



Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story

Mark L. Shurtleff

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story

Mark L. Shurtleff

Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story Mark L. Shurtleff

"Dred Scott's inspiring and compelling true story of adventure, courage, love, hatred, and friendship parallels the history of this nation from the long night of slavery to the narrow crack in the door that would ultimately lead to freedom and equality for all men"--Cover, p. 2.

Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2009 by Valor Publishing Group LLC

ISBN : 9781935546009

Author : Mark L. Shurtleff

Format : Hardcover 541 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History, Cultural, African American

 [Download Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story Mark L. Shurtleff

From Reader Review Am I Not a Man?: The Dred Scott Story for online ebook

Rachelle says

I received a free advanced reader copy of the book and set to work reading it. I still had a hard time getting into the book. Sometimes it takes me a while to get a feel for and identify with different writing styles. And be warned that this is a book about history--it's overflowing with historical details on every page. As you read this book, you will come to know Dred Scott from his very origin to his growing years until he becomes a father and a free man.

I had difficulty following the timeline of the story because it jumps around a lot, back and forth from historical happenings when Dred was born to 50 years later, etc. The version of the book available to the public has a timeline so that should make it a tad easier to follow.

Even though I had a hard time getting into the book and at times felt like I was reading a history book instead of a dramatized history book, I still want you to read it. I think you will enjoy it. I think this book is of vital importance because it reminds us of where we have come as a nation and that we cannot stand idly by and allow atrocities to exist in our midst. It isn't slavery today in The United States of America that we have a problem with--it's many more things that are terrible, yet on the rise.

As you read this book, you'll come to know the Blow family and their amazing fortitude when it came to helping their friend and former slave, Dred Scott.

Once you immerse yourself in the life of Dred Scott you'll be just like me, rooting for him with every turn of the page, crying at the injustices that men placed upon other men because of the color of their skin, and asking yourself--How did I not know this before?

I learned so much from this book and to me that allows the book to soar pretty high in my personal ranking because I have a love of learning. I'm grateful to Mark Shurtleff for compiling the magnificent amount of history that he put into this book, for making it come to life, and for reaffirming what I already know about humanity--We are all children of God who loves us, despite our race, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation--we are all children of God.

Our Founding Fathers knew this truth and wanted this nation to be a free nation for ALL. I hope that you will have an opportunity to read this book and refresh your memory on the great building blocks this country was established

Mormonhermitmom says

I remember just a little bit about the Dred Scott case from my American History classes. The Supreme Court at the time ruled that a negro slave was essentially less than a human being. Unfortunately, the instructor just barrelled on to the American Civil war without getting into Dred Scott's story. Mr. Shurtleff goes much deeper, putting flesh and blood on the bones of an old court case, breathing the harrowing story back to life.

The story of Sam Blow, aka Dred Scott, would contain sufficient hardship, struggle and hard-earned reward all by itself. Shurtleff goes beyond Dred Scott's story in this new historic fiction novel. He reaches back into colonial times for the story of Peter Blow, the first of a family of Virginia tobacco planters that eventually

succumb to the temptation of owning slaves as a source of labor. Shurtleff interweaves the lives of those who would help decide Dred's fate such as U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney, and the members of the Blow family who grew up regarding Dred as an older brother. Even Abraham Lincoln's story comes to light as Dred's lawsuit for his freedom stretches out for years.

Shurtleff asserts that without Dred Scott's legal fight and the damning opinion written by Judge Taney, Abraham Lincoln may not have had the political ammunition to win his race for the presidency of the United States. Shurtleff's case is certainly well constructed, as one would expect from a state attorney general. Shurtleff holds up Dred's fight for freedom in the courts as not just an individual's assertion of equality, but a turning point in the struggle of a whole people to gain recognition as human beings worthy of respect and equal treatment under the law.

Imaginative and thoughtful, this is a good escape for history buffs.

Cheryl Malandrinos says

The story of Dred Scott has been told before, but never has it been told in such a moving and engaging way as in *Am I Not A Man? The Dred Scott Story* by Mark Shurtleff.

Born Sam Blow on a plantation in Virginia, he was born into slavery, an issue that plagued the nation since its inception. But slavery was more than just an issue for Sam Blow and his family. While they were treated well and Sam and his younger brother, Dred became good friends to the Blow children, as a slave, they knew there was a certain line you didn't cross. When a tragic accident takes the life of his younger brother, Sam changes his name to Dred; his last name now honoring the great Winfield Scott.

When Dred's wife Sarah is sold at auction and lost to him forever, Dred is devastated, and his yearning to be free deepens. Many years would pass before he would meet Harriet, who would become his wife and the mother of his two daughters. Being a father finds Dred wanting to be free more than ever; to give his daughters a better life than the one he and Harriet have known.

Having traveled to free states with his master, at the urging of friends who are familiar with the law that states once free, always free, Dred puts his trust in the justice system to declare him a free man. Dred's freedom is short-lived, however, and he must take his case to the United States Supreme Court, where Chief Justice Roger Taney declares that a black man has "no rights a white man was bound to respect."

