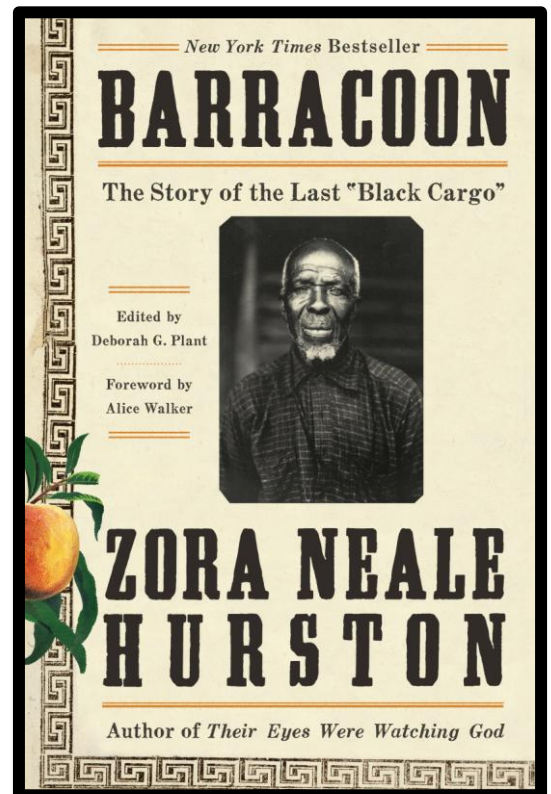


Barracoön: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo" by Zora Neale Hurston

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Book Details

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Book Synopsis

In 1927, Zora Neale Hurston went to Plateau, Alabama, just outside Mobile, to interview eighty-six-year-old Cudjo Lewis. Of the millions of men, women, and children transported from Africa to America as slaves, Cudjo was then the only person alive to tell the story of this integral part of the nation's history. Hurston was there to record Cudjo's firsthand account of the raid that led to his capture and bondage fifty years after the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed in the United States.

In 1931, Hurston returned to Plateau, the African-centric community three miles from Mobile founded by Cudjo and other former slaves from his ship. Spending more than three months there, she talked in depth with Cudjo about the details of his life. During those weeks, the young writer and the elderly formerly enslaved man ate peaches and watermelon that grew in the backyard and talked about Cudjo's past--memories from his childhood in Africa, the horrors of being captured and held in a barracoön for selection by American slavers, the harrowing experience of the Middle Passage packed with more than 100 other souls aboard the *Clotilda*, and the years he spent in slavery until the end of the Civil War.

Based on those interviews, featuring Cudjo's unique vernacular, and written from Hurston's perspective with the compassion and singular style that have made her one of the preeminent American authors of the twentieth-century, *Barracoön* masterfully illustrates the tragedy of slavery and of one life forever defined by it.