

A Spy Called James: The True Story of James Lafayette, Revolutionary War Double Agent

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Told for the first time in picture book form is the true story of James Lafayette—a slave who spied for George Washington's army during the American Revolution. But while America celebrated its newfound freedom, James returned to slavery. His service hadn't qualified him for the release he'd been hoping for. For James the fight wasn't over; he'd already helped his country gain its freedom, now it was time to win his own.

Anne Rockwell

is the author of *Hey, Charleston!*: The True Story of the Jenkins Orphanage Band, which was a Junior Library Guild Selection. She lives in Stamford, Connecticut.

Floyd Cooper

is a Coretta Scott King Award winner and the illustrator of *Ruth and the Green Book*. Floyd received a degree in fine arts from the University of Oklahoma. He lives in Easton, Pennsylvania.

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Rockwell's detailed yet accessible text is perfectly matched with Cooper's exceptional oil paintings

in this picture book biography. Using a muted color palette and done in a grainy style, the art imparts a sense of historical drama in each spread and expertly draws readers into James Lafayette's remarkable story. Rockwell wastes no words, beginning right away with General Cornwallis's defeat at the Battle of Yorktown and his discovery that a guide for the British army was in fact a double agent, a slave working as a spy for the Americans. (Rockwell discloses enough background information on the Revolutionary War to keep kids grounded.) Students will learn that although James provided an invaluable service to the Americans, he was denied his freedom after the war ended until a letter from General Lafayette intervened (back matter notes that James petitioned for his freedom on his own and was initially denied by the general assembly). In a triumphant last spread, the former spy, now James Lafayette, appears at the forefront of a landscape with bold red text proclaiming, 'James Lafayette was finally free.' VERDICT:

A profoundly successful work.

Pair this with Stephen Krensky's *Hanukkah at Valley Forge* and Laurie Halse Anderson's *Independent Dames: What You Never Knew About the Women and Girls of the American Revolution* for a well-rounded, multicultural look at the American Revolution."—starred, *School Library Journal* (Journal)

"Rockwell (*Hey, Charleston!*)

delivers a striking portrait of James Lafayette, an African-American

spy critical to the outcome of the Revolutionary War.

Enslaved by a Virginia farmer and known only as James, he worked with the French general Marquis de Lafayette (whose surname James later adopted) in exchange for freedom. Pretending to be a runaway slave, James infiltrated British troops, and 'information he passed to Lafayette allowed the colonial army to trap Cornwallis at Yorktown.' The succinct narrative explains a complicated wartime story using a conversational tone (General Lafayette is 'the French general with names to spare'). Cooper's (Ira's Shakespeare Dream) appealing oil-and-erasure

illustrations affirm his skill as a gifted portrait artist.

Settings recede into the background as close-ups of James, George Washington, Charles Cornwallis, and others bring emotion to the tale, revealing feelings of dejection, pride, and determination. Final pages and an author's note explain how James continued to fight for his freedom several years after the war and how Lafayette aided him in securing it."

Publishers Weekly

(Journal)

"Two years prior to the close of the Revolutionary War, an enslaved man in Virginia named James asks to help defeat the British by becoming a spy in exchange for his freedom. Working under the command of General Lafayette, James infiltrates General Cornwallis' troops by posing as a runaway slave and eventually becomes a double agent. Although Cornwallis surrenders, and the U.S. wins the war in 1783, James does not receive the freedom he expected, and three years pass before Lafayette wrote a certificate declaring James' independence. Rockwell's engaging narrative shines a light on the little-known story of a key African American player in a pivotal moment in American history. Rockwell's engaging, straightforward paragraphs are well matched by Cooper's stunning, soft-focus oil paintings, which add drama, thanks to the figures' expressive faces, from James' sly, knowing glances to the reader to his deflated aspect after the injustice of being denied what was promised him.

With a compelling story and appealing artwork, this inviting foray into American history will catch the attention of many readers.

"-Booklist

(Journal)

Other Books

HR: The Stolen Mackenzie Bride, Malcolm Mackenzie, putra bungsu dari Keluarga Mackenzie yang termahsyur di Skotlandia, adalah pemuda liar yang sulit diatur ... dan dia bertemu Mary, seorang wanita cantik asal Inggris yang sulit untuk ditolak. Namun peperangan terjadi antara para Highlander Skotlandia dan pasukan Raja Inggris. Mal dan Mary ada di kubu berbeda, dan hanya ada satu hal yang harus dilakukan agar mereka bisa bersama. Mal bergegas menyusun rencana untuk 'mencuri' Mary dari tunangannya, sebelum membawa Mary berkelana jauh ke pedalaman Highland dan menyelinap ke tengah perang yang terus berkecamuk.

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