

Sarah Louisa Forten

Sarah Louisa Forten was born in Philadelphia around 1814. She was a member of one of the most important abolitionist families of her time. Her father, James Forten (1766-1842), a free and wealthy businessman, provided his children with the best private education they could get. He also, among many other things, helped to found the newspaper *The Liberator*, edited by William Lloyd Garrison between 1831 and 1865, where Sarah Louisa would publish most of her poems. Along with her mother, Charlotte Vandine Forten (1785-1884), her sisters Harriet and Margareta, and other women, Sarah Louisa founded the Philadelphia chapter of the Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Besides her activities as an abolitionist, Sarah Louisa had a short career as a poet. She published thirteen poems between 1831 (she was about eighteen years old) and 1837. She married Joseph Purvis in 1838 and dedicated herself entirely to her family. Her poems have appeared in many anthologies, but, as far as we know, they have not been collected in a book. "The Grave of the Slave" is one of her most well known poems. It was published for the first time in the newspaper *The Liberator*, on January 22, 1831, under the pen name of "Ada." The poem was set to music by the great African American musician Francis Johnson (1792-1844). After a difficult life, Sarah Louisa Forten died in Philadelphia around 1884.

The video with the poem set to music can be found here:

[15 - The Grave of the Slave Words by Sarah Forten, Music by Francis Johnson \(1831\) - YouTube](#)