



The Souls of Black Folk

By *W.E.B DuBois*

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William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an African American civil rights activist, leader, Pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, writer, editor, poet, and scholar. The importance of his work to the success of the Civil Rights movement cannot be overestimated. "In the course of his long, turbulent career, W. E. B. Du Bois attempted virtually every possible solution to the problem of twentieth-century racism-- scholarship, propaganda, integration, national self-determination, human rights, cultural and economic separatism, politics, international communism, expatriation, third world solidarity." -David Levering Lewis The Souls of Black Folk propelled Du Bois to the forefront of the Civil Rights movement when it was first published. This hard hitting masterpiece is part essays, part memoir, and part fiction. More than any other book it brought home just how racist and unjust America could be, and demanded that African Americans be granted access to education and equality.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) is the greatest of African American intellectuals--a sociologist, historian, novelist, and activist whose astounding career spanned the nation's history from Reconstruction to the civil rights movement. Born in Massachusetts and educated at Fisk, Harvard, and the University of Berlin, Du Bois penned his epochal masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in 1903. It remains his most studied and popular work; its insights into Negro life at the turn of the 20th century still ring true.

With a dash of the Victorian and Enlightenment influences that peppered his impassioned yet formal prose, the book's largely autobiographical chapters take the reader through the momentous and moody maze of Afro-American life after the Emancipation Proclamation: from poverty, the neoslavery of the sharecropper, illiteracy, miseducation, and lynching, to the heights of humanity reached by the spiritual "sorrow songs" that birthed gospel and the blues. The most memorable passages are contained in "On Booker T. Washington and Others," where Du Bois criticizes his famous contemporary's rejection of higher education and accommodationist stance toward white racism: "Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races," he writes, further complaining that Washington's thinking "withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens." The capstone of *The Souls of Black Folk*, though, is Du Bois' haunting, eloquent description of the concept of the black psyche's "double consciousness," which he described as "a peculiar sensation.... One ever feels this twoness--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Thanks to W.E.B. Du Bois' commitment and foresight--and the intellectual excellence expressed in this timeless literary gem--black Americans can today look in the mirror and rejoice in their beautiful black, brown, and beige reflections. --*Eugene Holley Jr.*

Review

"One hundred years after publication, there is in the entire body of social criticism still no more than a handful of meditations on the promise and failings of democracy in America to rival William Edward Burghardt Du Bois's extraordinary collection of fourteen essays." —from the Introduction by **David Levering Lewis**

From the Hardcover edition.

Review

"This is a thoroughly researched, carefully reasoned, and well-integrated introduction and collection of documents. It is far and away the best scholarly introduction to Du Bois's Souls and frames the book's meaning in new and important ways. The introduction is extremely comprehensive and well organized. The treatment of Du Bois's life is accurate and thorough and appears in a 'voice' that will prepare student readers well for Du Bois's elegant and powerful prose."

Users Review

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Clara Duke:

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