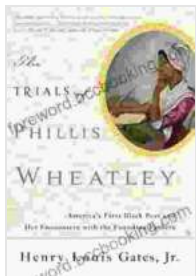


# America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers

In the annals of American history, the name Phillis Wheatley stands as a beacon of literary brilliance and unwavering determination. Born into slavery in 1753, Wheatley emerged as the first Black poet to publish a book in the United States. Her extraordinary talent and indomitable spirit captivated the attention of some of the nation's most illustrious figures, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.



## The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers

by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 236 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
X-Ray : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 145 pages



## A Young Prodigy in the Shadow of Slavery



Phillis Wheatley was born in Senegal and forced to board a slave ship at the tender age of seven. She arrived in Boston in 1761 as the property of John Wheatley, a prosperous merchant. Despite the horrors of her enslavement, Wheatley exhibited an extraordinary aptitude for learning. She quickly mastered the English language and became an avid reader of classical literature, including the works of Virgil, Homer, and Pope.

Wheatley's poetic talent was evident from an early age. As a teenager, she began writing poems expressing her longing for freedom, her admiration for nature, and her deep religious faith. Her exceptional abilities caught the attention of the Wheatley family, who encouraged her literary pursuits.

## **Encounters with the Founding Fathers**

In 1773, Wheatley was invited to meet George Washington at his home at Mount Vernon. Impressed by her intelligence and poetic skill, Washington became one of Wheatley's most ardent supporters. He encouraged her to continue writing and helped her to publish her first collection of poems, "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral," in 1773.

Washington was not the only Founding Father to be captivated by Wheatley's poetry. Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, praised her work as "beautiful" and "beyond the reach of art." Benjamin Franklin, the inventor and statesman, played a crucial role in promoting Wheatley's reputation in Europe, where she became celebrated as a literary sensation.

Wheatley's encounters with the Founding Fathers were not merely exchanges of admiration. She used her platform to challenge the prevailing views on race and slavery. In her poems, she denounced the hypocrisy of those who claimed to be fighting for freedom while upholding the institution of slavery. She also explored themes of identity, belonging, and the search for a place in society.

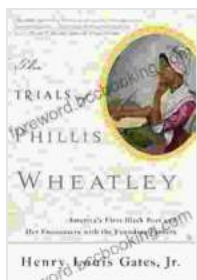
## **A Legacy of Inspiration and Resistance**

Phillis Wheatley died in 1784 at the age of 31, leaving behind a powerful literary and social legacy. Her poems continue to be read and studied today, inspiring generations with their themes of freedom, equality, and the human spirit. Wheatley's encounters with the Founding Fathers demonstrate the remarkable power of art to transcend boundaries and challenge societal norms.

As we celebrate the contributions of African Americans to our nation's history, it is essential to remember the story of Phillis Wheatley, the first Black poet who dared to break down barriers and speak truth to power. Through her writing, she not only captivated the attention of the Founding Fathers but also left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire and ignite change.

**Free Download your copy of "America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers" today and immerse yourself in the extraordinary journey of Phillis Wheatley, a literary pioneer whose words still resonate with power and purpose.**

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