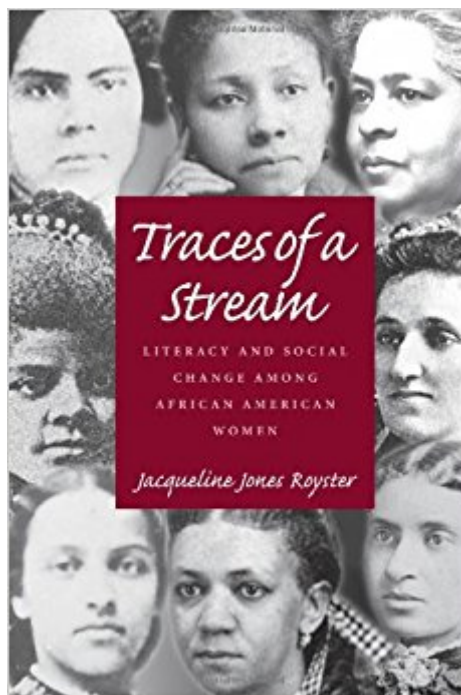




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Traces Of A Stream: Literacy And Social Change Among African American Women (Pitt Comp Literacy Culture)



Synopsis

Traces of a Stream offers a unique scholarly perspective that merges interests in rhetorical and literacy studies, United States social and political theory, and African American women writers. Focusing on elite nineteenth-century African American women who formed a new class of women well positioned to use language with consequence, Royster uses interdisciplinary perspectives (literature, history, feminist studies, African American studies, psychology, art, sociology, economics) to present a well-textured rhetorical analysis of the literate practices of these women. With a shift in educational opportunity after the Civil War, African American women gained access to higher education and received formal training in rhetoric and writing. By the end of the nineteenth-century, significant numbers of African American women operated actively in many public arenas. In her study, Royster acknowledges the persistence of disempowering forces in the lives of African American women and their equal perseverance against these forces. Amid these conditions, Royster views the acquisition of literacy as a dynamic moment for African American women, not only in terms of their use of written language to satisfy their general needs for agency and authority, but also to fulfill socio-political purposes as well. Traces of a Stream is a showcase for nineteenth-century African American women, and particularly elite women, as a group of writers who are currently underrepresented in rhetorical scholarship. Royster has formulated both an analytical theory and an ideological perspective that are useful in gaining a more generative understanding of literate practices as a whole and the practices of African American women in particular. Royster tells a tale of rhetorical prowess, calling for alternative ways of seeing, reading, and rendering scholarship as she seeks to establish a more suitable place for the contributions and achievements of African American women writers.

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Customer Reviews

Struggling under the double burden of racial and sexual inequality, 19th-century African American women sought for ways to gain empowerment. In this engaging new work, Royster (English, Ohio State) shows how eloquent, well-educated black women used essay writing as an act of resistance against white oppression. The periodical press became an ally of these courageous women, publishing early civil rights and anti-lynching essays by Maria W. Stewart, Ida B. Wells, and other writers of sociopolitical import. According to Royster, literacy and knowledge were crucial for the success of the community, and she documents the history of African American schooling from antebellum times, when some slaves were taught to read despite legal sanctions, to the later rise of historically black colleges. She also profiles a number of prominent black women educators and discusses the Black Clubwomen's Movement, which provided a unique forum for public discourse. Highly recommended for most libraries. DEllen Sullivan, Ferguson Lib., Stamford, CT Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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