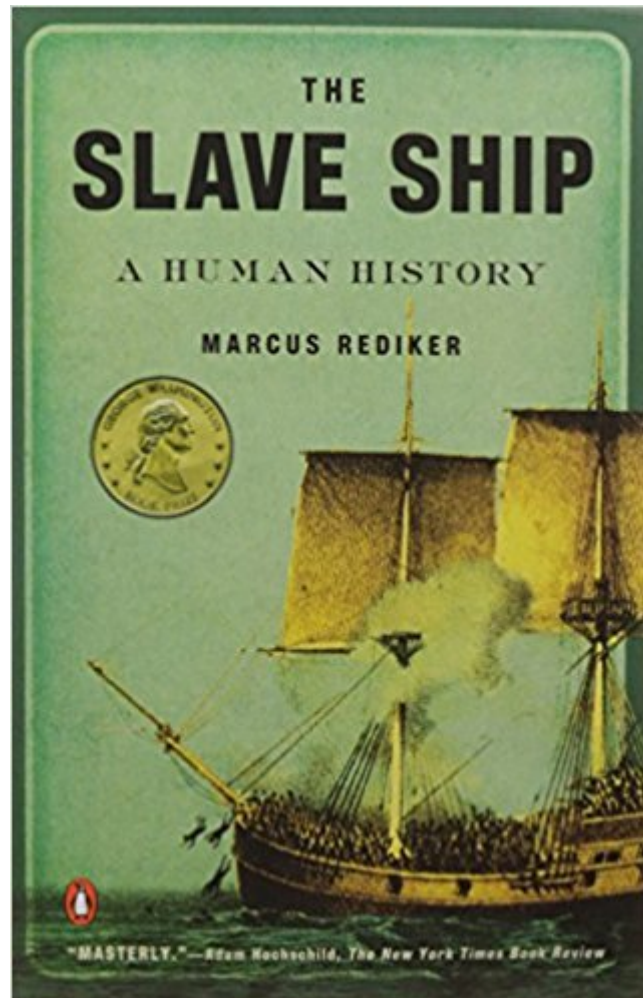




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# The Slave Ship: A Human History



## Synopsis

“Masterly.” —Adam Hochschild, The New York Times Book Review  
In this widely praised history of an infamous institution, award-winning scholar Marcus Rediker shines a light into the darkest corners of the British and American slave ships of the eighteenth century. Drawing on thirty years of research in maritime archives, court records, diaries, and firsthand accounts, *The Slave Ship* is riveting and sobering in its revelations, reconstructing in chilling detail a world nearly lost to history: the “floating dungeons” at the forefront of the birth of African American culture.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (September 30, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143114255

ISBN-13: 978-0143114253

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.9 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 90 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #16,378 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in [Books > History > World > Slavery & Emancipation](#) #8 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > History > Ships](#) #12 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Ships](#)

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this groundbreaking work, historian and scholar Rediker considers the relationships between the slave ship captain and his crew, between the sailors and the slaves, and among the captives themselves as they endured the violent, terror-filled and often deadly journey between the coasts of Africa and America. While he makes fresh use of those who left their mark in written records (Olaudah Equiano, James Field Stanfield, John Newton), Rediker is remarkably attentive to the experiences of the enslaved women, from whom we have no written accounts, and of the common seaman, who he says was a victim of the slave trade... and a victimizer. Regarding these vessels as a strange and potent combination of war machine, mobile prison, and factory, Rediker expands the scholarship on how the ships not only delivered millions of people to slavery, [but] prepared them for it. He engages readers in maritime detail (how ships were made, how crews were fed) and renders the archival (letters, logs and legal hearings) accessible. Painful as this

