent most of his time as a slave. Heretofore unknown information about the capture and trial of Northup's kidnappers has been included, adding still another fascinating episode to an already astounding story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Twelve Years a Slave should be must reading for every young Southerner. Only in accounts such as this can they understand the true nature of the curse which, more than a hundred years later, still hangs like a millstone around the neck of the South, hampering final emancipation for white and black alike." -- Frank G. Slaughter, Florida Historical Quarterly
"A moving, vital testament to one of slavery's 'many thousand gone' who retained his humanity in the bowels of degradation. It is also a chilling insight into the 'peculiar institution.' " -- Ernest Dunbar, Saturday Review

This story of the abduction of a free Negro adult from the North and his enslavement in the South--provides a sensational element which cannot be matched in any of the dozens of narratives written by former slaves. 'Think of it: For thirty years a man, wit all man's hopes, fears and aspirations--with a wife and children to call him by the endearing names of husband and father--with a home, humble it may be, but still a home...then for twelve years a thing, a chattel personal, classed with mules and horses....Oh! it is horrible. It chills the blood to think that such are.'

As slave stories go, this one is, in my view, without peer. Northup's s captivating tale -- which has gained attention because of the movie that shares the book's title -- is told in exacting detail with an easy prose. He sets the stage masterfully, describing people and places before proceeding into the narrative. Unlike works of fiction, this book is so compelling because, by all accounts, it is true. There is no polemical axe to grind, as with Uncle Tom (a novel at one point wryly referenced by Northup). Here you see both the brutality of slavery and the moments of kindness by slaves and even some slave owners. Solomon tells the story with clarity and intelligence. The free versions on other sites I found were pretty poorly formatted, so spending a dollar for a polished version on is worthwhile, but this one is not the best of them. Granted, the book is formatted adequately, and any typographical errors in this version seem to be simple reproductions of the original. However, the supporting material is a letdown. I read the version that includes the introduction by novelist Dolen Perkins-Valdez. That introduction is borderline insulting, as it makes only a weak attempt to

separate accounts with fictional elements like *Roots* from an authentic account like this one. Worse still, Perkins-Valdez can't resist indulging in repeatedly referencing her own recently released slave novel, even going so far as to quote herself. There are almost no historical elements to this version beyond the main book -- no mention of Northrup after the book, no mention of the writer who helped him pen the book, nothing. There is more information on the writer of the introduction than there is the author. One other oddity worth mentioning: the original book's preface -- the one done by the man who helped Northrup write the book -- has been curiously excised from this version too. That makes this version something less than complete. For those looking for a better version, you might consider *Twelve Years a Slave - Enhanced Edition* by Dr. Sue Eakin Based on a Lifetime Project. New Info, Images, Maps, which contains a robust amount of supporting material and, better still, is right now the same cost as this version.

Growing up in the North, I had always found it hard to imagine that slavery not only existed in this country, but flourished. Through the years, I have read many an autobiography or history book concerning slavery and thought I knew it all. And yet I was blind. Until I read Solomon Northrup's "12 Years a Slave." Where has this book been? It is a masterpiece of history, of one man, one free man's life. A true picture of 'The Old South'. Mr. Northrup was a free black man with a beautiful wife and two daughters living in Saratoga, NY. He was lured from his home by slave traders who specialized in the awful practice of kidnapping free black citizens and selling them into slavery. Torn from his home and family, Mr. Northrup endured the worst that can happen to a human being, and still live. And yet, he remained fair and honest, never stooping to the level some of his white masters did. I am not going to rewrite the book in this review because I recommend reading it for yourself. Slavery was and is a vile institution. Solomon Northrup is my new inspiration. This book will shock you. But you will be the better for having read it. My highest of fives.

The book itself is great -- absolutely wonderful. But I see that all sorts of folks have rushed it into print in the last month or two, to cash in on the film (which is also great) - This edition is quite cheap and shabby; it doesn't even include page numbers. I'd recommend one of the other editions (although some of them are probably also shabby... but at least look for one from a reputable publisher. And really: the book itself should be considered a classic. It's beautifully written, and powerful in its descriptions and insights.

I bought this after watching the movie. I am a college student that works full time, so I usually don't

have much time for reading things that aren't school related. I finally got around to finishing this. This is an extremely difficult book to read. What this man went through was astoundingly awful. It is an important narrative though. If you want to understand southern culture as it is today, if you want to get a deeper understanding of race relations in America, or if you just want to read a good book, I highly recommend it. You get a real picture of what institutional (versus man to man) racism is. You will also understand how far our country has come from it. If one black man can triumph over adversity in that day, all of them certainly can now. A history professor once told me that it's not enough to just say that the south was wrong, you have to understand why they thought like they did. This will definitely shed some dark light on the subject.

I saw the movie, but the movie only stole ideas from this book and created it's own "honey coated" story - that is, compared to the book. One can only marvel at the ability of man to cope with the most extreme situations, and then marvel even more at the cruelty that man is capable of. Slavery has been around since the beginning of time, I guess, and the perpetrators of this evil even used the Bible as a means to justify it's use, but a person with any conscience can only abhor it's use, as the author demonstrates in his own words that people become inured to violence that is around them on a daily basis, and that this violence eventually corrupts an entire society. A lesson that has been learned, and then forgotten, way too many times throughout the history of man.

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