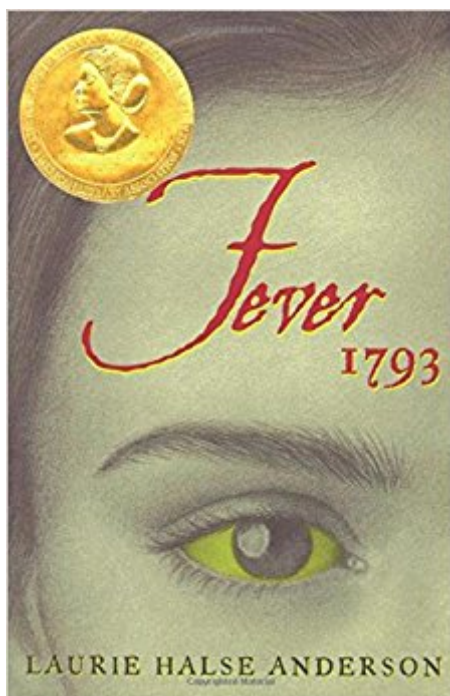


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# Fever 1793 (Seeds Of America Trilogy)



## Synopsis

From *Fever 1793* "Where's Polly?" I asked as I dropped the bucket down the well. "Did you pass by the blacksmith's? "I spoke with her mother, with Mistress Logan," Mother answered softly, looking at her neat rows of carrots. "And?" I waved a mosquito away from my face. "It happened quickly. Polly sewed by candlelight after dinner. Her mother repeated that over and over, 'she sewed by candlelight after dinner.' And then she collapsed." I released the handle and the bucket splashed, a distant sound. "Matilda, Polly's dead." August 1793. Fourteen-year-old Mattie Cook is ambitious, adventurous, and sick to death of listening to her mother. Mattie has plans of her own. She wants to turn the Cook Coffeehouse into the finest business in Philadelphia, the capital of the new United States. But the waterfront is abuzz with reports of disease. "Fever" spreads from the docks and creeps toward Mattie's home, threatening everything she holds dear. As the cemeteries fill with fever victims, fear turns to panic, and thousands flee the city. Then tragedy strikes the coffeehouse, and Mattie is trapped in a living nightmare. Suddenly, her struggle to build a better life must give way to something even more important -- the fight to stay alive.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

On the heels of her acclaimed contemporary teen novel *Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson surprises her fans with a riveting and well-researched historical fiction. *Fever 1793* is based on an actual epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia that wiped out 5,000 people--or 10 percent of the city's

population--in three months. At the close of the 18th century, Philadelphia was the bustling capital of the United States, with Washington and Jefferson in residence. During the hot mosquito-infested summer of 1793, the dreaded yellow fever spread like wildfire, killing people overnight. Like specters from the Middle Ages, gravediggers drew carts through the streets crying "Bring out your dead!" The rich fled to the country, abandoning the city to looters, forsaken corpses, and frightened survivors. In the foreground of this story is 16-year-old Mattie Cook, whose mother and grandfather own a popular coffee house on High Street. Mattie's comfortable and interesting life is shattered by the epidemic, as her mother is felled and the girl and her grandfather must flee for their lives. Later, after much hardship and terror, they return to the deserted town to find their former cook, a freed slave, working with the African Free Society, an actual group who undertook to visit and assist the sick and saved many lives. As first frost arrives and the epidemic ends, Mattie's sufferings have changed her from a willful child to a strong, capable young woman able to manage her family's business on her own. (Ages 12 and older) --Patty Campbell

