Some Features of the Female Slave Narrative

Written for a female white, northern, abolitionist audience
Slave is "heroine" and main character
Strong maternal themes
Author is strongly identified with family; often has children
Narrator appeals directly to female readers
Slave is beset by sexual predator(s)
Rhetoric of "slavery as it is" less pronounced than in male narratives / more mediated
by extended passages of pathos and emotion and direct appeal
Adoption of forms of sentimental fiction:
   crucial setting: domestic spaces (bedrooms/parlors/kitchens/homes)
   crucial plot motifs: family/love/romance/sex
   crucial characters: false lover/lecherous master/evil mistress/helpful grandmother
   crucial plot devices: marriage/death
Features climax based on intelligence, wits, and strength of character
Features reunion with family members separated by slavery

Conventions of the Sentimental Novel
(This is not a complete list. It includes the most common conventions)

Poetic epithets preceding the chapters
Lengthy chapter titles
Sympathetic narrative interjections
Predictable Plot Structure: Female Virtue under siege: "beautiful heroine in peril"
Ends in the reward of marriage and financial support
Female protagonist who embodies the characteristic virtues of the "Cult of True Womanhood": piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity
Melodrama: strong, heart-wrenching scenes, emotional crisis
Plot coincidences
Secret identities
Endorsement of Christian values of charity, compassion, faith, patience
Combined rhetorical forms: narratives, letters, essays, news fragments, poetry
Stock characters: the seduced female, the glittering rake, the faithful confidante,
   the cruel stepmother, the tragic mulatto (in antislavery fiction especially), the noble soldier
Didactic themes of moral uplift