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Phillis Wheatley

b. West Africa, c.1753-55; d. Boston, 12/5/1784.



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Named after the slave ship *Phillis* that brought her to America, she was the first African American poet to have her work published. Her Boston owners, the Wheatleys, encouraged her education. She published her first poem at age 13. During the war, Phillis Wheatley wrote a poem to George Washington, who praised her “poetical talents” and “genius”. She gained her freedom, but died young and poor.

*“Enlarge the close contracted mind,
And fill it with thy fire.”*