The opening scene of Anderson's ambitious novel about the yellow fever epidemic that ravaged Philadelphia in the late 18th century shows a hint of the gallows humor and insight of her previous novel, *Speak*. Sixteen-year-old Matilda "Mattie" Cook awakens in the sweltering summer heat on August 16th, 1793, to her mother's command to rouse and with a mosquito buzzing in her ear. She shoos her cat from her mother's favorite quilt and thinks to herself, "I had just saved her precious quilt from disaster, but would she appreciate it? Of course not." Mattie's wit again shines through several chapters later during a visit to her wealthy neighbors' house, the Ogilvies. Having refused to let their serving girl, Eliza, coif her for the occasion, Mattie regrets it as soon as she lays eyes on the Ogilvie sisters, who wear matching bombazine gowns, curly hair piled high on their heads ("I should have let Eliza curl my hair. Dash it all"). But thereafter, Mattie's character development, as well as those of her grandfather and widowed mother, takes a back seat to the historical details of Philadelphia and environs. Extremely well researched, Anderson's novel paints a vivid picture of the seedy waterfront, the devastation the disease wreaks on a once thriving city, and the bitterness of neighbor toward neighbor as those suspected of infection are physically cast aside. However, these larger scale views take precedence over the kind of intimate scenes that Anderson crafted so masterfully in *Speak*. Scenes of historical significance, such as George Washington returning to Philadelphia, then the nation's capital, to signify the end of the epidemic are delivered with more impact than scenes of great personal significance to Mattie. Ages 10-14. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Not only do I love YA fiction (which kind of grew on me as I taught middle and high school) but also historical fiction. Both of these genres blend together beautifully in Laurie Halse Anderson's "Fever 1793". It is a gripping account, written from the point of view of a fourteen-year-old girl, Mattie Cook during the course of a year, 1793, in Philadelphia. Mattie lives with her mother and paternal grandfather, a Revolutionary War veteran, above a coffeehouse the family operates in Philadelphia. Mattie chafes under her mother's strict and proper upbringing, and the daily grind of doing chores wears out Mattie's patience. Things change when the yellow fever epidemic sweeps Philadelphia and Mattie finds herself adrift without proper guidance when the people closest to her are unable to support her both emotionally and physically. The story tracks Mattie's growth as an individual, one who needs to make important, life-altering decisions, and grow quickly from childhood to adulthood within a span of a year. The story moves at a quick pace, and makes for riveting reading. Mattie is a strong-willed, defiant, and courageous young woman, and young adults will easily relate to her on this level. Her journey towards self-reliance and independence is credibly portrayed against the historical backdrop of the fever epidemic that swept Philadelphia in 1793 and took many lives. This is a well-written and engaging YA historical novel that will appeal to both teenagers and adults.

I also did not realize this was a young adult book. However I enjoyed the read --it was quick and very informative. I never heard about this epidemic and Fever brought it to life. I think the story is told in a very straightforward manner. I would agree the writing is not very complex and I would've enjoyed it more if it had more rich language.

While Fever 1793 is a book written for children, I would not hesitate to recommend it for adult readers. This fictional account of the Philadelphia Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793 is both fascinating and haunting. Mattie Cook is a young girl on the brink of womanhood. She lives with her mother and grandfather in the upstairs of their coffeehouse. When summertime fevers begin to take the lives of people Mattie knows her family refuses to believe it is yellow fever. The lack of understanding of both the cause of disease and its treatment leads to disaster. When the true cause of the rising death toll is apparent, Mattie's family must decide whether to stay in the city or to follow the many people leaving for the safer countryside. This is a wonderful book. The subject matter may be too sensitive for younger readers.

What a fantastic book! This is the story of a young girl's experience during the Yellow Fever

epidemic in Philadelphia in 1793. The author does a wonderful job of setting the scene for the tragedy that is about to occur. Ms. Anderson does not shy away from the reality of life at that time, nor does she romanticize it. The reader can not help but realize how tough daily life was even before the fever sweeps the city. When the fever does hit, again, Ms. Anderson is thorough and realistic in her descriptions, without being excessively gory. Her storytelling draws you in and puts you right next to Mattie, the main character in the story. While written for middle schoolers, this story is engrossing regardless of your age. This is one that everyone should read!!! I don't often give 5 stars, but this one definitely deserved it!!

I am 13, and I absolutely loved this book. I really wish it was a series, and I could keep reading about the amazing, interesting life of Mattie Cook in the late 1900s. I recommend this book to anyone and everyone who loves historical fiction. I read this book every chance I got. Early in the morning before school, after school, at night, at breakfast, in the car, etc. Everyone should read this book.

I probably would have given this book three stars just based on the writing (solid, entertaining, but not fantastic), but the book explores a period of history that doesn't get as much attention and addresses less represented groups in early American history as well. Would make a great teaching tool for elementary or middle schoolers, but it's a good, quick read on its own too.

I don't give many books a five. This book's historical accuracy on the many details of the 1793 Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic, makes it very informative. The plot actually gets a B, for being a bit lame, as in there almost wasn't a plot, but at the same time, it kept me reading. Really, the plot was a family had to deal with yellow fever, and at the end of the story the family is close to where it was when the story begins. It's the historical detail and accuracy that make the book a valuable read.

I read this book in preparation for scoring essays based on it for our local Academic Pentathlon competition. I'm glad I had the opportunity to learn about an event in history that I had not previously known. After reading the book, I did some research. Ms. Anderson certainly did her own due diligence in researching the background for this novel. The experiences of the protagonist, Maddie, were borne out by actual events during the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic of 1793. This book should be on every middle and high school reading list.

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