

Oroonoko key Info

Writer: Aphra Behn | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

Full Title: Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave

Author: Aphra Behn (c.1640–1689)

Titles of the Author: Playwright, Novelist, Poet, Pioneer Female Writer

Source: Mixture of real events and imagination, possibly based on Behn's own experiences in Suriname

Written Time: Early 1680s

First Published: 1688

Published Dates: 5th November 1688 (first edition)

Total Parts: Single novella (short novel)

Type of Work: Novella

Genre: Prose Fiction / Tragedy / Slave Narrative

Point of View: First Person (narrated by an unnamed female narrator, believed to be Behn herself)

Climax: Oroonoko's capture, torture, and death after a failed slave revolt

Setting:

Time Setting: Mid-17th century

Place Setting: Suriname, a British colony in South America

Background: "Oroonoko" was written in the late seventeenth century. England had many colonies at that time. Slave trading was a common practice then. People from Africa were taken as slaves to the colonies. Aphra Behn visited Suriname as a young woman. She saw the lives of slaves up close. In society, many people thought slavery was normal. There was also

strong racism during that period. "Oroonoko" tells the story of an African prince. He is captured and sold as a slave. The story shows his pain, bravery, and suffering. Aphra Behn wanted to show how cruel slavery was. She hoped readers would see the human side of slaves. The book asks people to think about justice and kindness.

Key Notes

Novella: "Oroonoko" is called a novella, which means a short novel. It is one main story told in a simple, direct way. The book shows the pain and suffering of people under slavery

Slavery: "Oroonoko" is about slavery and the cruelty faced by slaves. Oroonoko, an African prince, is betrayed and sold as a slave. The story shows how inhuman and harsh slavery can be.

Colonialism: The story takes place in a colony run by the English. It shows how colonizers mistreated and controlled others for their own gain. The characters reveal the injustice of colonialism.

Tragedy: "Oroonoko" is also a tragedy. Oroonoko and Imoinda love each other, but suffer greatly. The pain, loss, and sadness of the characters make the story heartbreaking.

Love and Loyalty: Love and loyalty are important themes in "Oroonoko." Oroonoko's love for Imoinda and his honor never fade, even in the worst times.

Narrative Voice: The story is told by a European woman who saw the events herself. Her words help the story feel true and human.

Authenticity: Aphra Behn visited Suriname and saw slave life herself. That is why the story has many real details and honest feelings. The novella makes readers see the truth about slavery.