

### **Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa)**

Olaudah Equiano (c. 1742-1857), an Igbo person who was kidnapped at around age 11 or 12 in what is now southeastern Nigeria, learned seamanship as a youth during his enslavement to British naval officer Michael Henry Pascal. After purchasing his freedom as a young man, he spent about a decade as a sailor, interspersed with stints as a hairdresser, laboratory assistant, and plantation manager. By the late 1770s, he was based in England. He became a well-known abolitionist and published his autobiography, [\*The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African, as Published by Himself\*](#), in March 1789. He married Susannah Cullen of Cambridgeshire in 1792 and died in London in 1797.

*The Interesting Narrative* went rapidly through ten editions. It has remained continuously in print for over two hundred years. It had a significant influence on the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 and on the genre of Black autobiography as a vehicle for political advocacy. It also situates Equiano in place and time during an age of revolution. [A timeline of his life](#) lists over seventy residences and waypoints in Africa, Europe, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, North America, South America, and the Caribbean.

This Collection offers a window into Equiano's remarkable life, depicting his extensive travels through numerous locales. It is based on a timeline on the [Equiano's World](#) website, which is directed by Professor Paul Lovejoy and sponsored by the [Equiano Society](#).