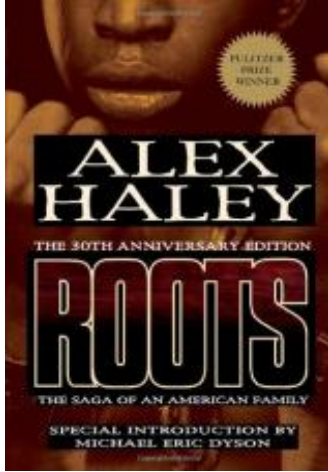


# Roots: The 30th Anniversary Edition

by Alex Haley

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## About the Book

One of the most important books and television series ever to appear, **Roots** galvanized the nation, and created an extraordinary political, racial, social and cultural dialogue that hadn't been seen since the publication of **Uncle Tom's Cabin**. The book sold over 1,000,000 copies in the first year, and the miniseries was watched by an astonishing 130,000,000 people. **Roots** opened up the minds of Americans of all colors and faiths to one of the darkest and most painful parts of America's past.

**Roots** also fostered a remarkable dialogue about not just the past, but the then present day 1970's and how America had fared since the days of slavery.

**Roots: The 30th Anniversary Edition** will remind the generation that originally read it (and watched the miniseries) that there are issues that still need to be discussed, and to introduce to a new and younger generation, a book that will help them understand, perhaps for the first time, the drama and reality of what took place during the time period.

## Discussion Guide

1. What significance do names have in **Roots**? How is a character's name tied into his or her identity and perception of himself or herself?
2. What effects does his new social context in America have on Kunta? What difficulties might immigrants in general have when moving to a new country and culture? How might those difficulties be magnified when the move is involuntary?
3. How do the American-born African-Americans differ from Kunta? How does this affect his relationship with Bell?

4. What are the consequences, good and bad, of Kizzy's relationship with Missy Anne?
5. What significance does George's skin color have to Kizzy?
6. How is George's return to America (after fleeing to Canada) different from his ancestor's arrival in the country?
7. What effect does the switch to first-person narration near the end of the novel have on your feelings about the story?
8. How does **Roots** differ from other narratives about slavery told from white perspectives, such as **Gone with the Wind**? What effects do the emphasis on the characters' African heritage and the description of the brutality of slavery have on your understanding of African-American history?
9. Does reading **Roots** give you a greater sense of connection to or curiosity about your own family's background? How might learning about a family's origins change your perception of its members?
10. Alex Haley wrote and published **Roots** during the civil rights movements of the 1970s, when American attention was focused on the history of African-Americans in the United States and the legacy and effects of slavery. Has the context changed in 21st century America? Do the same problems still exist? Do different themes in the book seem more or less important now than they may have when it was first published?
11. How does the format of the story as a novel affect your reaction to it? Would you feel differently if it had been presented as nonfiction?

## Author Bio

Alex Haley taught himself to write during a twenty year career in the U.S. Coast Guard. After retiring, he worked as a freelance magazine writer. His first book was **The Autobiography of Malcom X**, on which he was collaborator and editor. **Roots: The Saga of An American Family** was his second book, for which he was awarded special recognition from the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award committees. He also wrote **A Different Kind of Christmas**, and **Queen**, a sequel to **Roots**. Haley died in 1992.

## Critical Praise

?Fascinating?Exhilarating?Spectacular!?

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