

Author's Note

Imagine what it would have been like to be taken from your family by strangers when you were seven or eight years old. That's what happened to Phillis Wheatley.

We admire Phillis for surviving such a terrible experience and having the courage to go on with her life. She not only learned to speak and read English, but she chose to express herself by writing poetry.

Phillis didn't let powerful people or new experiences keep her from trying to reach her goals. She didn't back down when she had to go in by herself and face 18 important men in Boston. If she hadn't been willing to answer their questions, her poems would not have been printed in a book. She agreed to go to England to help get that book printed, even though she didn't know anyone in that country.

Some people think Phillis would have lived longer and had more influence if she had stayed in England. The laws in England allowed slaves who stepped on English soil to become free, so Phillis didn't have to return to Boston and care for Mrs. Wheatley. As you read this book, decide whether you think Phillis should have stayed in England or continued to help the Wheatleys.

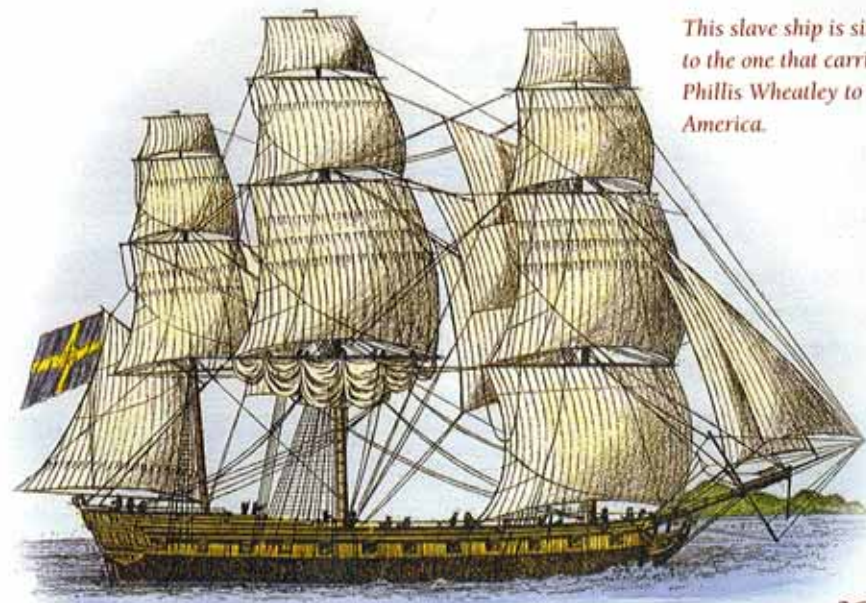
Bruce + Booby

Sold into Slavery



A frail girl stood in the Boston, Massachusetts, slave market, her dark skin covered only by dirty carpet. Bystanders guessed she was seven or eight years old because her front teeth were missing.

The girl had arrived on the slave ship *Phillis* after surviving a grueling voyage from West Africa. She and the rest of the Africans on the *Phillis* were about to be sold as slaves.



This slave ship is similar to the one that carried Phillis Wheatley to America.