

In Irving's story, Rip goes to sleep a loyal subject of King George and awakes twenty years later a citizen of a new nation whose president is George Washington. Irving thus transforms the violent rebellion and long war into something to sleep through; as the narrator himself explains, he wants "to make a long story short." Writing "Rip Van Winkle" thirty years after the end of the war, Irving implies that this is perhaps how all Americans want to record their national history. Founded in revolution, the nation awakes to find itself "singularly metamorphosed" into a legitimate world power and, like Rip, given the liberty to invent all sorts of stories about its origin.

DAVID WALKER, EXCERPTS FROM *APPEAL IN FOUR ARTICLES (1829)*

David Walker's Biography and Textual History

Although David Walker's name is not well known now, his short book, the full title of which is *David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to those of the United States of America*, was one of the most controversial texts in the United States in the antebellum period and a work of considerable importance in American literary history. Walker (c.1796–1830) was born in North Carolina; his father was enslaved, and his mother was free. Because, according to the law of the time, children followed the condition of their mother, Walker was also free.

We don't know much about Walker's early life, except that he lived for several years in Charleston, South Carolina, which was both a major center of the North American intrastate slave trade and also the location of a vibrant free black community—much of it centered around the African Methodist Episcopal Church, of which Walker was a lifelong member. Walker moved to Boston sometime in the early 1820s—historians are not exactly sure when he arrived, but he was clearly well established by 1825, since census records indicate that he owned a business. In Boston, he also became



Frontispiece to the 1830 edition of *David Walker's Appeal*.

a member of the Massachusetts General Colored Association and worked on behalf of one of the first African-American newspapers, *Freedom's Journal*.

Walker published the first edition of his *Appeal* in 1829, releasing two more editions of the work before his death in August 1830. At the time, many people suspected his death was the result of foul play since a \$10,000 bounty had been advertised on his life—evidence of both the anger and fear that *Appeal* created in the white community. However, most historians believe it more likely that Walker died from tuberculosis, which is listed on his death record, since his daughter had died from the disease only a week before his own death. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Boston.