

Olaudah Equiano

Olaudah Equiano was a writer who lived more than 200 years ago.

He is remembered for writing about his experiences of slavery and helping people understand why slavery was cruel and wrong.



Equiano wrote that he was born in Africa, in an area that is now part of Nigeria. When he was a child, he was kidnapped and separated from his family. He was eventually taken across the Atlantic Ocean on a slave ship. The journey was frightening and dangerous. Equiano was sold into slavery and had several different enslavers.

As he grew older, Equiano learnt to read and write. He also worked as a sailor and trader. Eventually, he was able to buy his freedom. This meant that he was no longer enslaved and could make more choices about his own life.

Equiano later settled in Britain. In 1789, he published a book telling the story of his life. His book became well known and helped readers learn about the terrible treatment of enslaved people. Equiano also supported the campaign to end the British slave trade. His writing remains important because it helps us learn about slavery, freedom and the struggle for equality.



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Questions

1. What is Olaudah Equiano remembered for?
2. Where did Equiano say he was born?
3. What happened to Equiano when he was a child?
4. How was Equiano taken across the Atlantic Ocean?
5. What important skills did Equiano learn?
6. What jobs did Equiano do?
7. How did Equiano gain his freedom?
8. In which country did Equiano later settle?
9. In what year was Equiano's book published?
10. What did Equiano campaign to end?



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Answers

1. He is remembered as a writer who described his experiences of slavery.
2. He said he was born in Africa, in an area now within Nigeria.
3. He was kidnapped and separated from his family.
4. He was taken across the Atlantic on a slave ship.
5. He learnt how to read and write.
6. He worked as a sailor and trader.
7. He earned enough money to buy his freedom.
8. He later settled in Britain.
9. His book was published in 1789.
10. He campaigned to end the British slave trade.



abolition	autobiography	campaign	equality	enslaved	enslaver	freedom
injustice	kidnapped	Middle Passage	published	rights	slave trade	voyage

1. When someone is taken away by force and without permission, often far from their home and family.
2. A long journey, especially one made by sea from one country or continent to another.
3. Being forced to work for someone else and not being allowed to live freely.
4. A person who holds another person in slavery and takes away their freedom.
5. The buying and selling of enslaved people, which caused enormous suffering to millions of people.
6. The terrible journey across the Atlantic Ocean that millions of enslaved Africans were forced to make.
7. Being able to make choices about your own life instead of being controlled by someone else.

8. Freedoms and protections that every person should have and that others should respect.
9. The idea that everyone should be treated fairly and have the same rights and opportunities.
10. Unfair treatment, such as denying people the rights and freedoms they deserve.
11. The act of officially ending something, such as slavery.
12. An organised effort to persuade others to make an important change.
13. A book in which someone writes the story of their own life and experiences.
14. When a piece of writing has been produced and made available for other people to read.



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Timeline Challenge

Olaudah Equiano wrote about his experiences of slavery and worked to help end the slave trade. As a child, he was taken from his home and sold into slavery. Later, he bought his freedom, travelled widely and wrote a book about his life. His story helped people understand how cruel and unfair slavery was.



Can you put these key events from Olaudah's life into chronological order?

Olaudah publishes a book about his life. He describes his experiences of slavery and explains why the slave trade should end.	Olaudah is born in what he describes as the Kingdom of Benin in West Africa. He grows up with his family and learns the traditions of his community.	Olaudah marries Susannah Cullen in England. They later have two daughters.	When he is about 11 years old, Olaudah is kidnapped with his sister. He is taken away from his home and sold into slavery.
Olaudah dies in London. His writing and campaigning are remembered as an important part of the fight against the slave trade.	Olaudah buys his freedom after saving money from trading. He is now free to make his own choices about his life.	Olaudah travels across the Atlantic Ocean on a slave ship. He later writes about the frightening and cruel conditions enslaved people face.	Olaudah joins people in Britain who are campaigning to end the slave trade. He speaks and writes about why slavery is wrong.

Link each event with one of the dates below. Use the information to make a timeline.

c. 1745	c. 1756	1750s	1766	1780s	1789	1792	1797
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