

# Black History Month

## PHILLIS WHEATLEY



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#### EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Phillis Wheatley's journey began in West Africa around 1753, where, tragically, she was kidnapped at the tender age of eight. Transported across the ocean on a slave ship, she found herself in Boston, Massachusetts, destined for a life of servitude. John Wheatley, a kind-hearted individual despite the prevailing norms of the time, purchased Phillis as a servant for his wife, Susanna. Remarkably, Phillis, despite her fragile health, would become an unexpected beacon of literary brilliance.

In an era where African Americans were actively discouraged from pursuing education, Phillis's intellect stood out. Susanna Wheatley, along with her children, recognized this potential and took the unconventional step of providing Phillis with a rare education. She was taught not only to read but also in theology, English, Latin, Greek, and ancient history. The early investment in Phillis's education would lay the foundation for her extraordinary future.

#### PUBLISHED POET

At the age of 15, Phillis Wheatley achieved a remarkable feat by writing her first published poem in the Newport Mercury. Her talent continued to shine, culminating in the publication of her groundbreaking book, "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral," in 1773. This made her the first African American enslaved person to publish a book of poems and the third African woman to achieve this milestone. Wheatley's literary contributions were an inspiring triumph against the societal norms of her time.

#### WASHINGTON

Phillis Wheatley's literary prowess extended beyond her penned verses as the Found is unique connection with George Washington. In 1775, she sent one of her esteemed commander of the Continental Army. In 1775, she sent one of her heartfelt works to Washington, a gesture that not only showcased her admiration but also led to a notable evolution. Phillis was welcomed to visit Washington at his Cambridge, Massachusetts headquarters in 1776, underscoring the impact her poetry had on prominent figures of the time. This connection with Washington not only elevated Phillis's status as a poet but also demonstrated the power of words in fostering relationships and bridging diverse perspectives during a crucial period in American history.



#### CHANGES

Phillis Wheatley's life was marked by significant challenges and changes. Despite her accomplishments, she traveled to treatment and returned to Boston, where her life was freed from slavery but devastated by the loss of her family members, including Susanna and John, in 1778. However, her marriage was marked by boarding house. Phillis continued to write, though her diminished enthusiasm for her poems. Despite these hardships, she couldn't find support for a second

#### DEATH

Phillis Wheatley, a pioneering figure in American literature, passed away on December 5, 1784, in Boston. The brevity of her life, Wheatley's legacy is marked by the first African American woman to publish a book of poems, challenging prevailing stereotypes in colonial America.



Wheatley's literary contributions remain a testament to her talent, resilience, and the power of her history. Her work not only showcased her poetic prowess but also served as a catalyst for future generations of African American writers. In the face of systemic oppression and discrimination of her time, Wheatley's legacy continues to inspire and shape the ongoing pursuit of literary understanding.

Her recognition of African American literary history, emphasizing the importance of understanding the ongoing pursuit of literary

### PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Comprehension Questions

INSTRUCTIONS: CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANSWER.

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**READING COMPREHENSION**

# READING PASSAGES WITH TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

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gure in American literature, passed away on December 5, 1784, in Boston. Phillis's legacy is a testament to the resilience and the power of her talent during a challenging period in history. Her work not only showcased her poetic prowess but also served as a catalyst for African American writers. In the face of the systemic oppression and discrimination of her time, Phillis Wheatley's literary legacy continues to inspire and shape the future, emphasizing the importance of the ongoing pursuit of literary standing.

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excellence and...

READING COMPREHENSION

COLOR & B/W  
VERSIONS INCLUDED

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# PHILLIS WHEATLEY

## Comprehension Questions

**DIRECTIONS: CHOOSE THE RIGHT ANSWER.**

**1. Where was Phillis Wheatley born?**

- A. Boston
- B. London
- C. West Africa
- D. Newport

**2. At what age did Phillis Wheatley write her first published poem?**

- A. 8
- B. 13
- C. 16
- D. 18

**3. What was the title of Phillis Wheatley's landmark book of poems?**

- A. Poems on Love and Nature
- B. Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral
- C. The Poetry Collection
- D. Verses

**4. What significant event weakened the enthusiasm for Phillis Wheatley's poems?**

London, during the war to John Peters on of her book.

What did Phillis Wheatley have with John Peters?

What was the publication date of Phillis Wheatley's first book?

How did Phillis Wheatley pass away?

## ANSWER KEY

1. Phillis Wheatley's early education and how it defied societal norms. How did her adopted family contribute to her learning?

2. A significance of Phillis Wheatley's first published poem and its impact on her subsequent fame. How did her literary journey begin on this point?

3. Phillis Wheatley's relationship with George Washington. What role did poems play in their connection, and how did it lead to a significant event in 1776?

4. The challenges and changes in Phillis Wheatley's life after moving from London. How did her freedom from slavery impact her struggles and her place in her personal life?

5. Phillis Wheatley's marriage to John Peters and the hardships she encountered. How did her family life unfold, and what external factors, such as the Revolutionary War, affected her career?

## Answers Key

### MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS:

1. C. West Africa: Phillis Wheatley was born in West Africa, around 1753, as stated in the passage.
2. B. 13: Phillis wrote her first published poem at around age 13, according to the passage.
3. B. Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral: The title of Phillis Wheatley's landmark book of poems is "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral," as mentioned in the passage.
4. B. As a common practice of the time: Phillis Wheatley adopted the Wheatley family name as a common practice of the time, according to the passage.
5. B. George Washington: Phillis Wheatley received an invitation from George Washington to visit his headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1776, as mentioned in the passage.
6. C. London: Phillis Wheatley traveled to London, England, to promote her poems, according to the passage.
7. B. The Revolutionary War: The passage states that the Revolutionary War weakened the enthusiasm for Phillis Wheatley's poems.
8. C. Three: Phillis Wheatley had three children with John Peters, according to the passage.
9. B. 1773: The book "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral" by Phillis Wheatley was published in 1773, as mentioned in the passage.
10. B. 1781: Phillis Wheatley passed away in her early thirties on December 5, 1781, in Boston, Massachusetts, according to the passage.

### QUESTIONS TO EXPLAIN:

1. Describe Phillis Wheatley's early education and how it defied societal norms. How did her adopted family contribute to her learning?  
Answer: Despite societal discouragement, Phillis Wheatley's

## MCQ'S & QUESTIONS

## ANSWER KEY INCLUDED

**READY TO PRINT**

**NO-PREP !**

**JUST PRINT AND GO!**



**EASY EDITING**

**EDITABLE**

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