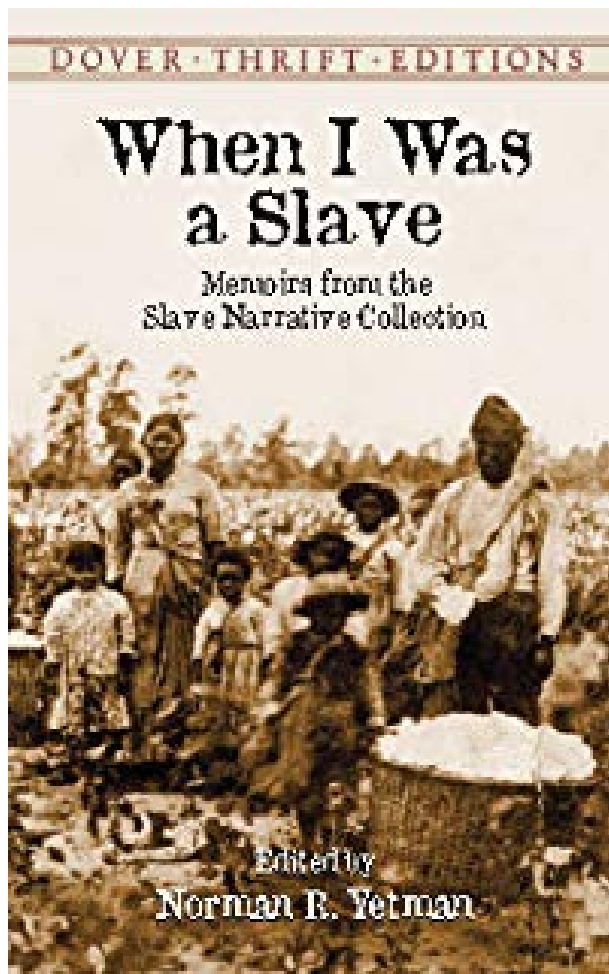


# When I Was a Slave: Memoirs from the Slave Narrative Collection



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In an effort to provide unemployed writers with work during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the United States Government, through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), funded the Federal Writers' Project. One of the group's most noteworthy and enduring achievements was the Slave Narrative Collection, consisting of more than 2,000 transcripts of interviews with former slaves, who, in blunt, simple words, provided often-startling first-person accounts of their lives in bondage. This book reprints some of the most detailed and engrossing life histories in the collection. Each narrative is complete. Thirty-four gripping testimonies are included, with all slave occupations represented — from field hand and cook to French tutor and seamstress. Personal treatment reported by these individuals also encompassed a wide range — from the most harsh and exploitative to living and working conditions that were intimate and benevolent. An illuminating and unique source of information about life in the South before, during, and after the Civil War, these memoirs, most importantly, preserve the opinions and perspective of those who were enslaved. Invaluable to students, teachers, and specialists in Southern history, this compelling book will intrigue anyone interested in the African-American experience.