



PHILLIS WHEATLEY

1753 - 1784

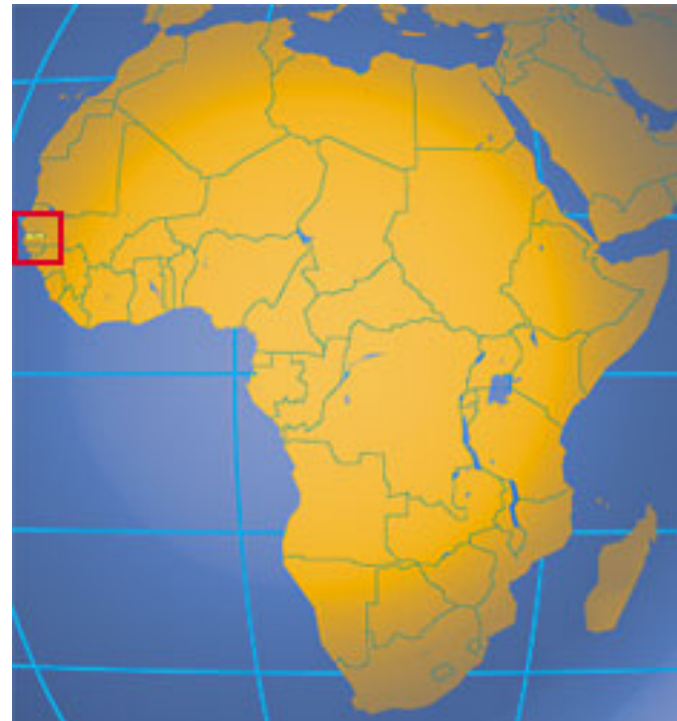
AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

- Brought to Boston on a slave ship
- Sold to the Wheatleys
- Brought up with their children
- Taught to read & write
- Published poet at 14 y. o.
- Corresponded with well-known personages
- Traveled to England and back

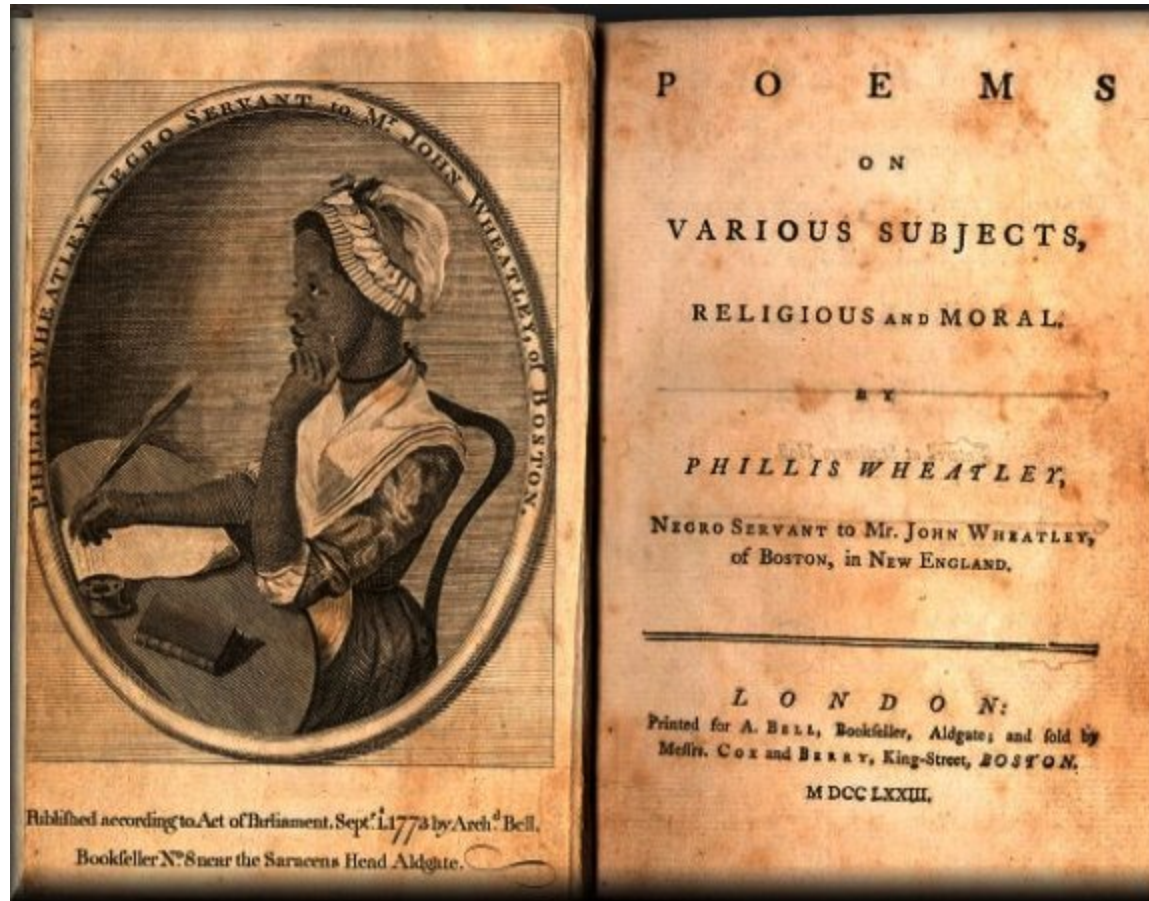


EARLY LIFE

- Born in Senegambia, 1753
- Sold into slavery at the age of 7 or 8
- Transported to Boston aboard the slave ship *Phillis*
- Bought by Wheatley family as companion to Susanna
- Son & daughter tutored her in reading & writing



POETIC REPUTATION



- Family encouraged her poetic gifts
- “On the Death of the Rev. George Whitefield” published when 14
- Reprinted in England
- Began various correspondences
- Failed subscription for a publication of her poems, 1772
- Book of poems published in England, 1773

TRAVELS

- Traveled to England in 1773
- Met Mayor of London
- Supposed to meet George III
- Called home by Susanna's failing health



LATER LIFE

- Susanna died, 1774
- Emancipated soon after
- Met General Washington, March 1776 after publishing “To His Excellency, George Washington”
- Washington was a fan
- Married 1778
- Tough times followed
- Died in poverty 1784



PUBLICATIONS & LEGACY

- First Black woman to publish a book in England or America
- Washington, B. Franklin & Voltaire were fans
- T. Jefferson scorned her poems
- Died in poverty, nearly forgotten.
- “Proved” that Africans could write poetry
 - Examined in a court of law to attest she wrote her poems in 1772
- Rediscovered in 20th Century



HER STATUE IN BOSTON

