



Voyage of the Slave Ship: J.M.W. Turner's Masterpiece in Historical Context

Stephen J. May

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Set against the backdrop of the Atlantic slave trade, this book traces the development, exhibition and final disposition of one of J.M.W. Turner's greatest and most memorable paintings. Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901) in Great Britain produced unprecedented wealth and luxury. For artists and writers this period was particularly noteworthy in that it gave them the opportunity to both praise their country and criticize its overreaching ambition. At the forefront of these artists and writers were men like J.M.W. Turner, Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, and John Ruskin, who created some of the most enduring works of art while exposing many of the social evils of their native land. The book also analyzes the man behind the painting. Aloof, gruff and mysterious, Turner resisted success. He worked as a solitary artist, traveling to Europe, sketching towns along the way, studying nature, and transferring his experiences to finished paintings upon his return to London. The son of a barber, he grew up in London and experienced many of the social issues of the age: slavery and freedom, poverty in the slums, monarchy and democracy, stability and anarchy. He was a poet of nature and its innumerable mysteries.

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