powerful book often is, Rediker does not lose sight of the humanity of even the most egregious participants, from African traders to English merchants. (Oct. 8) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Marcus Rediker is professor of maritime history at the University of Pittsburgh and the author of *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (1987), *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000), and *Villains of All Nations* (2005), books that explore seafaring, piracy, and the origins of globalization. In *The Slave Ship*, Rediker combines exhaustive research with an astute and highly readable synthesis of the material, balancing documentary snapshots with an ear for gripping narrative. Critics compare the impact of Rediker's history, unique for its ship-deck perspective, to similarly compelling fictional accounts of slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage*. Even scholars who have written on the subject defer to Rediker's vast knowledge of the subject. Bottom line: *The Slave Ship* is sure to become a classic of its subject. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Marcus Rediker's *The Slave Ship: A Human History* examines the floating dungeons that transported millions of Africans to the Americas. Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh, Marcus Rediker illustrates the horrific truths of the slave trade. Rediker's subtitle to this book, *A Human History*, exemplifies one of the main purposes of this book, which is to highlight the humanity of those taken from their homes and forced upon these ships. Rediker's book is extremely well-written and it is utterly gripping. The manner in which he conveys the various stories of slaves, slavers, and other involved parties is enthralling. This work is very heavy and can sometimes be hard to read. The numerous acts of brutality against the enslaved are simply horrific. Some of the stories he tells are reminiscent of those from the holocaust. Rediker does a phenomenal job in capturing life in the "wooden world" of the slave ships. The use of personal accounts of life on the slave ships help paint a reliable picture of the reality aboard these vessels. By combining stories from slaves, captains, seaman, and merchants, it is possible to reconstruct the conditions aboard the ships by looking for similarities between the stories. Rediker understands this and uses an almost overwhelming amount of first-hand accounts to drive home the truth of these ships, which helped shaped the modern Western world. This book is important because it reconnects Africa with the

greater Atlantic world. Modern Atlantic histories are generally concerned with Europe and North America, but it is clear that Africa needs to be included in these histories. Allison Games writes, "The comparative absence of Africa in conceptualizations of the Atlantic is a consequence both of the dominance of Atlantic history by historians of the North Atlantic and of enduring Eurocentrism." (Games) Marcus Rediker has created a tremendous work that is filled with a treasure trove of information. While it is a bit disjointed, the quality of the research far outweighs the minor structural problems. This book highlights the brutality and the horrors of the middle passage and the struggles those imprisoned onboard faced.

I read the kindle edition, and being a student of history this book contains excellent descriptive stories of the horrid experiences on board the slave ship. Rediker paints a vivid scene of the death machine known as the slave ship, and this human variable affecting slave mortality is made well known through his specific examples of the evil treatment on the slaves. This title is a must read for anyone interested on the topic, and is an excellent diversion from those historians and statisticians who tend to manipulate the numbers and the bogus statistics in order to conclude their arguments about the specifics of mortality on board slave ships. Rediker reveals to the reader that not all ships were the same, and that goes the same for the crew. Human involvement during this time was the quintessential variable impacting the slave trade and that is made crystal clear by Rediker's gruesome, descriptive writing. This is a definite must have for anyone's collection on this material.

Numbers don't lie. And Rediker's book actually gave me more insight into my dominant U.S. heritage: if 11,213,000 Africans were shipped to the Caribbean and South "America" with only 500,000 or so of those landing on "U.S." shores where did all the other people come from to make up the U.S. slave population come from? They didn't breed a couple of million people in forty years now did they? Hmm. This is a brilliantly written account The Middle Passage factory.

If this history were taught in schools and known by blacks and whites alike, it would serve well to anger us into unity against the black and white perpetrators that brought the scourge of slavery and racism to the Americas. Instead, our collective ignorance of this history still divides us with hate and vengeance. There is no justification or excuse for the Atlantic Slave Trade, neither is there justification or excuse for us to remain ignorant of the real history. Understanding that history is essential for understanding the development of racism in America, and dissolving it. We are one blood.

An excellent book that graphically but humanely describes the environment of the slavers that plied the Atlantic in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It focuses on the enslaved themselves and the horrors of the "machine" that was the ship. Rediker deftly uses primary sources to document the dehumanization of the enslaved but also of the ships' crews. Some of the events he describes are truly horrific, but this feels like an essential book for understanding the slave trade and the people and the capitalist system who profited from it.

A wonderfully researched gruesome tale of the horrors of the slave trade. the author's description of it as the beginning of global capitalism is very telling about the inhumanity of those seeking to grab power through money at a terrible human cost. It has left me thinking a great deal more about the immigration issues that The US struggles with today and the lack of responsibility those who have the power in this world take for the deadening affect of racism on the disenfranchised members of our society

The fact that slavery, in it's modern form went on for 4 centuries is unfathomable. Rediker's depiction of the slave ship as a massive instrument of terror and oppression is painful to read but I recommend it to all. This should be widely read

I think very few Americans are truly aware of this part of the history of the United States. This book is very well written and brings to life a subject that had a huge and often forgotten impact on the United States.

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