While I am familiar with Dred Scott and the landmark case that would lead to the election of President Lincoln, a bitter Civil War, and eventually the Emancipation Proclamation, I have never read such a personal and detailed account of Scott's life as I found in *Am I Not A Man?* by Mark Shurtleff. By choosing elements of fiction to create the picture of Scott's life, the author draws the reader into Dred's story in a way that compels her to keep turning the pages. This is not some dry, boring narrative. It is engaging, it is moving, and it makes you want to learn all you can about Dred Scott, his family, and his fight for freedom.

Am I Not A Man? shows you that Dred Scott was more than an over read story in a history text. He was a man who yearned for freedom and a man who sought a better life for himself, his family and for others. Shurtleff's many years of researching Scott's life culminate in this brilliant debut release from Valor Publishing. Currently the Utah State Attorney General, Shurtleff's passion for this subject is evident from page one. *Am I Not A Man?: The Dred Scott Story* should be in every high school and college American History classroom.

Jen says

The other morning, my puppy Newman did not want to go outside. I wanted him out and he preferred to search under the table for crumbs, or lay by the door and roll over to impress me with how cute he is. So, I opened the door and as I have done many other mornings, I nudged him out with my foot as I have so many other mornings and went about my day. It wasn't a kick, but it was a demonstration of the facts that:

- * its my house,
- * he's my dog,
- * whether he wants to or not, he gets to do what I expect him to do.

I thought little of it and picked up my advance reading copy of Mark Shurtleff's new historical novel, Am I Not a Man? The Dred Scott Story.

Like any American student, I spent semesters learning about the Civil war. As a child, books like Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry affected me deeply, and now as an adult it's impossible to be blind to the current race struggles that exist in our country. But until the other day reading Mark Shurtleff's book, I had never completely internalized that people were really viewing other human beings the way I view my dog. As property--pets like my Newman at best, expected to behave and fulfill his role--but even more often blacks in America were seen and treated simply as livestock, property, an inheritance to leave behind for your children.

I had the great privilege of asking Mark some questions about his writing process and reflection on this book:

1. In researching Am I Not a Man, were there any surprises--situations or characters you discovered a different side to than history usually presents?

First and foremost was how much I learned about Dred Scott the man. Early histories suggested he was lazy, shiftless, stupid and nothing but a pawn in the struggle for freedom. From all of his travels, experiences and endeavors it is clear that those early descriptions could not have been more wrong. Although illiterate, Dred Scott was highly intelligent, motivated and courageous and but for his tenacity and character, the case would never have arrived at the Supreme Court, hence my argument that but for Dred Scott, Abraham Lincoln would not have been elected president.

Going into my research, I wanted to believe Chief Justice Roger Taney's as being a racist villain. It became clear, however, as I learned of his personal history that he was personally against slavery and was obviously an imperfect man who struggled with trying to find a balance, and unfortunately made a terrible decision in the end.

2. How long did it take you to write Am I Not a Man? Any major setbacks along the way that caused you to reevaluate this work?

I started researching in 2002 by visiting Dred's birthplace at The Olde Place in Southampton Virginia and

felt a powerful spirit as I walked through cotton fields and pricked my fingers on the sharp dry cotton bolls. I came home highly motivated to begin writing, but was slowed by the nature of my job as attorney general which included long days and lots of cerebral activity that left me mentally exhausted at the end of the day. I was also slowed by my decision to not write the story of what happened in Dred's numerous travels until I had personally visited and experienced the same places including the wild Tennessee River, Huntsville, St. Louis, Rock Island, Ft. Snelling, Corpus Christi, etc.

When most of my research and travels were complete and I started writing, I ran into a major emotional roadblock in that I questioned myself and my own credentials for telling the story of Dred Scott. I asked myself, "who am I, a white man from Utah, to tell the story of slavery. I questioned my own ability to, in the words of Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* "climb into [Dred's:] skin and walk around in it." I continued doubting myself until I met Dred and Harriett Scott's great, great, granddaughter, Lynne Jackson in March 2007. We went together to the old Supreme Court Room in the U.S. Capitol Building on the 150th Anniversary of the decision. As we wept there together, I told her how much I had grown to love and admire her forebears then told her of my struggle with feeling worthy of telling their story. I asked her if she would read my first several chapters and give me her honest assessment. She called me a few weeks later and told me, weeping, that she couldn't think of anyone who could tell it better. Inspired and freed from my own doubts and insecurities, I began writing again.

My final great roadblock that delayed completion of the novel was a terrible motorcycle accident in September 2007 and severely broke my leg. For eighteen months I went through eleven surgeries and suffered through two major infections, nearly losing the leg. The constant pain medications dulled my mental acuity and made it impossible for me to create.

3. How has your interest in history, or the Dred Scott case in particular, influenced your career as the Utah State Attorney General?

