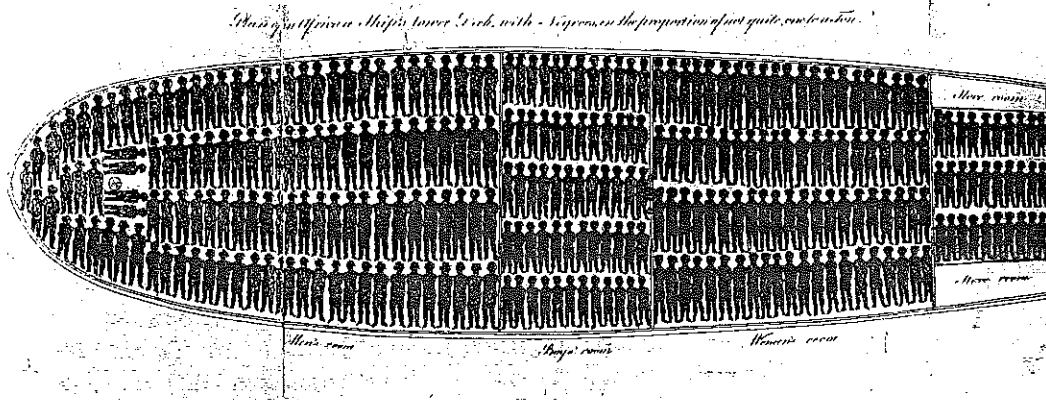


publication, Equiano frequently spoke at antislavery meetings and wrote numerous letters to newspapers in response to racist articles. As the editor of a London newspaper observed of one of those responses, "We cannot but think the letter a good argument in favour of the natural Abilities, as well as good feelings, of the Negro Race, and a solid answer in their favour." Equiano, who also spoke in favor of racial intermarriage, married an Englishwoman, Susan Cullen, in 1792. The couple had two daughters before Equiano died in London on April 31, 1797.

[bedfordstmartins.com/americanlit](http://bedfordstmartins.com/americanlit) for research links on Equiano

**Reading Equiano's *Narrative*.** Equiano's famous narrative, one of the earliest autobiographical accounts written by a black person in the Anglo-American world, was first published in London in 1789. The book sold extremely well in England, Ireland, and the United States, where it was published in 1791. In the early nineteenth century, it became an international bestseller, with numerous new editions in English, Dutch, French, and Russian. Addressing members of Parliament, Equiano clearly stated his purpose in the preface to the first edition:

My Lords and Gentlemen, Permit me, with the greatest deference and respect, to lay at your feet the following genuine narrative; the chief design of which is to excite in your august assemblies a sense of compassion for the miseries which the Slave-Trade has entailed on my unfortunate countrymen. By the horrors of that trade I was first torn away from all the tender connections that were naturally dear to my heart; but these, through the mysterious ways of Providence, I ought to regard as infinitely more than compensated by the introduction I have thence obtained to the knowledge



Plan of a Slave Ship

This engraving, published in 1789 by the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade to illustrate the brutal conditions aboard slave ships, was accompanied by the caption: "Plan of an African Ship's Lower Deck with Negroes in the Proportion of Only One to Ten."