



# Early American Literature

A Secondary School Catalog

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ENG-360

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# An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man

By: William Apess (1798-1839)



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## Overview

In William Apess' personal essay, he points out the hypocrisy of the white colonists during early American history. As a preacher he shared his feelings about the inequities people of color endured at the hands of the white community. He points out that the barbaric treatment went against the colonists' Christian values. Apess uses biblical citations to reinforce his points about racism. His essay is a very powerful sentiment to the frustrations of people of color and an eye opener for the white population.

“you may learn how deep your principles are. I should say they were skin-deep.”

## Themes

HYPOCRISY – RACISM – HYPOCRISY – RACISM – HYPOCRISY – RACISM

Hypocrisy and racism are two major themes in the essay “An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man”. Apess states that if a white man was “disfranchised from all their rights simply because of their skin color was white, these men would be crying injustice”, yet these same men neglect to give the colored men the same rights as they because they have a different color of skin (Levine, 2017). His use of rhetorical language throughout his essay highlights how the Indians are treated as being less important than the white men and women. The questions Apess asks nudges the audience to analyze the information that he is presenting to them. Apess points out the double standards that were used against people of color and he cites from the bible to back up his claims regarding racism and the injustices that target people of color.

# An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man

## Student Appeal

### First-hand Account of Racism

High School students will find this text to be appealing because it gets to the heart of the matter. Students of this age want to be treated with respect and will appreciate reading material that highlights the atrocities of our nation's history. It is not enough to say that racism is bad, students need to read first-hand accounts of how racism affected those it personally touched. Stories such as this one comes from the point of view of a mixed-race man. William Apess' grandfather was a white colonist, while his grandmother was Native American. This text will be appealing to this age group because they want to right the wrongs of the past and live in a world where racism ceases to exist.

## Secondary Standard(s)

### Reading Standard and Writing Standard for Arizona

This essay meets the reading standards for the state of Arizona grades 9-12. Students will be able to pull out key ideas and details and be able to cite evidence from the text. Students in grades 9 and 10 will be able to decipher at least one theme in the essay, while students in grades 11 and 12 will be able to determine multiple themes and how those themes interact with each other. Students will be able to analyze those themes and be able to explain the themes verbally. Students in grades 9-10 will be able to analyze the author's meaning of the essay, while students in grades 11-12 will be able to compare this essay to another essay or story with similar themes.

This essay meets the writing standards for the state of Arizona in grades 9-12. Students will be able to write argumentatively to support the claims found in the text. Students will be able to analyze themes found in the text and explain those themes in writing. Students will be able to write informative and explanatory essays and be able to convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately. Students will be able to research and gather evidence from the text to produce an informative and well thought out project.

# The Private Journal from Boston to New York in the Year 1704

By Sarah Kemble Knight (1666-1727)

## Overview

This journal gives readers a glimpse into a journey traveled by a woman in the the early 1700's. Knight writes about her experiences and observations during her trip in an expository format. She traveled from her home in Boston, MA to New Haven, CT, and New York City. Her traveling alone with only one male escort was highly unusual for the time period. She highlights the daily life of the northeastern colonies



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## Themes

SOCIAL NORMS – RACISM – CLASS – SOCIAL NORMS – RACISM – CLASS

Societal norms and class are themes that are represented in Sarah Kemble Knight's journal. She discusses how Connecticut is similar to Boston, but they have "too much independence" and how those in New York do not strictly follow the day of the Sabbath. She explains their manners and customs, which some she found to be odd, such as the groomsmen having to "wrangle" the groom back to the alter to accept his duty. She describes how the Dutch women in the area of New York are more casual in appearance and you can feel the judgement in her words. In one particular story, Knight describes a country gentleman who enters a store whose wife wants to buy some ribbon. She observes their interaction and deems them all to be dim witted and uneducated. Knight's own racism is apparent when she writes about how a slave owner is "too indulgent" (Levine, 2017) when he allows his slaves to break bread with the family and sit at their dinner table. She also describes seeing the Indians frequently on her travels and describes them as "savages". By the end of her journey, she is more than ready to head back home to Boston where she feels the population is more civilized.

