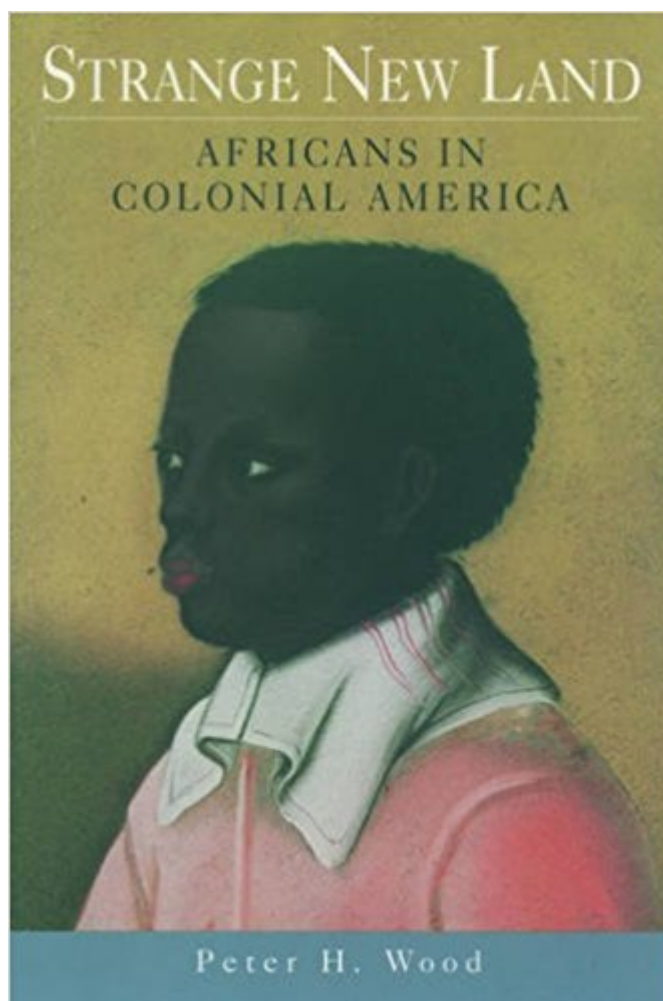


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# Strange New Land: Africans In Colonial America



## Synopsis

Engaging and accessibly written, *Strange New Land* explores the history of slavery and the struggle for freedom before the United States became a nation. Beginning with the colonization of North America, Peter Wood documents the transformation of slavery from a brutal form of indentured servitude to a full-blown system of racial domination. *Strange New Land* focuses on how Africans survived this brutal process--and ultimately shaped the contours of American racial slavery through numerous means, including: - Mastering English and making it their own - Converting to Christianity and transforming the religion - Holding fast to Islam or combining their spiritual beliefs with the faith of their masters - Recalling skills and beliefs, dances and stories from the Old World, which provided a key element in their triumphant story of survival - Listening to talk of liberty and freedom, of the rights of man and embracing it as a fundamental right--even petitioning colonial administrators and insisting on that right. Against the troubling backdrop of American slavery, *Strange New Land* surveys black social and cultural life, superbly illustrating how such a diverse group of people from the shores of West and Central Africa became a community in North America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Long before there was a United States, Africans were present in what would become American history. In very condensed form, Duke University historian Wood follows Africans, from those who traveled with the early Spanish explorers to those who fought in the early years of the American

Revolution. He illuminates how differences among the colonies, between North and South America, and among European powers affected the Africans' experience, including their differing relations with the Native American population and the diversity of the Africans themselves. With deft strokes, Wood provides a political milieu and a broad international context, such as the effects of the Great Fire of London in 1666 and the Paris Treaty of 1762. As succinctly, he provides a vivid sense of African daily life-the acquisition of new languages, hairstyling, food, music, religion-and the effect that had on America. There are no new revelations on the order of Wood's *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, but Wood here offers a splendid synthesis of recent research for a lay reader's edification and , despite often horrific events, pleasure; the scholarly foundation upon which the book rests is hidden under its simple, straightforward and graceful style. This is an amazing "little" book, a really masterful distillation. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Wood offers a splendid synthesis of recent research for a lay reader's edification and, despite often horrific events, pleasure; the scholarly foundation upon which the book rests is hidden under its simple, straight-forward and graceful style. This is an amazing 'little' book, a really masterful distillation." --Publishers Weekly "While his selection of facts and figures is illuminating throughout, what makes the work a particular pleasure are Wood's inspired discussions; he ably links facts and puts them into larger contexts for readers. An obscure chapter in American history, rendered vividly."--Kirkus Reviews "Charts the arrival of blacks to this country between 1617-1776, exploring the earliest Africans in this country and their attempts to retain and rebuild a new culture in a strange land."--Children's Bookwatch

I'm not really sure whom this book is for. On the one hand, it seems to have been written for people with little or no knowledge of American slavery (and perhaps little background in history of most kinds--several pages are dedicated to the basics of the Protestant Reformation). And despite the pro-forma descriptors ("this terrible institution") applied with regularity, it really pulls its punches with regard to exactly what made it terrible. I could see it being used as supplemental reading in a high school history class: it provides the outlines of how slavery took on its eventual 19th century form, which is more typically described in textbooks, without in any way discomfiting majority sensibilities. It's a shame, because it could have been a really rich and informative book. The author clearly knows a great deal about the subject. He summarizes major topics and tantalizing biographies with a paragraph or two apiece; if you already know something of a topic, you'll likely

find peculiar what he mentions and what he glosses over. If you don't, often there's enough to be intrigued by but not enough to be satisfied with. If this larger subject the book addresses is of interest to you, the book might best serve as a series of pointers for further reading. The author even seems to anticipate this: there's an "Additional reading" list in the back.

Great book for beginners to learn so much about African American history. I read it in 2 days and had to write a 30 page assignment on it. Worked out great. It was delivered to me in 4 days. Must read!

This is a good quick and short introduction to slavery and African presence in the colonial period in North America. This is not a scholarly or deep study, but a good book for someone who needs the facts about this subject. Here and there the author offers a few facts that an experienced reader might not be familiar with, but this is really an introduction that can help a reader go on to more serious research. One of the more original aspects of this book is that he discusses the presence of Africans in the current US before colonialization by the Dutch and the English. The first Africans were not the ones who were bought from the Dutch in 1619 in Virginia, but Africans who came as slaves or free persons with the Spanish in their explorations and attempts at conquest in both the Southeast and the Southwest in the 16th century. A number of them were known to escape to the Indians, others set down roots in the early Spanish settlements in New Mexico and Florida or in failed Spanish outposts elsewhere. One of the more useful sections of his book is his quick but clear discussion of how the English colonialists decided to use color and "race" to determine the nature of slavery and to redefine slavery from the way it had been seen in both Europe and Africa. He also indicates how racism was constructed to justify this political and economy decision, rather than being some inherent human prejudice. Again, this is a good quick introduction or refresher on the subject.

Granddaughter needed this for a class project. Great read

A terrific sad but true account of Africans in early America. I am recommending this book to everyone I know.

easy read and well organized. not a test book but worthwhile read to lead you to explore some items more deeply.

Outstanding! This book is well written history of African American in New York City. Many people are unaware of the historical Chambers Street legacy. I will buy extra copies in the future to share.

EXCELLENT!!!

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