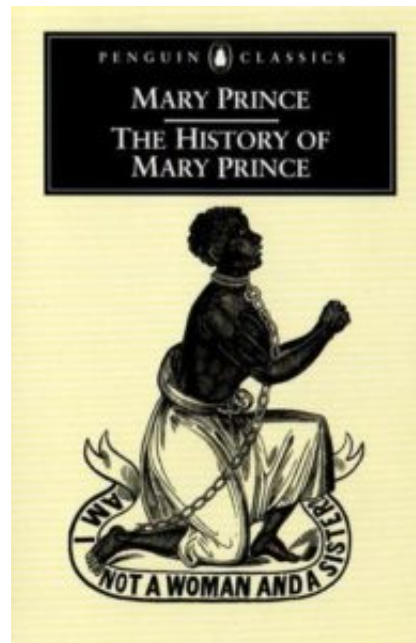


Mary Prince



Mary Prince

In 1788, Mary Prince was born to enslaved parents in Brackish Pond, which is now Devonshire Parish, Bermuda. Mary's father was owned by David Trimmingham and worked as a sawyer, her mother was a house servant owned by Charles Myners. In 1788, Myners died which caused Mary along with her mother, brothers and sisters to be sold to Captain Darrell Williams. Captain Williams then gave Mary's mother to his wife Sarah Williams as a servant; Mary was gifted to Betsey Williams the granddaughter of Captain Darrell. In 1798, Sarah Williams died, Captain Williams would meet a new woman and marry her two years later. To pay for the wedding Captain Williams sold Mary to Captain John Ingham separating her from her family. She was twelve years old, away from her family and facing constant abuse from the Ingham family. The Ingham's constantly beat their slaves. Mary once witnessed her pregnant friend Hetty beaten to death by the Ingham's. She

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would grow tired of the beatings and escape the Ingham plantation seeking refuge with her mother. Mary's mother and other enslaved women helped Mary hide in a cave for several months before she returned to the Ingham plantation.

The Ingham's decided to sell Mary in 1805 to an enslaver known as Mr. D who owned a salt pond in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. D's workers were extracting salt from the salt ponds for up to seventeen hours a day. The conditions of the salt ponds were inhumane and hazardous to the health of the workers. The men who worked the salt ponds were at risk of losing limbs because they were knee deep in salt water almost all day every day. Mary and the other women were charged with packaging the salt that was collected by the men. Workers would die or become very ill often because of the working conditions, Mary developed rheumatism and [St. Anthony's fire](#). Mr. D decided to give up salt mining and moved to Bermuda with his family taking Mary along with him. Unfortunately Mr. D was no different than the Ingham's, he also abused Mary along with his daughter. Mary was forced to bathe Mr. D daily which was some of the sexual abuse she suffered at his hands. Mr. D contracted Mary out to a place named Cedar Hill working as a clothes washer, the money Mary earned washing clothes Mr. D collected.

Mr. D sold Mary to John Adams Wood of Antigua for \$300 in 1815. She once again worked as a servant while suffering from the effects of rheumatism; often she could not work because of her declining physical condition. Wood traveled often, during his travels Mary would take advantage of his absence and make money for herself washing clothes and selling food. She learned to read after joining the Moravian Church which was something she feared the Wood's would not approve of. She also married a man named Daniel James in 1826, a free black man who brought his freedom working as a carpenter and cooper. Because Mary married a free black man Wood abused her out of fear of her running away. The Wood family traveled to England in 1828, geographically Mary was free because slavery was abolished in the United Kingdom by the [Slave Trade Act of 1807](#). Adams Wood unofficially freed Mary but still retained the rights to her. He would tell her she could leave but went out of his way to make sure she couldn't make a living.

Eventually, Mary would escape enslavement with the help of the Moravian church in Hatton Garden, London. Contrary to what Wood believed or told Mary, she found work with the writer and abolitionist Thomas Pringle; she also joined the Anti-Slavery Society as their secretary. Mary's fight for her freedom was far from over, if she wanted to return to Antigua and live with her husband as a free woman, Wood needed to grant her freedom, Wood refused to grant her freedom. The Anti-Slavery Society would petition the parliament for Mary's freedom but was not successful. Several petitions and bills were proposed to end slavery in the West Indies but at that time all were turned down. Pringle hired Mary to work for him in 1829 and also convinced her to have her life story recorded by Susanna Strickland. *The History of Mary Prince* was officially published in 1831, this was the first time a book was published describing the life of an enslaved black woman in the United Kingdom. The book upset many of the people who supported and participated in the slave trade because it exposed the terrible conditions the slaves endured. Two human rights cases arose out of the controversy the book caused by exposing the true conditions of slavery. The

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Slavery Abolition Act was passed in 1833 which ended slavery but allowed slavers time to transition the wealth they gained.

The book *The History of Mary Prince* forced the people of the United Kingdom to view slavery through the eyes of an abused slave. Her book helped to push for the overall abolition of slavery within the West Indian Islands and other English territories. The book was so popular that it sold out three times and three different editions were published within its first year. Much is not known about Mary Prince's life following the years after her book was published, but her life's story is one of many stories we have that gives accurate accounts of the lives of slaves. Many people think that slavery outside of the United States was less cruel, but stories like Mary's give us a different narrative. She used her experience to help others live a life free of enslavement. Mrs. Mary Prince, we proudly stand on your shoulders.

J.A. Ward

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1x3qoFbvF2k>

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