As the chief law enforcement officer for the state of Utah, I daily contemplate my role in ensuring justice and protecting the rights of individuals, and as I came to know Dred Scott, I developed a greater commitment to fight injustice at any cost and wherever it raises its ugly head. Exercising police powers of investigation and prosecution is an awesome responsibility handed to me by the people of Utah and that is why I designed my office seal and motto around the Constitution's promise of ensuring justice, which means equal access, opportunity and responsibility under law. Every issue I confront with my attorneys and police officers is weighed to balance the duty to protect the public and secure the rights of every individual, regardless of who they are.

4. What message would you want your children to come away with after reading your book?

That each has been endowed by their Creator with the right to life, liberty, and happiness; and an unshakeable knowledge of their self-worth, and that in this great free nation, they have the opportunity to be anything they want to be, but they must go out and seize the day and earn it and not expect others to hand it to them. Hopefully, by my example, my children will see that the greatest legacy of free people is to use their talents, education, experience, time and resources to serve and bless the lives of others.

5. Do you have plans for any future books? If so, are you willing to share with us what you have in the

works?

I have begun work on the incredible true story of an experience I had while serving as a JAG officer in the United States Navy. I represented a Chief Petty Officer who was charged in a General Court Martial of wearing unauthorized medals (including silver and bronze stars and purple hearts) and refusing a direct order to remove them. His claim was that he earned in secret combat operations in Laos during the Vietnam War. The case became one of intrigue, suspense and ultimately murder of one of my witnesses, as I delved into the mysteries of top secret military actions and the terrible price paid by many of the men and women who served in that conflict. As I traveled to the Pentagon and met with officials, veterans, and POW families, my own preconceived notions and "my country right or wrong" attitude I had grown up with, began to change. The book is entitled *An Apostrophe to Nam*. The title and theme of the book are taken from the famous soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that has been called "An Apostrophe to Man:"

"Oh what a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world - the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me."

In addition, I intend to finish an LDS fantasy/adventure novel I began writing several years ago entitled *The Children of Light*. It is based on the "whole armor of God."

****Disclaimer:** I received a free copy of this book to review. I am not receiving compensation to express my opinion of this book.

Cindi says

Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff was the honored speaker at the fundraiser dinner for Childhelp that my husband and I attended a few weeks ago. I knew he was a passionate speaker, attorney and politician but until that night, I didn't know that he was also a writer. We left that night with a free copy of his book: *Am I Not A Man? The Dred Scott Story*.

Dred Scott was born a slave in Virginia in 1799. Eventually, his masters, the Blows, would move to Tennessee and then to Missouri. After the death of Mr. Blow, Dred was sold to Dr. Emerson, a military doctor. Dr. Emerson was sent by the army to Illinois, a free state, and he took Dred with him. Later, Emerson was transferred to Minnesota, another free state, where Dred met and married his wife Harriet. Back in Missouri and in close proximity to the Blow children, who love Dred, he learned of a law in Missouri, that once free (as he was in Illinois and Minnesota, even though he didn't know it) always free. Dred and his group of white supporters and friends filed in court for his family's freedom. This set forth a series of court battles that would end in the Supreme Court of the United States and ignite the anti-slavery passion of Abraham Lincoln and the country.

Shurtleff tells Dred Scott's story in his historical novel. Much of the book reads like a novel but there are also sections that are more like historical narrative or biography. Personally, I enjoy histories and biographies, so I didn't mind. Shurtleff not only tells Scott's story, but includes the history and political wrangling involving slavery and the expansion of the United States during the mid nineteenth century. The book is well researched and the law put forth in terms simple enough for the lay-man (me) to understand. I was surprised

and impressed with the moonlighting author's ability to write and write well. He succeeds in showing the strong character of Dred Scott and made him come alive in the book.

Dred Scott and his court battles became famous and propelled the country toward, the election of Abraham Lincoln, the ultimate battle over slavery and the eventually the emancipation of all slaves. His story is vital to our history as a nation and should be known and studied by us all. Shurtleff gives us a well researched, interesting and well written way to learn more about Dred Scott.

Daron says

I begin this review with tears in my eyes--tears which have welled up as my heart has been taken on a journey of both pain and hope in the reading of this magnificent book. Let me say a few words about that journey.

First of all, in the spirit of complete disclosure, this book is being published by Valor Publishing Group, LLC, the same publishing company which is publishing my own novel in March of 2010. I received the Advanced Readers Copy free of charge. A few months ago, I was asked if I wanted to be part of the Blog Tour by Tristi Pinkston, Senior Editor at Valor, and I eagerly accepted. I am under no obligation to like the book. I am under no obligation to say nice things about the book, even if I do like it. I made no promises of any kind to Tristi or to Valor except for one: I would write a review, and I would be honest. If I were to hate the book, I would say so.