# The Private Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York in the Year 1704

## Student Appeal

### A Colonial Woman's View in the Colonial Era

Sarah Kemble Knight's account of the travel conditions in the northern states was unusual for the times. Women did not make such journeys without their husbands during the Colonial period. While, Knight was born and raised in Boston, MA she was familiar with norms and customs of her region, but during her travels she encountered differences that she thought was strange. Her journal provides a first-person account of traveling on horseback and the hardships it presented. She writes about the different attitudes regarding slavery, Native Americans, and Christianity in Connecticut and New York, compared to the norms in Boston, MA. Her observations are written with humor and enlightenment, but also shed light on her own unflattering viewpoints regarding the treatment of Negroes and Native Americans.

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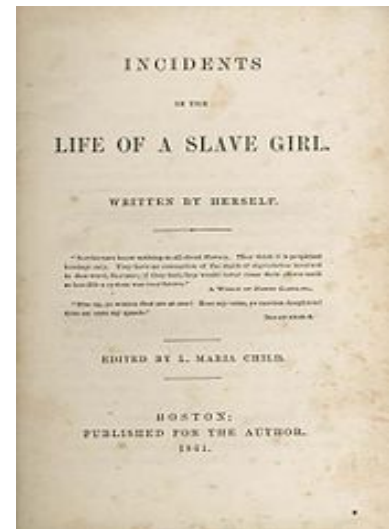
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# The Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

By Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897)

## Overview

This novel is the autobiographical text of former slave, Harriet Jacobs. It follows her life and determination to securing her freedom and the freedom of her children. Jacobs discusses the treatment of negro men and women who were born into slavery and the hardships they faced during their lives being the property of another person. This novel is written to educate the audience of the atrocities of slavery and the effects of abuse.



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## Themes

### SLAVERY – MOTHERHOOD – PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Slavery is the main theme of the novel, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Jacobs writes about how a person cannot be considered “good” if they own another person. Ownership of another person’s life takes away a part of their humanity and it allows them to feel entitled to treat their slaves as property and not as another human who has thoughts and emotions. The novel also points out through the character of Mr. Sands, that even a decent white man can succumb to going back on their word if it becomes profitable for them.

Motherhood is another theme woven throughout the novel. The main character strives her entire life to provide a safe and comfortable home for herself and her children. Linda sacrifices her own comfort at times to be near her children and refuses to flee her bad situation until she can take her children with her. The character of Aunt Martha, represents the type of home that Linda desires. Although all of Aunt Martha’s children were sold through slavery, she was able to buy her own freedom and then provide a comfortable home for herself and a place of refuge for her relations.

Abuse is a running theme throughout the novel. Linda’s slave owner, Mr. Flint, was physically abusive to other slaves, but he tormented her in a psychological way. He would leer at her and tell her she was a spoiled and pampered slave and should feel lucky and appreciate of all her did for her, while also telling her how worthless she was. His insistent demands of a sexual relationship with her and the mind games he played affected her mentality and confidence. This constant psychological abuse pushed the character to start a sexual relationship with another man to try to become undesirable to her master. She was willing to let go of her own virtue in order to be free of the unwanted advances of Mr. Flint. This novel sheds light on the emotional toll of psychological abuse.

# The Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

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## Student Appeal

### First-person Account of Slavery

This is the autobiographical story of a slave woman born in bondage. It describes how her life changed drastically after the death of her mother and the death of her first mistress. She was bequeathed to the niece of her mistress, but because her new mistress was only a child, the author was subjected to years of psychological abuse by the girl's parents. This story highlights the psychological results of being a female slave. It also provides an accurate depiction of the lengths a mother will go to protect her children and how even a mistreated woman can pick herself up and fight for her right to freedom and a better life.

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## Works Cited

"The Norton Anthology of American Literature." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, by Robert S. Levine, 9th ed., A, W.W. Norton, 2017.