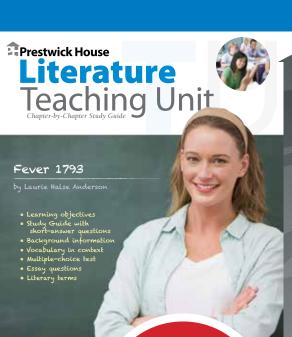


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# Literature Teaching Unit Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



# Prestwick House

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Fever 1793 TEACHING UNIT

## **Fever 1793**

#### Note to the Teacher

Fever 1793 is a historical novel that chronicles the yellow fever epidemic that occurred in Philadelphia. The book focuses on Matilda "Mattie" Cook and how she and her family are affected by this mosquito-borne disease. Although the Cook family is fictional, Anderson includes a number of historical events and figures, such as the launch of Blanchard's hot air balloon, Dr. Benjamin Rush, and Richard Allen, the founder of the Free African Society. As the fever infects people in Philadelphia, and the wealthy travel to the countryside, Mattie witnesses the city transform into an unfamiliar landscape. During this trying time, Mattie also undergoes her own transformation as she matures from a girl into a determined young woman.

Laurie Halse Anderson was born in Potsdam, New York, in 1961. She began her career as an author by writing picture books, but she is best known for her young adult novels, including the award-winning novel *Speak*. She has always been interested in American history. *Fever* 1793, her first historical novel, has been a long time in the making. She began researching and rewriting the book in 1993, and finally published it in 2000. *Fever* 1793 has won multiple awards, including the American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults, and has been adapted into a stage play that was performed in May 2004 in Syracuse, New York.

All references come from the Simon & Schuster edition of Fever 1793, copyright 2000.

Fever 1793 TEACHING UNIT

### **Objectives**

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

- 1. write an essay that explains and supports how *Fever 1793* is a coming-of-age story.
- 2. infer meanings about characters and events when the meanings are not explicitly stated.
- 3. identify historical figures and events within the novel.
- 4. analyze the effect Anderson creates by quoting historical sources in the epigraphs.
- 5. discuss and understand the significance of the insects mentioned throughout the novel.
- 6. compare the characters Matilda and Lucille Cook.
- 7. explain how class and race influenced how people were affected by yellow fever.
- 8. understand the various methods of treating and preventing yellow fever and discuss the effectiveness of these methods.
- 9. explain how the Revolutionary War maintains an underlying presence in the novel.
- 10. define the term "symbol" and analyze the meaning(s) and significance of the following symbols:
  - the yellow hot air balloon
  - mockingbirds
  - the garden
- 11. discuss how Philadelphia changes over the course of the novel and determine how the city environment may have caused the disease to spread rapidly.
- 12. evaluate the ways in which society breaks down or endures during the yellow fever outbreak.
- 13. discuss the role of religion and its importance to characters in the novel.
- 14. define the following literary terms and identify examples of them within the text:
  - anaphora
  - hyperbole
  - irony
  - personification
  - simile

6 OBJECTIVES

Fever 1793 TEACHING UNIT

#### **Questions for Essay and Discussion**

1. The culture and daily life depicted in *Fever 1793* is, in many ways, quite different from that of modern America. Discuss the significant differences between the historical culture and that of modern day, and describe how certain elements, such as people's behaviors and relationships, remain the same.

- 2. Characters mention a number of possible sources of the fever, from foul smells to refugees. Discuss likely causes of the illness and how Anderson suggests the actual source of the contagion.
- 3. Pembroke stopped fever victims from entering the town. Discuss whether such policies are inhumane or justifiable methods of preventing the spread of disease.
- 4. In the epigraphs, Anderson quotes primary sources, including writings by people who also appear in *Fever 1793*. How do these quotations make Anderson's historical novel appear more credible?
- 5. Matilda is upset by insensitive treatment of the dead. Why is this indifferent handling justifiable? Why does the treatment of the dead matter?
- 6. This novel contains many similes. Identify examples of similes from the text and analyze how this literary device is used and the effect it has on the audience.
- 7. *Fever 1793* is told through Matilda's point of view. How does her perspective affect the portrayal of characters and events?
- 8. The novel is set about a decade after the Revolutionary War ended. Write a one-page essay in which you explain how the War has affected how characters perceive themselves and events. Cite specific incidents from the text to support your answer.
- 9. Discuss how Matilda's attitude toward the future changes over the course of the novel.
- 10. Trace the breakdown and later recovery of society during the yellow fever outbreak.
- 11. Grandfather emphasizes the importance of family. Examine how Matilda's family includes people other than relatives.

Fever 1793 STUDENT COPY

# **Fever 1793**

## Chapter One – August 16th, 1793

#### VOCABULARY

abhorred – strongly disliked; loathed	
clattered – moved quickly with a loud rattling sound	
dawdling – wasting time; moving slowly	
droned – continued to speak in a dull, monotonous tone	
noggin – a head	
rouse – to awaken someone; to cause someone to become active	
stays – a type of corset	
tardy – late; not on time	
teemed – was filled with	
wretched – unpleasant; miserable	
What pests does Matilda encounter in the bedchamber?	
How does anaphora emphasize Matilda's reluctance to face the day?	
Tiow does anaphora emphasize Mathdas reluctance to face the day:	
	•
How does Matilda compare to her mother's expectations for how a child should act?	
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Fever 1793 STUDENT COPY

## Chapter Seven – August 30th, 1793

#### VOCABULARY

bombazine – a specially woven fabric made of silk or silk and wool

	brocaded – woven with a raised design
	Chippendale – an eighteenth-century furniture design with elegant outlines and
	ornate carvings
	damask – thick, shiny cloth woven with patterns
	discretion – good judgement; the quality of having careful judgement
	dregs – the least desirable part of something
	grog – an alcoholic drink
	hovels – small, poorly constructed, often dirty houses
	implore – to beg; to make an emotional request
	mahogany – reddish-brown wood, usually used for making furniture
	man-of-war – a battleship
	mangy – having a skin disease
	parched – extremely thirsty
	sideboard – a piece of furniture that holds dishes, silverware, and linens
	tedious – boring; tiresome
	vile – unpleasant; foul; disgusting
	Why does Mother briefly speak to Matilda in a "gentle tone"?
	with does wother briefly speak to mathda in a gentle tone :
	why does wother briefly speak to Mathida in a genite tone :
	wity does wother briefly speak to Mathida in a "gentie tolle":
	why does wother briefly speak to Mathida in a "genite tone":
2.	Matilda describes Pernilla Ogilvie as "sail[ing] across the room like a man-of-war." How does this simile reveal Mattie's attitude toward Mrs. Ogilvie?
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