



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave *Frederick Douglass (1818 – 1895)*

Read by:	Jeanette Ferguson	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	4 hours	Catalog:	DB-1154
Language:	English	UPC:	0683422134692
Style:	Solo	MSLP:	\$9.99
Genre:	Biography & Autobiography		

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass is the first and most popular of three memoirs Frederick Douglass wrote during his life. Published in 1845, it was among the first accounts written by slaves about their experience and was an influential work in stimulating the abolitionist movement prior to the civil war. The eleven chapters break into four sections. The first (1-4) deals with his earliest years and tells of his separation from his mother and the cruel treatment of slaves. The second (5-7) recounts his childhood struggles to learn to read and write and his growing awareness of the possibility of freedom. The third (8-9) chronicles his movements as a piece of property through numerous masters during his youth. In the last chapters (10-11) he

beats a cruel master in a brawl, serves 2 years in prison for attempted escape, becomes an apprenticed tradesman, becomes engaged to a free black woman, and finally escapes to the north. The book was a quick success, selling 5,000 copies in the first few months and 30,000 by 1860. Ironically, the awareness it generated forced him to flee to England and Ireland to avoid being recaptured in the U.S., as prevailing laws required. It was a revelation to much of the public that a former slave could be so literate and educated. Margaret Fuller, a noted critic and reviewer, wrote “we have never read [a narrative] more simple, true, coherent, and warm with genuine feeling.” That assessment stands to this day.

Frederick Douglass (c. February 1818 – February 20, 1895) began life as a slave and escaped bondage to become an orator, writer, and social reformer who became a national leader of the abolitionist movement. He was noted for his dazzling oratorical skills and insightful antislavery writings. He was the first articulate, literate, and educated Afro-American many whites had ever met. Shortly after publication of his *Narrative* he traveled to Ireland and England to avoid recapture, and wrote eloquently of the revelation of being treated “not as a color, but as man”. During his trip he became legally free when supporters raised the funds to purchase his freedom from owner Thomas Auld. After his return to the United States he was active as a speaker and publisher of abolitionist journals. His social activism was not limited to abolition; he was a dedicated supporter of women’s suffrage and spoke eloquently in favor of women’s suffrage at the first women’s rights convention in 1848. He conferred with President Lincoln on the treatment of black soldiers and after the war with President Johnson on black suffrage. He was the keynote speaker at the dedication of the Emancipation Memorial in Lincoln Park in 1973. His first marriage to free black woman Anna lasted 44 years and bore 5 children. After her death he provoked controversy when he married a white suffragist in 1884, to which he responded that his first marriage was to a person the color of his mother and his second to a woman the color of his father. Cedar Hill, his home in the Anacostia section of Washington, is a National Historic Site.