Second, I want all who read this review to know, I struggled with the book at first. The way that the chapters are laid out, with a painfully frequent jumping from one scene and place and year to another, and then back again, and this done several times, made the book a difficult read. I talked with Tristi about my concerns and was told two important things:

1. The final version of the book will have a chronology in it so that the reader can more easily figure out where they are on the timeline, and not get lost in the history.
2. When I asked about certain methods of style employed by the author in the writing, I was encouraged to consider the novel more of a "Dramatized Historical Narrative" than a Historical Fiction Novel. That encouragement helped me to look past the point-of-view changes which I found at times to be confusing.

Now, with those two points in mind, I will give my overall impression of the book.

I found Mark Shurtleff's writing to be beautifully descriptive, the story enjoyable to read, and the characterization believable. There are times which I felt the book read more like a history textbook than a novel, but I believe that fits well within the description of being a Dramatized Historical Narrative.

The history contained in the book is utterly fascinating. As I read, I kept asking myself, "Why did I not know this? Didn't I learn about Dred Scott in school?". Yes, I believe that I did learn a little about him. What the history textbooks wanted me to know, at least. And much of history contained in textbooks since I was a kid is either glossed over, or revisionist with the intent to distort the facts, in my opinion. But I am not here to talk about my conservative political views.

No book is perfect. Even this book, I am sure, has its flaws and incorrect historical facts. It would be an education in itself to try and find them. But, I don't have the background or the time to research it so that I

might verify every single point, and there are thousands of such history facts in this book. Let me say this, if even eighty percent of this book is historically spot-on, the book would then be a treasure trove. And I get the feeling the percentage is much, much higher.

Aside from all of this, I do want to share what the book made me feel...

Dred Scott is a national hero, or he should be.

The pain I felt as I read about his incredible journey through life brought tears to my eyes.

The wonder I felt as I realized that with all of the complexities of men's lives--intertwining, affecting each other, hampering at times and helping at others, and the barriers which wicked men place in front of those who have a right to seek liberty--that God could still work his wonders through men, whether they realized they were instruments in his hands or not, deeply impressed me.

The admiration I felt as I learned about Dred, his family, the Blows, and the people who wanted to help him, made me to feel the burning fires of patriotism even stronger than I did before, and forever solidified my feelings towards Dred Scott to be the same which I have always felt for Abraham Lincoln: That these men were blessed by God, which blessings in turn, blessed us all.

My final word about the book... Wonderful. I encourage anyone who has a desire to experience the fires of freedom burning within their heart to read this book, one which I believe is destined to be talked about for a good long time. Congratulations to Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff: Well done!

Melissa says

<http://gerberadaisydiaries.blogspot.c...>

Dred Scott: for me he was a forgotten footnote from an intro to Constitutional Law or American history class, taken so many years ago. Who was he? Why was he important? Why can't I remember?

Mark Shurtleff, in his debut novel, *Am I Not a Man? The Dred Scott Story* attempts to answer those questions as he rediscovers the man, born a slave, who changed the course of history by suing, unsuccessfully, for the right to be free. In 1846 he sued for his freedom on the grounds that residing in free territory had made him free. Eleven years later his case reached the Supreme Court, where it was decided on March 6, 1857. Chief Justice Roger Taney read the majority opinion declaring that Dred Scott was not a person but a piece of property.

This novel is meticulously researched and enormous in scope: from his birth in Virginia, his ownership by the Blow Family, his travels with the Blows and his sale to Dr. Emerson, to his final judgment in a Missouri courtroom and ultimately, the Supreme Court, there is no detail spared in this narrative. The author seems to include every historical figure from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison to Andrew Jackson, Robert E. Lee and US Grant; even the Prophet Joseph Smith makes an unexpected and unlikely appearance. It was a soup-pot of characters including family genealogical histories and a myriad wives, husbands, friends, and in-laws. So many, I had a difficult time keeping them all straight.

As a parallel to Dred's story, the author details the lives of President Abraham Lincoln and Roger Taney, the Chief Justice who would write the majority opinion in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, denying Dred his freedom. As he explores the ancestors of these two individuals, somehow, in a work of historical fiction, our current president is mentioned. It was an awkward reference, that didn't seem appropriate in a work of "fiction." Similarly, the events of September 11, 2001 are alluded too after the British attack Virginia and Maryland – completely shocking me out of the novel.

However, one of the more successful sections of the book was the account of Peter Blow's Virginia Militia service and Dred's support as they and the militia defend Virginia against the attacking British forces during the War of 1812. The imagery of "Red Coats" marching through the mud as they advanced on Craney Island was extremely well done. The author also creates a vivid account of Dred's relationship with his wife Harriet and their children, Eliza and Lizzie (although, I often wondered, "who names their children both essentially the same name – Elizabeth?"). Their love and devotion to each other and their daughters was tangible on the page. Additionally, and most importantly, the final chapters that detail the legal battle fought by Dred and his lawyers were paramount.

