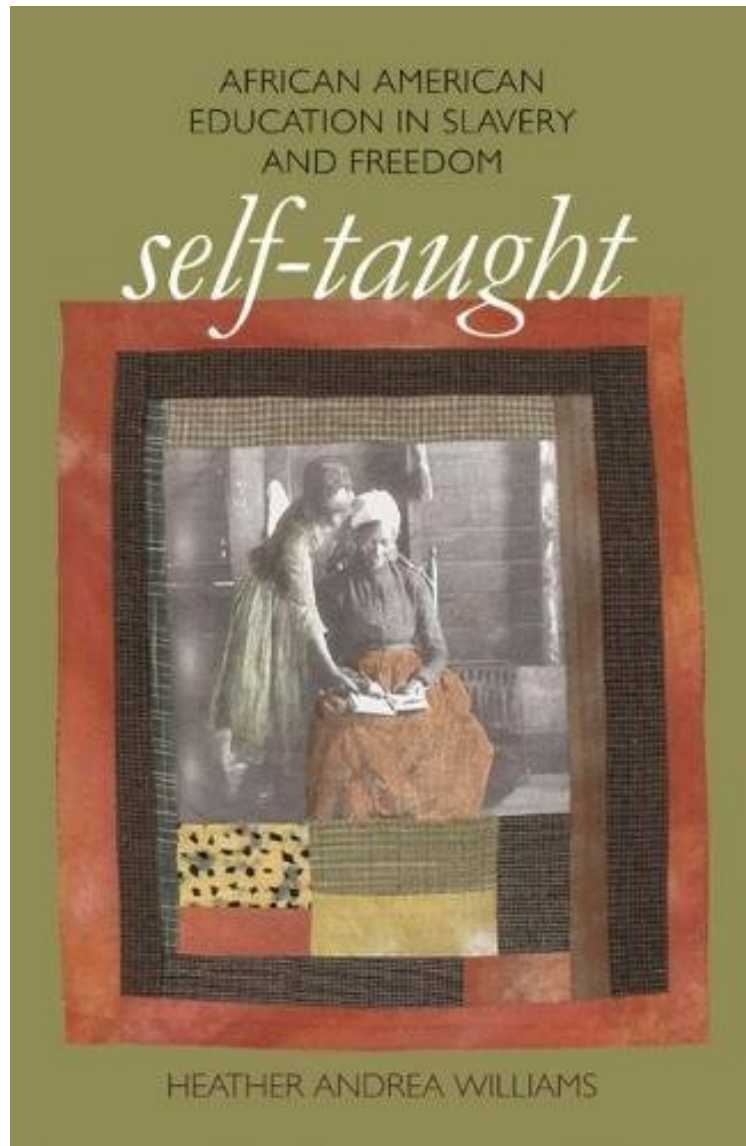


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Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom (The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture)

Heather Andrea Williams

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#2291633 in Books The University of North Carolina Press 2005-03-07Original language:EnglishPDF # 1
.97 x 6.46 x 9.74l, 1.33 #File Name: 080782920X320 pages | File size: 71.Mb

Heather Andrea Williams : Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom (The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom (The John

Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I respect a slave who want to read and write better. During slaveryBy charmaine rileyI read this book for my upper level history class. First of all, I respect a slave who want to read and write better. During slavery, Whites did not allow masters and teachers to help slaves with writing and reading. After emancipation, slaves were eager to write their names on contracts. And read the bible. When educated black teacher taught students, some Whites became offensive and the Klu Klux Klan whipped Blacks. Life in the late 1800s was dangerous. Blacks walked a fine line between danger and safety in their communities. I believe today that the average black student does not know all the obstacles that an ex-slave endured. As an older student I enjoyed learning about the history of the black community's education and struggle for survival. I got an A on my history research paper, and I also enjoyed reading the book.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. African-American Educational Pursuit At Its Best!By Anita M WhiteOne of the best books I have read surrounding the issue of early African-American interest in the importance of education. Personally, I believe the information included in this book could very well act as a catalyst to motivate some Black children to realize that Blacks have a legacy of commitment to education. I recommend this book for middle school and high school students. One does not get this type of African-American history in school.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Excellent descriptive work of African American education, but not powerfully interpretiveBy IoanaThis research is a much needed contemporary history of the education of African Americans in the South from slavery through reconstruction and the beginnings of the common (public) school. It addresses the question from the local, 'grassroots' perspective--Williams explores how blacks sacrificed to build schools, pay for teachers, advocate for their own education, and how these individuals striving for freedom inspired a movement for education across the South. Poor whites, seeing blacks entering schools, were driven to anger, jealousy, violence, and imitation. Some whites enrolled in freedpeoples schools, as they believed them superior to the poor white schools in the neighborhood (if there were any).Williams' work could definitely use an update and a broadening of perspective. Her research is education-centric--she does not consider broader social forces at play in her analysis, or if she does, she brings them up for a paragraph before moving on. In other words, she does not string her analysis along broader themes of race/ism, freedom, democracy, etc, all at play during this period. Education was in fact the very foundation of new conceptions of democracy: it was foundational to the ideology of freedom, and it was not coincidental that freedpeople associated education with a way up in the world. They were in some ways appropriating a republican ideology of free labor that valued education as foundational.By not considering the broader context--the North, the new forces of industrialization and the changing meaning of labor, contestations of freedom, and so on, Williams' point is less forceful, less connected. However, as descriptive work, and as *the* contemporary (21st century) work on the subject, this is definitely must-reading.

