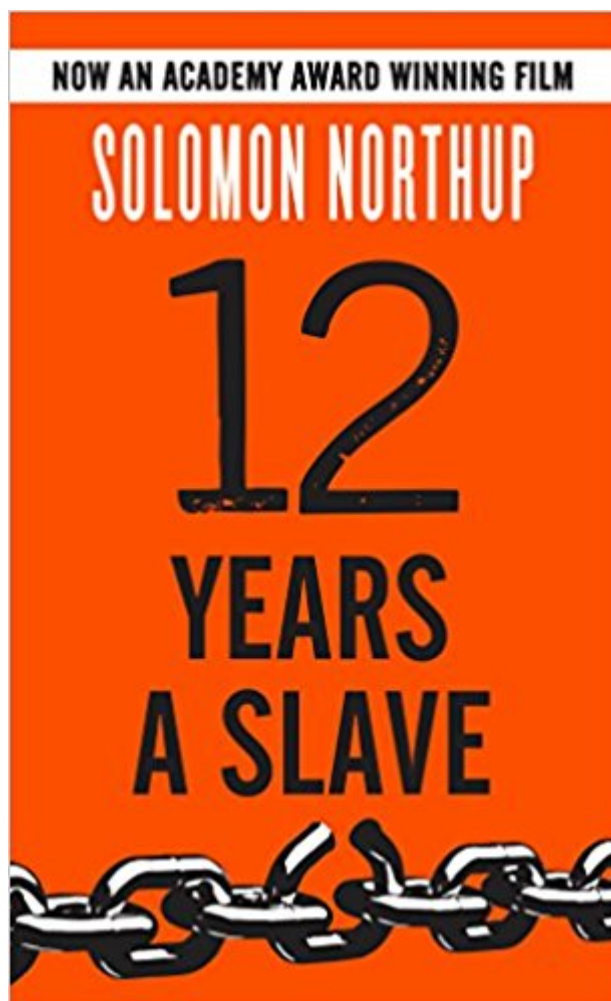


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12 Years A Slave



Synopsis

This unforgettable memoir was the basis for the Academy Award-winning film 12 Years a Slave. This is the true story of Solomon Northup, who was born and raised as a freeman in New York. He lived the American dream, with a house and a loving family - a wife and two kids. Then one day he was drugged, kidnapped, and sold into slavery in the deep south. These are the true accounts of his twelve hard years as a slave - many believe this memoir is even more graphic and disturbing than the film. His extraordinary journey proves the resiliency of hope and the human spirit despite the most grueling and formidable of circumstances.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A moving, vital testament." --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.' --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

As slave stories go, this one is, in my view, without peer. Northrup'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 Northrup). 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 *12 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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