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Using a combination of edited slave narratives alongside critical scholarship, Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky: A Narrative by Francis Fedric, Escaped Slave, ed. by C.L. Innes, simultaneously illustrates how an individual's African-American slave narrative changed over time whilst using extensive research to confirm an overwhelming majority of Francis Fedric's narrative. Also notable within this book is Innes' refuting of Henry Louis Gates' claim that Fedric's narrative was fictional rather than authentic.

Innes' introduction adds to this book by providing historical and cultural contexts to this compelling work. The narrative is compelling because it illustrates the depravity of slavery whilst providing the reader with enough detail to help understand the locations and people that Fedric encountered in his pre-emancipation life. Without such detail, Innes would not have been able to have conducted her own research into the authenticity of Fedric's narrative. The combination of Fedric's narrative alongside Innes' historical judiciousness makes this book a must read for those potential readers interested in authentic African-American slave narratives that are captivating whilst being very readable considering the cruelty Fedric recalls.

George Watley

22 March 2012
He joined the hundreds of other fugitive slaves fleeing across the Ohio River and north to Canada on the Underground Railroad. After his arrival in Toronto he discarded his master's surname (Parker), renamed himself Francis Fedric, and married an Englishwoman. In 1857, he traveled with his wife to Great Britain, where he lectured on behalf of the antislavery cause and published two versions of his life story. In 1854, faced with the threat of yet another brutal beating, a fifty-year-old slave in Mason County, Kentucky, decided to try to escape. He joined the hundreds of other fugitive slaves fleeing across the Ohio River and north to Canada on the Underground. Specifications. Series Title. Slave narratives became an important form of literary expression before the Civil War, when about 65 memoirs by former slaves were published as books or pamphlets. The stories told by former slaves helped to stir public opinion against slavery. The Most Interesting Slave Narratives. The prominent abolitionist Frederick Douglass first gained widespread public attention with the publication of his own classic slave narrative in the 1840s. Brown, William Wells. "Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States." Electronic Edition, University Library, UNC-Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004. Brown, William Wells. "Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself."