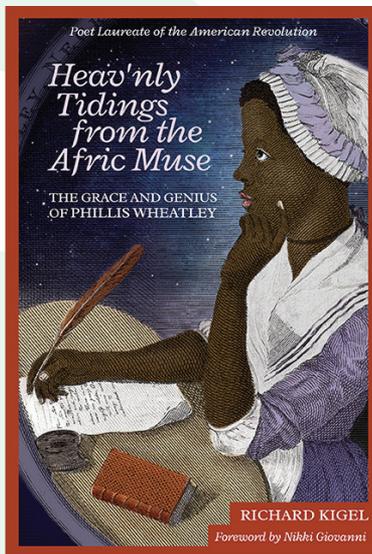


Heav'nly Tidings from the Afric Muse

THE GRACE AND GENIUS OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Author: Richard Kigel
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Foreword by award-winning poet Nikki Giovanni!

“Phillis Wheatley is the mother of the African American literary tradition and ‘the sable muse’ of the American Revolution. With this masterful biography, she will be restored to her rightful place as a major figure in the intellectual history of the fledgling American Republic. Every student and scholar of American literature should read this well-written and carefully researched biography.”

—Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard University

“She had to learn another language, not just to speak, but to express her heart... I think this book should be read by every poet—to remind us how precious our freedom really is.”—Nikki Giovanni, Poet, Distinguished University Professor, Virginia Tech, best-selling author, and winner of 7 NAACP Image Awards.

“Richard Kigel brings the passion of a master teacher to his biography of Phillis Wheatley, survivor of the Middle Passage and poet extraordinaire of the eighteenth-century Atlantic. Wheatley is a proper heroine for our history-hungry times.”—Marcus Rediker, author of *The Slave Ship* and *The Amistad Rebellion*

“Written out of a robust respect for this poet whose eloquence subverted the stereotype of the African.... Kigel gives us a servant of language, a truth-teller who survived with an amazing grace.”—Yusef Komunyakaa, Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

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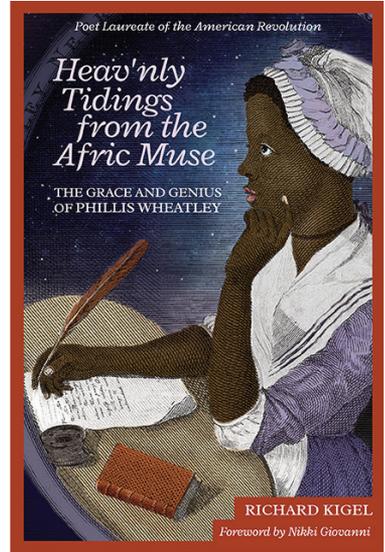
Over

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THE GRACE AND GENIUS OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Phillis Wheatley

- Poet Laureate of the American Revolution
- Most widely known African-American in the world in her time
- First personified the American symbol “Columbia” in poetry
- Friends with George Washington
- Arrived on a slave ship and was sold about age seven
- At age 20, made a literary tour of London
- Published a book in London that arrived in Boston on the *Dartmouth* with the tea that was dumped in the “Boston Tea Party.”



SHE SURVIVED the horrific Middle Passage as a child and was purchased as a slave in 1761. By the time she turned twenty Phillis Wheatley was the most famous person of African descent in the world. In a culture of white domination, she forced those around her to acknowledge her humanity and confront the inequity of her status as a slave.

Her own words resurrect the spirit of the classic poet who managed to launch two literary traditions at once: African-American literature and women's literature. Phillis Wheatley has taken her rightful place among our Founding Fathers and Mothers as the true “Poet Laureate” of the American Revolution.



RICHARD KIGEL brings the practical skills of a veteran educator to his work. During the thirty years Kigel taught in Brooklyn schools with mostly African-American students, he immersed himself in the richness of Black History. Kigel fell in love with Phillis Wheatley and her poetry and has made it his mission to introduce her to modern America.

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THE GRACE AND GENIUS OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Among the author's findings and perspectives:

- Phillis Wheatley was the only slave among untold millions who suffered the horrors of the Middle Passage whose arrival was documented—we know the name of the slave ship that brought her and the date and place of arrival in America.
- The book argues that the famous “Wheatley Court” examination by 18 Boston men never happened. There is no evidence to support the mythical scenario that Phillis was quizzed by a panel of experts.
- Phillis Wheatley’s London stay changed her life. The book presents a detailed description of her London travels taken from her letters that reveals how she earned her freedom.
- Evidence that the first shipment of Phillis Wheatley’s books arrived from London on one of the Boston Tea Party ships. This is the first time evidence demonstrating that Phillis Wheatley’s shipment of books arrived on the Dartmouth along with 114 chests of East India tea has been documented. Her books were most likely on board the fateful night of the Boston Tea Party.
- New evidence suggesting that the extraordinary March 1776 encounter between Phillis Wheatley and General Washington actually took place.
- Details that Phillis Wheatley gave us our first popular symbol of America. The heavenly figure of Lady Columbia as a goddess in a flowing robe became a popular symbol of the American spirit which lasted until the mid-20th century. That a slave girl sold in chains on the auction block would grow to imagine the American spirit as the goddess in robes is a powerful reminder of Wheatley’s place in American history.
- The book makes the case that Phillis Wheatley should be given serious consideration as “Poet Laureate” of the American Revolution. Her patriotic poems celebrate the American fight for freedom and helped create enduring images of the American imagination that still exist today.
- The book asserts that Phillis Wheatley was the first public figure to embrace her identity as an African-American. She declared her African heritage proudly as “your vent’rous Afric,” “an Ethiop,” and “the Afric muse.” Her decision to return to Boston from London, where she was legally free, provided clear affirmation that Phillis Wheatley saw her future as an African-American poet.



Heav'nly Tidings from the Afric Muse

THE GRACE AND GENIUS OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY

PHILLIS WHEATLEY is the only captive among the 388,000 who suffered the horrors of the Middle Passage whose arrival in North America was documented. This book asserts that Phillis Wheatley was the first public figure to embrace her identity as an African-American. Her decision to return to Boston from London, where she was legally free, provides clear affirmation that Phillis Wheatley saw her future as an African-American poet.

Marketing Plan

- Press release mailing, top 100 daily newspaper book editors
- Press release mailing, top literary review publications
- Review copy mailing, leading African-American consumer and scholarly publications
- Pitch to national TV and radio
- Press release to top magazines and online reviewers
- Black History Month flier mailing to top 150 library systems in the US
- Co-op available

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