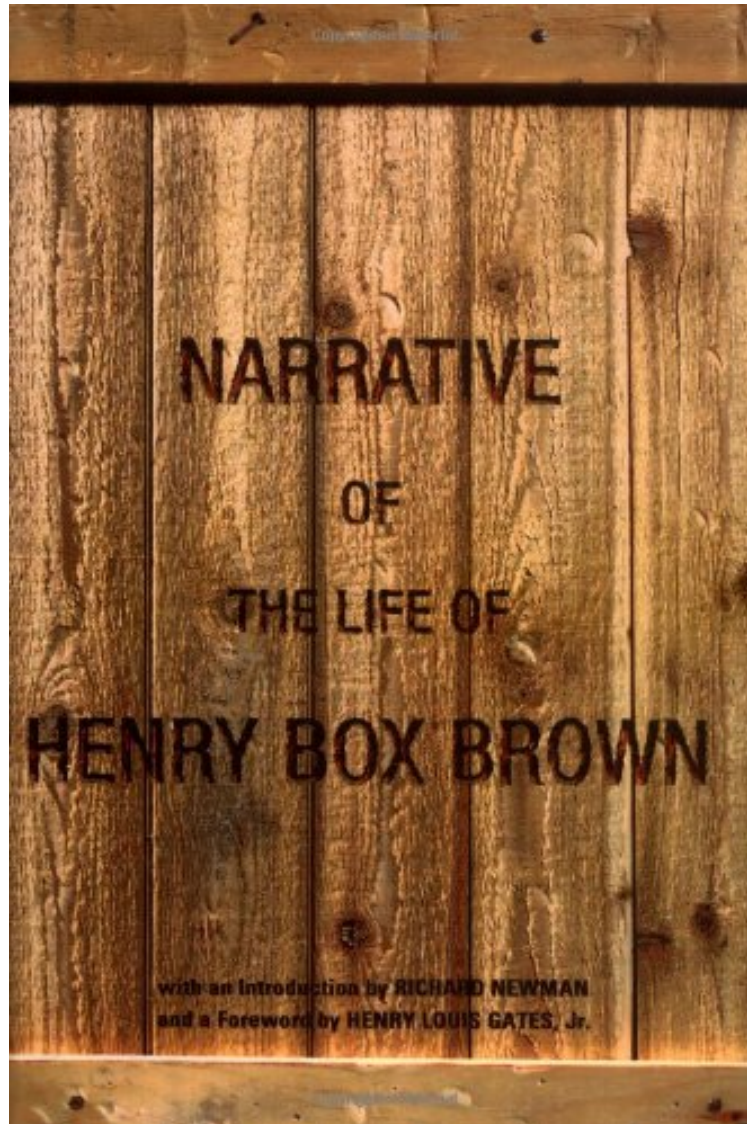


[Free] Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown

## Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown

*Henry Box Brown*

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**Henry Box Brown : Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. TextbookBy Lydia IpswitchI bought this book for a class I was taking on Slave Literature. It was a very interesting account of slavery in general, and it provides a great perspective of what it was like to be a slave during this period.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown - Henry Box BrownBy A. L. AndersonThis is a very interesting historical account of a man who had himself mailed to freedom. Imagine the discomfort, and the ultimate exhilaration.6 of 6 people found the

following review helpful. A Slave Narrative By Beach Reader This genre, the slave narrative, created by fugitive slaves, is one that I knew nothing about, but was one that fascinated audiences and often made celebrities out of their authors. Narratives written by escaped slaves were very popular in the mid 1800s as they recounted stories of abuse, cruelty, escape, and their lives as free people in the north. None of these slave narratives was as curious and compelling as that of Henry "Box" Brown, who actually boxed himself up and shipped himself to freedom in 1849, from Virginia to an abolitionist in Philadelphia. Risking death and/or suffocation to be free showed the desperation of the slaves even in a state like Virginia, where cruelty was purported to be less than in other parts of the south. Brown's story showed this not to be true. His escape was motivated by the sale of his wife and children, sent to parts unknown and never seen again. His book was originally written by a Charles Stearns, described as a radical, argumentative ideologue and was written in an overwrought style. Brown fled to England in 1850 when the Fugitive Slave Act was passed. He was a controversial figure, criticized for revealing how he escaped (and profiting from this) rather than sharing it with other slaves who might have used the same method. When Brown got to England, his book was re-written in a more honest and simple style, and the edition that I am reviewing is the American version of that book. The difference is that this book is said to be written in Brown's voice and the lack of turgid prose makes it 20+ pages shorter. I have my doubts if this was Brown's voice...it seems to be the voice of a well-spoken, educated person with a large vocabulary, capable of complex sentence structure and high levels of organization. For example, he writes: "I might perhaps have dragged my chains of quietude to the grave, and have found a tomb in a slavery-polluted land; but thanks be to God I heard the glorious sound and felt its inspiring influence on my heart, and having satisfied myself of the value of freedom, I resolved to purchase it whatever should be the price." Despite this, the book was an incredibly interesting account of Brown's early life, his life as an adult slave, his escape.

