



The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (Penguin Twentieth Century Classics)

James Weldon Johnson

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Originally published in 1912, this novel was one of the first to present a frank picture of being black in America

Masked in the tradition of the literary confession practiced by such writers as St. Augustine and Rousseau, this "autobiography" purports to be a candid account of its narrator's private views and feelings as well as an acknowledgement of the central secret of his life: that though he lives as a white man, he is, by heritage and experience, an African-American. Written by the first black executive secretary of the NAACP, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, in its depiction of turn-of-the-century New York, anticipates the social realism of the Harlem Renaissance writers. In its unprecedented analysis of the social causes of a black man's denial of the best within himself, it is perhaps James Weldon Johnson's greatest service to his race.

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