



Existentialist Thought in African American Literature before 1940

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Existentialist Thought in African American Literature Before 1940 is the first collection of its kind to break new ground in arguing that long before its classification by Jean-Paul Sartre, African American literature embodied existentialist thought. To make its case, this daring book dissects eight notable texts: Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I A Woman* (1861), Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl* (1861), Sutton E. Griggs's *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), and Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929). It explores and addresses a wide range of complex philosophical concepts such as: authenticity, potentiality-for-authentic living, bad faith, and existentialism from the Christian point of view. The use of interdisciplinary studies such as gender studies, queer studies, Christian ethics, mixed-race studies, and existentialism, allows the authors within this book to lend unique perspectives in examining selected African American literary works.

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