

Time-line of the Life of Olaudah Equiano

- 1745 Olaudah was born in 1745 in the kingdom of Benin, which is now part of Southern Nigeria. He tells us that his father was one of the elders or chiefs.
- 1756 Olaudah and his older sister are kidnapped by men from another tribe and taken to the coast of Africa where he is sold to a European slave trader. He is then transported to Barbados and renamed Michael during the crossing. In Barbados he is sold again and sent to Virginia in the USA where his new owner renames him Jacob.
- 1757 Olaudah is bought by Michael Pascal who is a lieutenant in the Royal Navy and is renamed Gustavus Vassa after the then King of Sweden. [Olaudah used this name for the rest of his life and only changed back to Olaudah when he came to write his story later in life.]
- 1757 Olaudah acts as valet to Lt Pascal and travels with him to England. He is involved in the Seven Years War, which was a war partly between England and France fighting over overseas colonies, which lasted for seven years!
- 1758 Olaudah is present during the the Battle of Louisberg off the coast of Canada (England won).
- 1759 Olaudah converts to Christianity and is baptised at St Margaret's Westminster. He is also at the battle of Lagos off the south coast of Spain (England won again).
- 1761 Olaudah is also at the battle of Belle Ile off the west coast of France (England won again!) From time to time, Lt Pascal would send Olaudah to England to stay with his sister-in-law where he learnt to read and write.
- 1762 Lt Pascal sells Olaudah to Captain James Doran of Gravesend, from where he was transported back to the Caribbean, to Montserrat, in the Leeward Islands. There, he was sold to Robert King, an American Quaker merchant from Philadelphia who traded in the Caribbean. Olaudah works for Robert King in his stores. He learns to read and write better English and is allowed to trade on his own behalf as well as that of Robert King, selling fruit, glass tumblers and other goods both in Georgia and the Caribbean islands.

- 1765 Robert King promises that Equiano can buy his freedom for £40 (equivalent to £5,500 in 2019)
- 1766 Equiano buys his freedom with his savings from his trading. Robert King asks Equiano to stay on as a business partner but Equiano thought it too dangerous to stay in America as a free man as while loading a ship in Georgia, he was almost kidnapped back into enslavement. Olaudah returns to England but continues to work as a sailor.
- 1773 Olaudah sails on HMS Racehorse on a scientific expedition to the Arctic with Dr Charles Irving
- 1775 Olaudah sails with Dr Charles Irving to what is now Nicaragua in Central America to help select and manage slaves on a sugar plantation.
- 1777 Olaudah returns to London, where he later becomes involved with the movement to abolish slavery and the slave trade.
- 1780s Olaudah is very active in the abolition movement in London. He is also involved in helping black Americans who had been freed from slavery having fought for the British during the War of Independence between England and America and who had then fled to England after the war ended rather than risk being made slaves again in America.
- 1789 Olaudah writes his autobiography which becomes a best seller. The money from the sales of the book makes him financially independent.
- 1792 Olaudah marries an English woman, Susannah Cullen. They settle in Cambridgeshire and have two daughters. One dies at the age of four but the other grows up and marries and has children of her own.
- 1796 Susannah dies at the age of 34.
- 1797 Olaudah dies at the age of 52. He leaves £950 in his will, equivalent to around £75,000 today.