



**Remembering the 10 to 12 million Africans taken  
to Europe and the Americas as slaves...  
...and their descendants 1444-1888**

**By Imogen Ashfield**

The dedication at the beginning of the book 'Blonde Roots' is a heartfelt humanitarian message towards a topic of much relevance and importance for generation upon generation throughout the world.

Last year marked the bicentenary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act which saw the opening of the first International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, with a host of numerous ceremonial events in the main ports around the country, focusing on cultural and ancestral roots.

With the recent announcement to incorporate more black history into the English school

curriculum, the transatlantic slave trade is still widely topical as it forms an integral part of so many people's family history. To raise more awareness among each age group is there a need to keep the topic afresh through regenerating new ways to tell the stories? Bernardine Evaristo thought so and with an audience aimed at teenagers, Blonde Roots is definitely experimental and original in its format in which 'African are masters and Europeans are slaves'.

But why is this piece so different? What other literary works have focused on the vast topic of slavery?

The autobiography '[The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano](#)' classics: originally published in 1794, is one of the most well known accounts narrating the experience of a slave from an African slaves perspective which raised much attention among a mass audience and aided the abolitionist movement. It remains today a seminal piece of work as it vividly documents his life in Africa, his capture and enslavement and eventually his freedom. This work is still widely read today and Equiano has become a key figure of inspiration, abolition and freedom.

## My Recommendations

**READ:** A few fascinating books on the topic of slavery to get started on...

['Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl' by Harriet Jacobs](#)

['The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave' by Mary Prince](#)

['The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' by Mark Twain](#)

['Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave' by Frederick Douglass](#)

**GO PICK ONE UP AND START READING, EXPAND YOUR MIND** because in the words of Frederick Douglass:

"We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future".

**READ AND WATCH:** 'Roots: The Saga of an American Family ' by Alex Haley.

**THINK:** How would you write a narrative today from a slaves perspective? What would be your purpose of writing it? What would you use for research? What form would you use? Challenge yourself and write it from the master's economic perspective. [Email in your ideas!](#)