
William Pickens ; William L. Andrews

Autobiography holds a position of distinction—indeed, many would say preeminence—among the narrative traditions of black America. African-Americans had been dictating and writing first-person accounts of their lives for almost a century before the first black American novel appeared in 1853. Nineteenth-century abolitionists sponsored the publication of the narratives of escaped slaves out of a conviction that first-person accounts of those victimized by and yet triumphant over slavery would mobilize white readers more profoundly than any other kind of antislavery discourse.