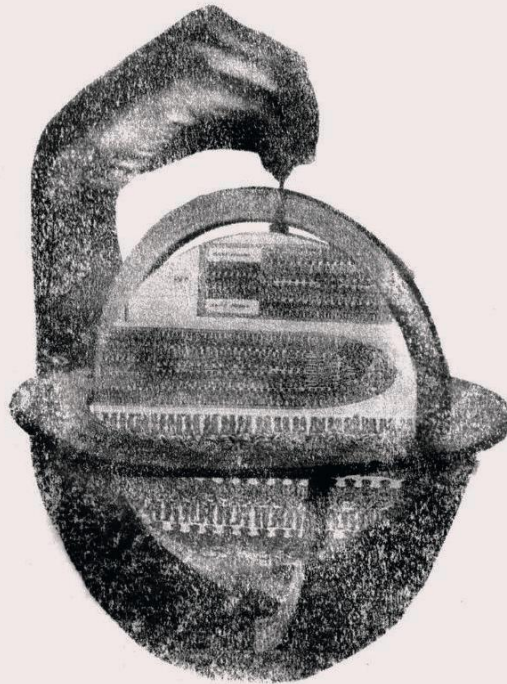


Featured in chronological order throughout this issue are 17 literary works that bring to life consequential moments in African-American history. All are original compositions by contemporary black writers who were asked to create brief explorations of important events or people.

● *August 1619: A ship arrives in Point Comfort, Va., carrying more than 20 enslaved Africans, the first on record to be brought to the English colony of Virginia. They are among the 12.5 million Africans forced into the trans-Atlantic slave trade, their journey to the New World today known as the Middle Passage.*



Over the course of 350 years,
36,000 slave ships crossed the Atlantic
Ocean. I walk over to the globe & move

my finger back & forth between
the fragile continents. I try to keep
count how many times I drag

my hand across the bristled
hemispheres, but grow weary of chasing
a history that swallowed me.

For every hundred people who were
captured & enslaved, forty died before they
ever reached the New World.

I pull my index finger from Angola
to Brazil & feel the bodies jumping from
the ship.

I drag my thumb from Ghana
to Jamaica & feel the weight of dysentery
make an anvil of my touch.

I slide my ring finger from Senegal
to South Carolina & feel the ocean
separate a million families.

The soft hum of history spins
on its tilted axis. A cavalcade of ghost ships
wash their hands of all they carried.

By Clint Smith