

Fever 1793

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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.

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
approx. 4 hours, 3 cassettes

It's late summer 1793, and the streets of Philadelphia are abuzz with mosquitoes and rumors of fever. Down near the docks, many have taken ill, and the fatalities are mounting. Now they include Polly, the serving girl at the Cook Coffeehouse. But fourteen-year-old Mattie Cook doesn't get a moment to mourn the passing of her childhood playmate. New customers have overrun her family's coffee shop, located far from the mosquito-infested river, and Mattie's concerns of fever are all but overshadowed by dreams of growing her family's small business into a thriving enterprise. But when the fever begins to strike closer

to home, Mattie's struggle to build a new life must give way to a new fight—the fight to stay alive.

Other Books

Constructing the Outbreak. When an epidemic strikes, media outlets are central to how an outbreak is framed and understood. While reporters construct stories intended to inform the public and convey essential information from doctors and politicians, news narratives also serve as historical records, capturing sentiments, responses, and fears throughout the course of the epidemic. *Constructing the Outbreak* demonstrates how news reporting on epidemics communicates more than just information about pathogens; rather, prejudices, political agendas, religious beliefs, and theories of disease also shape the message.

Analyzing seven epidemics spanning more than two hundred years—from Boston's smallpox epidemic and Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic in the eighteenth century to outbreaks of diphtheria, influenza, and typhoid in the early twentieth century—Katherine A. Foss discusses how shifts in journalism and medicine influenced the coverage, preservation, and fictionalization of different disease outbreaks. Each case study highlights facets of this interplay, delving into topics such as colonization, tourism, war, and politics. Through this investigation into what has been preserved and forgotten in the collective memory of disease, Foss sheds light on current health care debates, like vaccine hesitancy.

“ . . . Even though more than four thousand people died of yellow fever in 1793, this epidemic has been all but erased from collective memory. Most people do not know much about the disease itself—its transmission, symptoms, and lethality—or . . .”