



Narrative of William W. Brown, an American Slave: Written by Himself (Docsouth Books)

William Wells Brown

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By 1849, the *Narrative of William W. Brown* was in its fourth edition, having sold over 8,000 copies in less than eighteen months and making it one of the fastest-selling antislavery tracts of its time. The book's popularity can be attributed both to the strong voice of its author and Brown's notoriety as an abolitionist speaker. The son of a slave and a white man, Brown recounts his years in servitude, his cruel masters, and the brutal whippings he and those around him received. He provides a detailed description of his failed attempt to escape with his mother; after their capture, they were sold to new masters. A subsequent escape attempt succeeds. He is taken in by a kind Quaker, Wells Brown, whose name he adopts in gratitude. Shortly thereafter, Brown crosses the Canadian border. Brown's *Narrative* includes stories of fighting devious slave traders and bounty hunters, various antislavery poems, articles and stories (written by him and others), newspaper clippings, reward posters, and slave sale announcements.

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