Although the range of this novel needed streamlining and editing, the author did a decent job in creating a life for Dred Scott, a man whose struggle has been forgotten by many in my generation.

Book source: publisher

Janice says

Really deserved 3 1/2 and possibly four.

A few months ago, I was contacted by the publisher of Valor Publishing Group asking if I would be interested getting an advanced copy of a book by the current Utah Attorney General, Mark Shurtleff. I immediately said yes.

For full-disclosure, part of my interest in reading this book was the fact that as a child, I met Mark's parents in Central America. I ran into them about year ago after last seeing them when I was 10 years old. Mark Shurtleff lives close to me and in one of those strange turn of events, a week before I started reading the book, there were changes in our church's congregation and Mark Shurtleff and I now attend church together. That said, I have yet to speak with him and have purposely not spoken with him until I finished his book and reviewed it.

Before starting this book, I knew nothing about Dred Scott or his importance in American history. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, the Supreme Court basically stated a black man had no rights whatsoever in America and ignored years of precedent that said once a black man was brought into a free state, he was free forever. The uproar from the decision was almost immediate and Abraham Lincoln was one of its most outspoken critics. Mark Shurtleff feels this is what propelled him into the White House and what ultimately led to the battle for freeing the slaves, the Civil War.

Mark did an excellent job in explaining the great importance of this case and I felt by the end of the book that a lot of pieces of American History, some of what I felt I knew a lot about and some which I knew nothing about, all fell into place. I feel like I have a much better picture of American history as a result. I said to my husband, it is like when I go to the eye doctor and think I am seeing 20/20 but then the doctor puts new lenses in front of my eyes and realize that I was only seeing 20/40. So many aspects of American history became more focused because of this book and there is no question, I am more culturally literate because of it.

I was so impressed with the obvious thorough research that Mark did in preparation for writing this book and it is apparent on practically every page. It is obvious he visited places, spoke with many people, and spent hours researching. The book is crammed full of amazing historical references.

Some problems:

Mark combines actual facts with historical fiction, where he creates dialogue and scenes for characters. I didn't like the historical fiction aspect of it. It felt very contrived and his strength as a writer is not in creating dialogue. I understood what he was trying to do, but I am not sure he really pulled it off convincingly for me.

Also, the first third of the book jumps around a lot from 1852, when a higher court overturned an earlier ruling that gave Dred Scott freedom, to 1799 during the times Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to 1638 at Jamestown, where we learn the history of some of Dred Scott's original owners. All of this history is great in establishing historical reference for things later in the book, but it was hard to follow. I found myself having to go back pages and rethink things and I wonder if it could have been written differently where there would have been a more obvious flow. The last two thirds were more linear and at that point, I found myself having a hard time putting the book down. The story became very compelling and I marveled at how so many people put their lives on the line to help this one man become free.

Am I glad I read this book? Yes. Would I recommend it? Yes but know what you are getting into. It is not an "easy" read because of the subject matter. Slavery was and is awful.

Candace Salima says

Dred Scott played such an integral part of American history and I do not think he is nearly well enough known amongst Americans today. Sure, if you graduated law school you know who he is. The U.S. Supreme Court decision handed down a death knell of freedom for all Americans was a travesty of justice rarely equaled in this nation.

Utah State Attorney General Mark L. Shurtleff brings forth a literary triumph in his debut as a historical novelist.

Born a slave and treated like an animal, Dred Scott rose up against the oppression of his masters and demanded to be treated like a man. His fight for freedom led to Abraham Lincoln's election as president of the United States and inspired the Emancipation Proclamation. Despite tragic setbacks, Dred's unwillingness to give up his claim on human rights and judicial equality shaped America as it is today. His courageous life story is worthy of praise and recognition. Author Mark L. Shurtleff spotlights Dred Scott in this engaging historical novel based on fact, *Am I Not a Man? The Dred Scott Story*.

With a powerful storyline and compelling characters, this story of adventure, courage, love, hatred, and friendship parallels the history of the American nation—from the long night of slavery to the narrow crack of dawn that would ultimately lead to the freedom and equality of all men.

Shurtleff has masterfully woven a tale that draws readers deep into the life and times of Dred Scott, breathing life into Dred's story and making it leap off the page. This book encourages readers to stand up for what they believe, fight for their rights and freedoms, and to never give up.

Abel Keogh says

Even though I love history, I rarely read historical fiction. The reason? I'd rather read a well-written historical account of real people than a book about made up people living during past events. But when asked

if I was interested in an advance reader's copy of *Am I not a Man? The Dred Scott Story* I agreed to read and review it since I was curious to see if Utah Attorney General, Mark Shurtleff, could pull off a compelling account of a real people and events and put them into novelized form.

Much to my surprise, Shurtleff did a good job of weaving his research with his storytelling abilities. The result is a compelling read that tells the story of Dred Scott while examining the complex issue of slavery in the United States.

