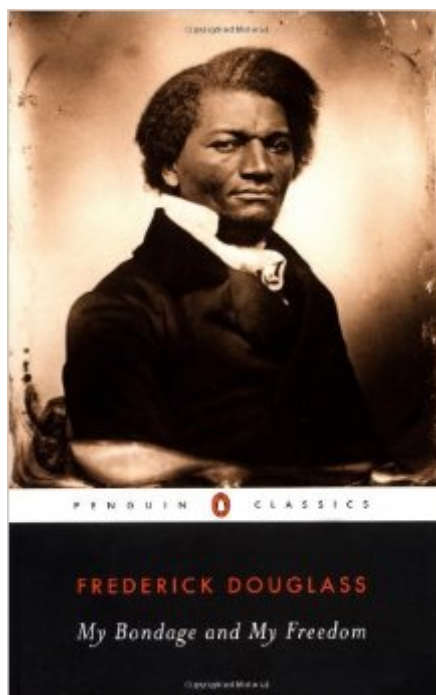


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# My Bondage And My Freedom (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Ex-slave Frederick Douglass's second autobiography-written after ten years of reflection following his legal emancipation in 1846 and his break with his mentor William Lloyd Garrison-catapulted Douglass into the international spotlight as the foremost spokesman for American blacks, both freed and slave. Written during his celebrated career as a speaker and newspaper editor, *My Bondage and My Freedom* reveals the author of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) grown more mature, forceful, analytical, and complex with a deepened commitment to the fight for equal rights and liberties. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by John David Smith"

## Book Information

Series: Penguin Classics

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; New Ed edition (February 4, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140439188

ISBN-13: 978-0140439182

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.7 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviewsÂ (50 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #56,126 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 inÂ Books > History > World > Slavery & Emancipation #33 inÂ Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Abolition #67 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Civil War

## Customer Reviews

I have to be honest, I never knew that Frederick Douglass published another volume of his autobiography. I foolishly believed that *A Narrative in the Life of Frederick Douglass* was his only book regarding his life as a slave and his life as a free man. I was so wrong. Sometimes I wonder how many other people still believe as I once did...*My Bondage and My Freedom* is an exceptional example of auto-biographical writing. Douglass' mastery of the English language is superb! In reading his story and the way he's able to describe his past as a young boy, raised by his grandmother and then sent to begin working, with little knowledge beforehand that he was in fact a slave was so eye-opening. I had no idea that some children, raised during this time were actually allowed to be child for a few precious years before they were introduced to the vile world of slavery. This book give such a detailed account of a man's struggle to unleash the genius kept

constrained by the world into which he was born and raised, is just amazing. I'm still astounded by him even though it's been some time since I finished the book. While a majority of the book describes his life as a young boy and slave (told in the *My Bondage* section), the rest of the book (*My Freedom*) tells of his life after he escaped from slavery, his experiences given lectures against slavery, his time abroad in other countries where he was treated as a human being and not as a piece of property and then of his struggles to create and manage his own newspaper once he returns to the United States. The appendix is also a treasure, as it reprints many of his speeches and lectures on the injustice against humanity that was the slavery system.

Historians often call the Civil War the first modern war, a precursor to the great battlefield slaughterhouses of the twentieth century. Frederick Douglass shows that America was also first to invent the totalitarian police state. It's hard to believe Stalin didn't have *MY BONDAGE AND MY FREEDOM* prominently positioned on his bookshelf for frequent consultation because the Soviet system of oppression had so much in common with the system of oppression in the American South. The only significant difference was that, in the Soviet system, absolute power was vested in Stalin; in the American system, absolute power was vested in each slavemaster. Each slavemaster was, in essence, a little Stalin, with life and death power over his slave property. The slave system rigorously withheld news and information from slaves. A slave often would not know his father or even his own date of birth. He could not lawfully learn to read. He could not travel without written authorization. He could not associate freely with other slaves. He could not safely trust anyone or confide his private thoughts to anyone because planted informers were so numerous. Slaves had to avoid even certain thoughts for fear the slavemaster would see in their facial expressions what was in their minds. Disguised slave catchers would sometimes help and encourage a slave to escape, only to capture him for the reward. The slavemaster demanded and enforced absolute, immediate, and unquestioned subservience through fear, a liberal use of the lash and the constant threat of transferring a recalcitrant slave to an even harsher labor camp in the deep South. Yet *MY BONDAGE AND MY FREEDOM* is by no means a depressing book, thanks to Douglass' irrepressible courage, wit, spirit and good luck when he most needed it.

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