In 1849, Henry Brown escaped from slavery by shipping himself in a crate from Virginia to an anti-slavery office in Philadelphia. 27 hours and 350 miles later, Brown stepped out of his box to begin a new life. This is his memoir, originally published in 1851 in England, as fresh and compelling today as it was 150 years ago. This extraordinary narrative paints an indelible portrait of life in slavery, and describes one of the most audacious, creative escapes ever completed. With a keen sense of irony, Brown examines the "peculiar institution"--from the hypocrisy of slave-owning Christian preachers, to the system of bribery that forced slaves to purchase the rights to their own belongings, to the practice of separating slave families with no warning. Indeed, it was when his own wife and children were sold away that he became determined to escape, and he enlisted the aid of a friend, who nailed him into a three-foot-by-two-foot wooden box. He traveled by railroad car, steamboat and horse cart--often upside down, despite a "this side up" stamp--to the free state of Pennsylvania. His unprecedented manner of arrival made him a public sensation in the North, and a celebrity on the anti-slavery lecture circuit. With an introduction by Richard Newman and a foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* conveys the unquenchable spirit of a hero who risked death rather than live a slave. A classic slave narrative, it makes unforgettable reading.

From Library Journal Narratives recorded by fugitive slaves in the antebellum South or former slaves after the Civil War were promoted by abolitionists and sold at antislavery meetings. This genre documented the harsh reality of slavery, the desire for personal and economic freedom, and the relationships between blacks and whites. Well known among African American scholars (the manuscript was first published in 1849), Brown's story was brought to the publisher's attention by Newman (W.E.B. DuBois Inst.). It is a testament to ingenuity and fortitude. Strongly motivated by the sale of his wife and children, in 1849 Brown escaped from servitude by having himself crated in a box 3' long x 2' wide. and shipped to an abolitionist in Philadelphia. After his 27-hour, 350-mile journey, he emerged to drink a glass of water and sing the 40th psalm. Not unexpectedly, word of his unorthodox journey spread to bring him celebrity status. Brown became a lecturer on the abolitionist circuit, singing his songs and telling his story. In his introduction, Newman delineates the circumstances of Brown's escape, the many instances of slave resistance, and the development of the slave narrative. A brief foreword by Henry Louis Gates, chair of African American studies at Harvard, relates the significance of Brown's tale. This important and moving document is recommended for academic libraries. Kathleen M. Conley, Illinois State Univ., Normal Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Apologists for the antebellum South often assert that slavery was "not that bad." This compact, engrossing narrative certainly belies those claims. Brown was a slave in Virginia, where conditions for slaves were supposedly less onerous than in the Deep South. Yet Brown's description of daily slave life is infuriating and chilling. He recounts the constant intimidation, the countless humiliations, and the occasional but sickening physical brutality that slaves endured. Perhaps the most heartbreaking and terrifying threat was the possibility that one's family could be split apart forever if a family member was "sold south." When Brown's family was sold, he determined to escape to the North. The story of that escape provides an inspiring and thrilling climax to what otherwise would be a depressive chronicle of human cruelty and degradation. This is an important work that is necessary for all who wish to appreciate the bitter harvest of our "peculiar institution" of slavery. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Highly readable and moving in its blunt description of slavery and of Brown's experience of shipping

himself to Philadelphia."--Carlin Romano, Philadelphia Inquirer" In the remarkable books that Brown left behind, horror serves not only as a surprisingly realistic medium through which to represent slavery, but also as a powerful means of resistance to it. The reader who steps into the claustrophobic box occupied by Brown encounters an unforgettable reconstruction of the horror--slavery--upon which America itself was built."--Chicago Tribune" Compact, engrossing.... An important work that is necessary for all who wish to appreciate the bitter harvest of our 'peculiar institution' of slavery."--Booklist" A testament to ingenuity and fortitude.... An important and moving document."--Library Journal" What distinguishes Brown's book is its incredible, though brief and uninflected, conclusion, involving one of the most impressive escapes in American letters.... What can be said of Box Brown can be said of slave narratives in general: only by appreciating their confinement can we understand their liberation."--New Republic" Henry 'Box' Brown's daring escape from slavery is one of the great creative acts in the struggle for black freedom. This is his story."--Cornel West, Alphonse Fletcher Jr. University Professor, Harvard University" Richard Newman has performed a most outstanding and admirable service in restoring this rare and compelling text to a new generation of readers. Brown's story calls to mind in our own generation the determination to achieve democracy by oppressed people throughout the world. His story is just as relevant today as it was one hundred and fifty years ago."--Henry Louis Gates, Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University" This long-neglected autobiography by a self-liberated ex-slave casts new light not only on the breadth of black resistance, but on the very genre of slave narratives itself."--Jill Watts, Associate Professor of History, California State University, San Marcos, and author of Mae West: An Icon in Black and White