

Phillis Wheatley Told Me

A Poem by Anna J. Small Roseboro



Phillis Wheatley Told Me

When they challenge your intellect,
Girl, fight back!

When they said,
“You didn’t write that?”
I said, “Really? What does it lack?”



They shouted right back
“It’s because you’re black.

“Blacks can’t write like that!”



“Oh yeah!” I said.
(Maybe not just like that.)

Just watch my smoke.
You better stay woke,
‘Cause I’m not through
With you -- or with you!



I kept on writing
and
I hope you do, too.



They'll believe when they see
Your intellect shine through.

That melanin is only a color of skin
Not indicative at all
Of what you can do.



So, you just keep on writing
And when you're through.

They'll have to acknowledge
What you truly *did* do.



Phillis Wheatley, engraving attributed to Scipio Moorhead, from
the frontispiece of her 1773 book.