

Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl: Black Illustrated Classics (Bonus Free Audiobook)

Harriet Ann Jacobs



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Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is an autobiography by a young mother and fugitive slave published in 1861 by L. Maria Child, who edited the book for its author, Harriet Ann Jacobs. Jacobs used the pseudonym Linda Brent. The book documents Jacobs' life as a slave and how she gained freedom for herself and for her children. Jacobs contributed to the genre of slave narrative by using the techniques of sentimental novels "to address race and gender issues." She explores the struggles and sexual abuse that female slaves faced on plantations as well as their efforts to practice motherhood and protect their children when their children might be sold away. Jacob's book is addressed to white women in the North who do not fully comprehend the evils of slavery. She makes direct appeals to their humanity to expand their knowledge and influence their thoughts about slavery as an institution. Jacobs began composing Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl after her escape to New York, while living and working at Idlewild, the Hudson River home of writer and publisher Nathaniel Parker Willis. Portions of her journals were published in serial form in the New-York Tribune, owned and edited by Horace Greeley. Jacobs' reports of sexual abuse were deemed too shocking for the average newspaper reader of the day, and publication ceased before the completion of the narrative. Boston publishing house Phillips and Samson agreed to print the work in book form if Jacobs could convince Willis or abolitionist author Harriet Beecher Stowe to provide a preface. She refused to ask Willis for help and Stowe never responded to her request. The Phillips and Samson company closed. Jacobs eventually signed an agreement with the Thayer & Eldridge publishing house, and they requested a preface by abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, who agreed. Child also edited the book, and the company introduced her to Jacobs. The two women remained in contact for much of their remaining lives. Thayer & Eldridge, however, declared bankruptcy before the narrative could be published.

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