(For those who need of a quick history refresher, Dred Scott was slave who sued for his freedom. The result was the infamous *Dred Scott v. Stanford* decision where the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that persons of African descent could not be considered citizens of the United States under the U.S. Constitution.)

Am I not a Man? gives a detailed and fascinating account of the life of Scott and his fight for freedom and equality. What makes the book worth reading isn't just learning about Scott's undying desire to become a free man, but the human face Shurtleff puts on Scott, his family, his supporters, and his enemies. People are always complex creatures and Shurtleff does a good job of making Scott and others come alive in the book.

Shurtleff also does an excellent job of describing the complex issue of slavery and the strong emotions it evoked in people on both sides of the debate. After reading *Am I not a Man?* it's easier to understand why the issue tore families apart and led to the costliest war the United States has ever fought.

Since Shurtleff is an attorney, he does a great job of unraveling the reasons behind the Supreme Court's decision and examining the legal and political consequences—the biggest one being the election of our nation's greatest president—Abraham Lincoln. But even when talking about reasons for the decision, Shurtleff is able to tell them in such a way that the reader is seldom, if ever, bored.

My only complaint with the book is I wanted to know how much literary license Shurtleff took with some of the characters and certain incidents in the book. Shurtleff does go out of his way to say that the book is historical fiction and based upon real people and his own research and that some liberties had to be taken—just not how much. (So, Mark, if you ever read this, I'd love to sit down with you and talk about how you weaved this story together. It's more to satiate my own curiosity about the writing process.)

Despite this one issue, I found the book to be a worthwhile read and would recommend it not only to those who enjoy historical fiction but also to those who enjoy stories of people with unconquerable spirits to fight injustice and inequality.

The lessons of *Am I not a Man?* are just as relevant today as they were during Scott's life. Freedom is something that is easily taken away but not easily regained. The fight for freedom is difficult to obtain and often takes a lifetime of blood, sweat, and tears to achieve. Scott's story is a good reminder that freedom comes with a price and we should always be vigilant to protect it.

Teri says

Am I Not A Man? The Dred Scott Story by Mark L. Shurtleff

This awesome debut by Mark Shurtleff, Utah's Attorney General, goes deep into telling the story of Dred Scott, the little 5'4" giant of a man. Dred was born Sam Blow on a Virginia Plantation, but when his brother dies, he takes on his name. Dred, even though he is a slave and is treated very badly at times, he treats others with a humbling dignity missing today. Early in his young life, he is asked of his owner, a doctor, to go out

in the middle of a river, to stake a squatter's claim and he almost drowns, but has a total change in his life that changes him for good. During his early years, he was friends with Nat Turner, but because of his odd behavior, he didn't stay friends long and Nat ended by taking another path than Dred, as Dred was a very spiritual man, could quote scripture better than some who could read. When Dred and a former owner were down on a riverbank, he overheard people shouting to Winfield Scott, Commander, "Great Scott." Dred liked the sound of the words and the man, so from then on, he went as Dred Scott.

When the love of his early life, Sarah, gets sold at an auction, it totally devastates him, but later, he does find the woman who loves him the way a wife should and that is Harriet, who was raised on a plantation and treated as one of the family. She and Dred had two girls, Eliza, known as Gypsy Girl and Lizzie. When Dr. Emerson, who Dred worked for, died, his widow took him to court. She had mistreated him terribly, much worse than her husband had. Dred had moved from a slave state to a free state with Dr. Emerson, so if you return to a slave state, you were considered free as the saying went "Once Free, Always Free." When Dred won his case in the lower courts, he was happy, but the decision was reversed, so he decided to sue at the highest level The Supreme Court and lost. It was a landmark case, and was the reason Abraham Lincoln was our 16th President, that if not for Dred Scott, Abraham Lincoln would not have been our President.

One of the things I really liked about this moving story was the bantering back and forth between Jefferson and Madison. And, when Dred gets so excited when he learns to "spell" his name in Morse Code. What an experience that must've been for him!!! Since I've had my ARC for awhile and have discussed this book and Dred Scott with friends and family, it has surprised me how many people do not know much about our Country and its history. And, for this, I'm sad. For those who read my review who have never heard of Dred Scott or his case, please do yourself a HUGE favor and read this most important story. I knew about Dred Scott, but learned so much and came away touched to have learned what a great man he was. No man should be abused the way he and hundreds of thousands of blacks were treated. We are all created by God as equal men and women, regardless of color. Mark, hats off to you!!!

Forever Friends Rating A HUGE 5 Stars by Teri
Until Next Time, See You Around The Book Nook.

Valor Publishing Group
Pub. Date: 3 November 2009
ISBN: 978-1-835546-00-9
534pp

Lucy says

You've probably heard of Dred Scott. His is a name attached to great legal precedent much like Brown v. Board of Education and Roe v. Wade. Sadly, I recognized the name but didn't really know his story - only that it involved slavery. Shame on me.

