



Harriet Jacobs: A Life

Jean Yellin

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In this remarkable biography, Jean Fagan Yellin recounts the full adventures of Harriet Jacobs, before and after slavery. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, one of the most widely read slave narratives of all time, recounts through the pseudonymous character named "Linda" the adventures of a young female slave who spent seven years in her grandmother's attic hiding from her sexually abusive and cruel master. Jean Yellin takes us inside that attic with Harriet Jacobs and then follows her on her escape to the North, where she found safe haven with Quaker abolitionists. Drawing upon decades of original research with never-before-seen archival sources, Yellin creates a complete picture of the events that inspired *Incidents* and offers the first rounded picture of Jacobs's life in the thirty-six years after the book's publication. Harrassed by her former owner, living under threat of recapture until the end of the Civil War, Jacobs survived poverty, ran a boarding house, and built a career as a political writer and speaker, struggling all the while to provide for her family. Jean Yellin brings to life the struggles and triumphs of this extraordinary woman whose life reflected all the major changes of the nineteenth century, from slavery to the Civil War to Reconstruction to the origins of the modern Civil Rights movement.

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