

# Death of an Old Carriage Horse

BY GEORGE MOSES HORTON

Published in *Naked Genius* (Raleigh: William B. Smith, 1865).

## As you read...

George Moses Horton was an enslaved African American poet in Chatham County, North Carolina.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Many of Horton's poems criticized slavery. Why might Horton have chosen to compare a slave to an old carriage horse?
2. What was the Old Carriage Horse required to do?
3. Who or what was the "oppressing force" that Horton described?
4. What other figures/people are in this poem other than the Old Carriage Horse? How did Horton describe them?
5. Why does he call death his "sweet and favored friend"?
6. How does this poem criticize slavery?

I was a harness horse,  
Constrained to travel weak or strong,  
With orders from oppressing force,  
Push along, push along.  
    I had no space of rest,  
And took at forks the roughest prong,  
Still by the cruel driver pressed,  
Push along, push along.  
    Vain strove the idle bird,  
To charm me with her artless song,  
But pleasure lingered from the word,  
Push along, push along.  
    The order of the day  
Was push, the peal of every tongue,

The only word was all the way,  
Push along, push along.  
    Thus to my journey's end,  
Had I to travel right or wrong,  
    'Till death my sweet and favored friend,  
Bade me from life to push along.

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## On the web

### **George Moses Horton**

<http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/civiced/resources/docs/georgemoseshorton.pdf>

In this lesson from the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, students will learn about the life of North Carolina's "first professional poet," George Moses Horton, who was born into slavery in Chatham County. By reading, discussing, and preparing dramatic presentations of Horton's poetry, students will gain an understanding and appreciation of Horton's literary contribution, even under the great adversity of enslavement.

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## About the author

### **GEORGE MOSES HORTON**