
**Basic Trajectory of Black Autobiographies (and Autobiographical Fiction)**

**Ascent Narrative**

a. Narrator’s physical and spiritual movement upwards from South to North
b. Slavery to freedom. It is the story of a slave (non-man/woman) who becomes human (a man/woman)
c. Illiteracy to literacy.
d. Narrator’s development of self-mastery (primary subject of the autobiographical work). Self-mastery implies a more aware, acute observer and interpreter of society, especially in regards to political, social, educational, and religious institutions.
e. Narrator works towards spiritual and psychological wholeness.
f. Narrator moves form homelessness to having a home.
g. Narrator’s personal development works in tandem with the theme of a broader responsibility.
h. Slave narratives aim at educating white audiences and as models of hope for black society.
i. The narrator ascends from muteness to voice. The narrator is finally able to tell his own story. Voice gives them subjectivity and for Stepto makes the narrator the definitive historian.

Central to the Ascent Narrative is the struggle to reconcile a “double-consciousness,” the term Du Bois used to characterize black subjectivity in America as a problem of reconciling two “warring” selves and ideals: (African/American):

After the Egyptian and the Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and the Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, born with a veil and gifted with second sight in this American world,—a world which yield him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that look on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this twoness,—an American, a Negro. (Souls of Black Folk 45)
Works Cited