Mark L. Shurtleff, Attorney General for the state of Utah, admits to becoming fascinated by Scott's case while in law school. Years of personal research, in addition to his studies, motivated him to write an incredibly thorough account of who Dred Scott was and the events in his life that led to his infamous case before the 1857 United States Supreme Court who decided by a seven to two majority that persons of African descent were not citizens of the United States. Included in their opinion was that the black man, whether freed or slave, had no right to legal recourse in Federal Court, and that the Missouri Compromise,

which allowed slaves who became free by traveling to states where slavery was illegal to remain free, was unconstitutional. In short, Chief Justice Roger Taney ruled that a black man was not a man and had no rights. Wow.

While a summary the Scott v. Sandford case might easily enough be described in a paragraph or two, the hows and the whys of this case cannot. Shurtleff, befitting his profession, gives justice to Scott's story by putting it in context. Who was Roger Taney? Why did his former owners, the Blow family, support his bid for freedom when they themselves didn't free Scott before selling him to John Emerson? Who was the Sandford in Sandford v. Scott? Knowing who these people were in relation to Scott is important but understanding their own histories and backgrounds, and the life events that placed them in Scott's trajectory certainly fuel Shurtleff's hypothesis, along with many others, that this case, and the fallout that stemmed from it, were directly responsible for electing of Abraham Lincoln as our sixteenth president in 1860. He certainly convinced me.

When asked to review Am I Not A Man as part of an online book tour, I asked the senior editor of the publishing company what kind of feedback she was looking for. She replied, "Honest feedback." That I can do.

I enjoyed this book a lot more than I thought I would. From the book's beginning, Shurtleff can't seem to decide if he's writing a novel or a biography. Being the novel lover that I am, I felt frustrated each time Shurtleff left Scott's character to write in legalese, give a US history lesson or, worse, sermonize with hindsight. I just wanted him to pick one style of writing because the transition between the novel and biography, and even, sometimes, a legal textbook, didn't work. It felt choppy and detracted from the overall quality of his writing, which was really good.

While I can't say the problem worked itself out, I can say that I cared less about it as the book continued because I genuinely wanted to know what happened next - regardless of style. This is an important story to know and I am a better person for knowing it. Dred Scott's legacy not only comes from the equality he helped bring to all men regardless of race, but it also includes his shining example of how mankind should be: patient, true, forgiving, humble, loyal, curious, full of hope, full of charity and trusting in his creator to endure to the end.

I cheerfully recommend it to anyone with a desire to better understand our nation's history and the struggle of a slave AND man: Dred Scott.

Laurie says

When offered, I leapt at the chance to receive a pre-release copy of this book and write a review. "AM I NOT A MAN?" the first novel by Utah's Attorney General, Mark L. Shurtleff, has generated a substantial amount of buzz, and for good reason. The author's research about Dred Scott's life and the era in which he lived, is phenomenal, particularly as it's observed through the prism of his battle to escape slavery using the American judicial system. The storyline is educational and tender, and the topics of the Constitutional guarantees of liberty are again passion-points in America. For these reasons and many others, "AM I NOT A MAN" is an important book that should be on our shopping lists this year.

Most school children have had some introduction to the man for whom the infamous Supreme Court ruling, "The Dred Scott Decision," is named, but Mark L. Shurtleff's exhaustive research transforms a vague history lesson into a powerful example of hope, courage, and dignity under fire, reminding us why that landmark Supreme Court case was required text. The highest court's ruling, "that a black man was so inferior that he

had no rights a white man was bound to respect,” chills us today, highlighting the dangerous consequences that occur when men bend the Constitution to achieve an agenda.

Dred Scott was born a slave named Sam Blow, but his life was a montage of extraordinary experiences, propelled by a mind and heart that could never be enslaved. He was connected to the most important events and people of his day, and his battle to hold the legal system’s “feet” to the Constitutional “fire” drew the entire nation’s attention. Underlying the precedent-setting legal chronicle is the simple, tender story of a man seeking what every person seeks—love, a family, self-determination. For years, Dred fought to prevent his family from being split apart, and to spare his young daughters from the brutality and debasing abuse subjected upon most female slaves. With the help of his white benefactors, and after years of suffering, Dred won his fight and achieved his dream of freedom, but his victory was short-lived when his case was overturned on appeal. Following more years of delay and further appeals, Dred’s case was heard before the United States Supreme Court, where the justices’ decision was not made to uphold the law as much as it was intended to calm the gathering storm. It failed on all counts, stripping away the Scotts’ freedom, denying all Negroes the standing afforded to other Americans, providing the platform upon which Abraham Lincoln rose and escalating the call to war. It is a painful saga.

Truly, “AM I NOT A MAN?” is more than a biography. It is a sweeping panorama of American history, and Dred is in the thick of it. I regret that no historical notes were included in this book. I would have loved to follow Mr. Shurtleff’s leads for further study, and to draw the line where the history ends and the fictionalized portions exist.