In this previously untold story of African American self-education, Heather Andrea Williams moves across time to examine African Americans' relationship to literacy during slavery, during the Civil War, and in the first decades of freedom. *Self-Taught* traces the historical antecedents to freedpeople's intense desire to become literate and demonstrates how the visions of enslaved African Americans emerged into plans and action once slavery ended.Enslaved people, Williams contends, placed great value in the practical power of literacy, whether it was to enable them to read the Bible for themselves or to keep informed of the abolition movement and later the progress of the Civil War. Some slaves devised creative and subversive means to acquire literacy, and when slavery ended, they became the first teachers of other freedpeople. Soon overwhelmed by the demands for education, they called on northern missionaries to come to their aid. Williams argues that by teaching, building schools, supporting teachers, resisting violence, and claiming education as a civil right, African Americans transformed the face of education in the South to the great benefit of both black and white southerners.

"Eloquently places African Americans at the center of the struggle for education. . . . in the American South." -- s in American History" In *Self-Taught*, Heather Andrea Williams . . . offers a passionate historical analysis. . . . Upon finishing *Self-Taught* the reader will be changed. -- Black Issues Book , Fall 2005" *Self-Taught*, a history of African American education in the South. . . . could scarcely be more timely." -- Civil War History" In this finely-crafted, nuanced, and well-written book, Williams brings to light a history that has never been fully told before." -- Journal of Social History This delightfully well-written and swift reading scholarly monograph may well be considered a classic in its field. . . . By tapping the rich historical experience of African Americans, Heather Andrea Williams presents readers with the important personal exercise of autonomy and rejuvenating dignity that was gained by black Americans who worked within their communities to establish or demand educational institutions in the South during the Civil War and Reconstruction.--Civil War Book *Self-Taught* is a well-written, thoroughly researched study of the African American effort to employ literacy in the quest for true freedom and empowerment. Its insightful analysis of African American agency is a welcome and significant addition to the literature of black education in the era of emancipation.--Journal of Illinois HistoryAn original, informative, and moving account. . . . [A] major corrective study

of the struggle of African Americans.--Arkansas Historical QuarterlySelf-Taught, a history of African American education in the South from the antebellum era through Reconstruction, could scarcely be more timely.--Civil War HistorySelf-Taught is not merely the most comprehensive documentation and analysis of African American education in the South during the 1861-1871 period, it is in every respect the first definitive study of the formative stages of universal literacy and formal education among ex-slaves. Never before has anyone described so fully the broad range of roles and the significant contributions of African Americans to the development of formal and public education in the South for themselves and for the entire region.--James D. Anderson, author of *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*This book is a well-told story of a courageous people's quest to obtain an education. . . . The book is a testimony to the resiliency of the indomitable human spirit.--Louisiana HistoryWith great skill, Heather Williams demonstrates the centrality of black people to the process of formal education--the establishment of schools, the creation of a cadre of teachers, the forging of standards of literacy and numeracy--in the post-emancipation years. As she does, Williams makes the case that the issue of education informed the Reconstruction period--the two-cornered struggle between North and South over the rebuilding of Southern society, the three-cornered struggle between white Northerners, white Southerners, and black people over the nature of education, and the less well-known contest between black Northerners and black Southerners over the direction of African American culture. *Self-Taught* is a work of major significance.--Ira Berlin, University of MarylandProvides a needed corrective to the existing literature. . . . [A] readable and carefully researched work. . . . Represents an important expansion of knowledge about Reconstruction, the South, the political and cultural struggles of African Americans, and the nation's educational system.--North Carolina Historical A book that eloquently places African Americans at the center of the struggle for education, establishment of schools, and teaching despite the daunting legal, economic, and societal barriers that confronted them in the American South.-- *s in American History*Makes contributions beyond the author's stated goal of documenting the agency of blacks in acquiring literacy. . . . Williams provides a useful model for how to elucidate relations of power while also explaining their significance for larger historical developments. Hopefully, her success will inspire other historians to pursue similar work.--Florida Historical QuarterlyProvides us with glimpses into the often heroic activities of African American teachers during this period, and illuminates their education, their teaching philosophies, and the numerous obstacles they overcame. . . .A wonderful book that clearly explains and fully documents the 'history of freedpeople's role in educating themselves.'--Journal of African American HistorySelf-Taught joins that body of scholarship pressing the case that African Americans were not passive recipients of education, but rather the active agents of realizing the promise of formally schooled intelligence.--Journal of American HistoryHeather Andrea Williams's excellent new book . . . tells their story, emphasizing the role that literate African-Americans played in 'jumpstarting' the extraordinary reduction in illiteracy after the War. . . . Beautifully written and cogently argued, *Self-Taught* deserves the attention of all scholars interested in early history of African-American schools.--Journal of Economic HistoryGroundbreaking. . . . Williams marshals enormous primary evidence to reveal a previously untold story. . . . Ultimately, a book of triumphant reading--both enslaved and freedpeople's acts of reading.--Southern CulturesA subtle, compelling, and poignant portrait of freedpeoples' determined efforts to secure the right to an education for themselves and their children. . . . In this finely-crafted, nuanced, and well-written book, Williams brings to light a history that has never been fully told before, telling that story through the words of the protagonists themselves.--Journal of Social HistoryIn *Self-Taught*, Heather Andrea Williams . . . offers a passionate historical analysis. . . . Upon finishing *Self-Taught* the reader will be changed. Untold stories of protest and resistance come alive through Williams's expert analysis and captivating storytelling.--Black Issues Book This book is a testimony to the resiliency of the indomitable human spirit. . . . Further evidence of the great indebtedness of African Americans of today to the slaves and freedmen.--Louisiana HistoryFrom the Inside FlapWilliams discusses how southern African Americans sought education during and after the Civil War, highlighting the efforts former slaves made on their own behalf by teaching, building schools, and attending school themselves.