For example, a painful exchange occurs between fellow slave owners, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, over the immoral compromise they had each accepted in order to secure passage of the documents needed to establish and maintain the United States—the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. The great irony is that these “definers of American liberty,” are discussing their regret over the institution of slavery as they arrive at the Blow family plantation the night Dred “Sam Blow” Scott was born a slave. Mr. Shurtleff delivers a fascinating literary moment, but I would have loved knowing where fiction and fact met during that exchange. Another curious connection exists between Dred and his boyhood friend, Nat Turner, the slave whose murderous revolt would spell agony for slaves across the map. Again, historical notes would help separate the extraordinary facts from the fascinating fiction.

Let me note, however, how extraordinarily exhaustive Mr. Shurtleff’s research is. During the five years I’ve conducted the research for my Free Men and Dreamers series, I’ve covered many of the issues, places and people that fill “AM I NOT A MAN?” Mere weeks ago, I returned to Point Comfort where Dred Scott fought during the War of 1812, and then, as I read Shurtleff’s account of that battle, I was impressed with the care and attention to detail the author took with this small chapter in Dred Scott’s life. That level of historical integrity permeates the work.

“AM I NOT A MAN?” is not an easy read—literally or emotionally. In his effort to incorporate all the wonderful history he has uncovered, the author frequently becomes a historian instead of a novelist, shifting time periods and interjecting long passages of fascinating background info that slow the read for those who come merely seeking a historical novel. Emotionally, the story is painful and graphic in places, perhaps necessarily so, but parents should be advised before handing the book to a younger reader.

None of these issues trump the value or importance of this book. It is a painful story that chronicles the best and worst traits of the human spirit, compelling the reader to place themselves in the shoes of Dred Scott or his brave benefactors. We turn the last page, determined to seek and defend liberty at any cost, and that’s what makes “AM I NOT A MAN?” one of the most important books I’ve read this year, and a novel I highly recommend.

Tristi says

History has the tendency to "conveniently" leave out those facts that might be considered a little controversial. We're not always told the full story, and there are times when we don't know what that full story might be. "Am I Not a Man? The Dred Scott Story" seeks to tell the story of a man who was born a slave, and throughout an entire lifetime of fighting for his right to be treated as a human, never gave up his dream of freedom. The United States Supreme Court declared him to be not just a slave, but a being who was of so little consequence, no white man was obligated to respect him. With that ruling came one of the most embarrassing, shameful moments in our nation's history - the dehumanizing of an entire race.

Shurtleff's writing places us square in the heart of the story. We can imagine ourselves walking the streets of St. Louis and sitting in the courtroom, hearing the case being argued. The historical accuracy of this book is astonishing, every aspect carefully researched and relayed with masterful skill.

This book is more than just a history lesson, more than just an insightful read or an education way to spend your afternoons. This book will touch your soul and awaken you to a deeper gratitude of the freedoms we enjoy today, freedoms that weren't always available to us and in the past weren't ever available to the slaves. We can thank Dred Scott for his courage and determination, for without Dred Scott, our nation would be an entirely different place today.

Lillie says

I vaguely recall studying about the Dred Scott case in history, but I didn't understand the whole story. This book is a novel based on the life of Dred Scott. The fiction format allowed the author to give voice to the characters' thoughts and emotions, which evokes powerful emotions in the readers. However, I found myself wondering how accurate the story was. There seems to be a lot of historical documentation of the case, and I might have preferred to figure out for myself how the characters were feeling. In fact, I plan to look for a nonfiction book about the case to get "just the facts."

A few things in the writing I found disconcerting. The story was not in chronological order, and I found myself getting confused about what happened when. There was a lot of "information dumps" in dialogue, where characters told each other things they would have already known. It would have been easier for me to read if the information had been presented in narrative instead of dialogue. Sometimes the characters talked in dialect and sometimes they used better English. Most confusing of all was that the thoughts of different characters were given in the same scene. In one sentence, the slave is being beaten and we are reading about his pain, and a sentence or two later, we reading the hateful thoughts of the slaveowner. A story in chronological order without dialect in dialogue and without head hopping would have been easier to follow.

However, the story was still very powerful. It made me ashamed of Christians who found nothing wrong with owning other human beings and in many cases treating them worse than animals.

But it also gave me hope. We have gone from a ruling by the Supreme Court of the land that Negroes were less than human with no rights whatsoever to a Constitution with amendments that guarantee freedom and equal rights to blacks. We've gone from a country where a black man didn't have control over his own body or the ability to care for his family to a country that elected a black man as president.

The story of Dred Scott gave me hope that one day soon we will see the same turnaround in recognizing the humanity and life of unborn children. One day Roe v. Wade will be overturned like the Dred Scott decision was overturned, and as the slaves were freed, the lives of unborn babies will be saved from murder in the womb. One day people will look back and wonder how we could stand by and allow babies to be killed, just as today we look back and wonder how people could stand by and allow black people to be enslaved.
