

## CHAINS ABOUT THE BOOK

As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight... for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of the woman who holds them in slavery, she and her sister, Ruth, become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons,

who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on the Locktons, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.7–8.1, 2, 3, 4) (SL.7–8.1, 3, 4, 6) (L.7–8.1, 3)

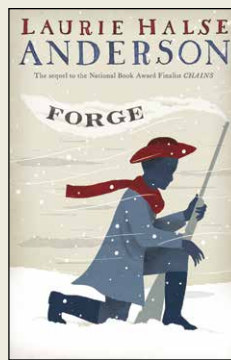
1. Describe the life of slaves in the American colonies in the 1700s. Discuss the difference between a servant and a slave. How does Mary Finch's view of slavery differ from that of most slave owners?
2. Why does Mr. Robert accuse Isabel of lying when she tells him that she read Miss Mary's will? Explain why Pastor Weeks thinks that teaching a slave to read only "leads to trouble."
3. Discuss the connection between bravery, courage, and fear. What is Isabel's first act of bravery? Discuss her most fearful moments. How is her bravery and courage fueled by her fears? How does she become bolder and braver as the novel develops?
4. The American Revolution was about freedom and liberty. Mr. Lockton, a Loyalist, thinks that freedom and liberty have many meanings. Define freedom and liberty from his point of view. How might the patriots define freedom and liberty? What about Isabel?
5. Isabel has lived her entire life in bondage but dreams of freedom. What does freedom look like in Isabel's mind?
6. Why does Isabel feel betrayed by Curzon? How does Colonel Regan betray Curzon? What other betrayals occur in the novel?

7. At what point does Isabel understand that Curzon's dream of freedom is the same as hers? How does this realization help her forgive him?

8. What does Lady Seymour see in Isabel that Madam Lockton doesn't see? How does the "lamb" in Lady Seymour help the "lion" inside of Isabel escape?

9. Explain the brand on Isabel's cheek. At what point does Isabel gain strength from the brand? How is this moment a rebirth for Isabel?

10. What does Isabel mean when she says, "I was chained between two nations"? There are other references to chains throughout the novel. How is the word *chain* used as an antonym to the word *freedom*?



## FORGE ABOUT THE BOOK

Set in 1777 and 1778 in the middle of the American Revolution, *Forge* opens with fifteen-year-old Curzon fighting alongside the Patriots in Saratoga. In the winter he lands at Valley Forge, the encampment of General George Washington and his army. Soldiers are

suffering from lack of supplies and food, and battle wounds. Disease is rampant. Spies are swarming the towns and battlefields, and Curzon doesn't know whom to trust. To make matters worse, he worries about Isabel. They had parted ways in a fit of anger because he wanted to fight for freedom, and she was set on finding Ruth, her little sister, who was shipped off to an undisclosed location by Madam Lockton. Curzon survived a horrid time in a British prison, but can he survive the battlefields and the prejudices of the soldiers so that he might hold on to his freedom?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Explain what Curzon means when he says, "the freedom could kill us." How does freedom separate Isabel and Curzon?
2. Curzon cries when he realizes that his felt hat is gone. Explain the symbolism of the hat.
3. Valley Forge wasn't a battlefield. Instead, it was a winter encampment for Washington's army. What types

of personal battles did the soldiers endure at Valley Forge? Why is Valley Forge considered the turning point in the American Revolution?

4. Explain why Curzon is especially sensitive to Turnbull's insults in front of Eben and his uncle Caleb.

5. Stealing is the only way that Curzon can exist in freedom. How does he justify stealing from Turnbull? Curzon steals from Bellingham at the end of the novel so that he and Isabel can once again be free. How might he defend the theft?

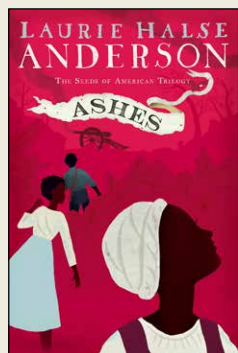
6. Discuss how Curzon comes to realize that silence is "powerful."

7. Curzon is the victim of prejudice. He deals with it by remembering something that his father once told him: "A lot of white people have twisted hearts. It prevents them from seeing the world properly and turns them into tools of the devil." Who has the most "twisted heart" in Curzon's company? How does he spread "poison" about Curzon?

8. At what point does Curzon begin doubting Eben's loyalty? What does it take for Curzon and Eben to become friends again? At the beginning of the novel, Curzon saves Eben's life. How does Eben help Curzon at the end of the novel?

9. Analyze the following: "The parrot squawked as the two of us entered the kitchen...I was every bit as caged as the kitchen parrot." What does Curzon mean when he says that he is caged? What does the parrot symbolize to Curzon?

10. Describe Curzon and Isabel's reunion. How do they have to learn to trust each other again? How does Gideon interfere with this trust? Explain the role of ghosts in Isabel and Curzon's final reunion.



### **ASHES** **ABOUT THE BOOK**

The year is 1781. Curzon has promised to help Isabel find Ruth because of his debt to her for saving his life, but he would much rather be supporting the Patriot cause. The two learn that Madam Lockton shipped Ruth to Riverbend Plantation near Charleston, South Carolina. They

travel by night, and seek safe shelter by day. When they reach Charleston, they find Ruth under the loving care of Mister Walter and Missus Serafina,

two slaves owned by the Locktons. Ruth doesn't appear to recognize her sister, but Missus Serafina gives Isabel good advice about handling Ruth and sends them on their way. Isabel faces many ups and downs in her relationship with Curzon, and it takes a while to gain Ruth's trust. Through it all, they live the day-by-day harsh realities of the war and eventually make some surprising discoveries about who they are and what they want for their future.

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1. Explain what Isabel means when she says, "Time and hard travel had changed us both." Debate whether she is referring to her relationship with Curzon or their individual goals.

2. Isabel says, "Everyone was fighting for freedom, but few could agree on the meaning of the word." Compare and contrast Isabel and Curzon's definition of freedom. Explain what she means when she says, "Neither side was talking about freedom for people who looked like us."

3. Isabel says, "It did no good to let desire and dream race ahead of common sense." What is her desire and dream? How do she and Curzon use "common sense" as they journey south in search of Ruth? How do their dreams look differently at the end of the novel?

4. Isabel and Curzon find Ruth under the loving care of Mister Walter and Missus Serafina, two slaves at Riverbend Plantation. How do they understand Ruth and know how to calm her "fits"? How does Ruth respond to them?

5. Mister Walter and Missus Serafina know that Ruth should be with her sister. Explain Mister Walter's parting message to Ruth. "Keep home in your heart where no one can steal it away."

6. Explain the close relationship between Ruth and Aberdeen. What do they have in common? How does Isabel depend on Aberdeen to help her understand Ruth? Why is Isabel so determined to "wean" Ruth from Aberdeen?

7. What is the source of most arguments between Isabel and Curzon? How does their fighting affect Ruth?

8. Discuss why Isabel and Ruth leave their work at the laundry. Explain what Isabel means when she says, "We had been forced back into war for our liberty."

9. Describe Isabel's emotions when she learns that Ruth thought she sent her away. How does this explain Ruth's response to Isabel?

10. How does Henry help Isabel understand the true meaning of friendship? Discuss how the harshness of the times causes Isabel to be suspicious of making friends. Who is her best friend in the novel?

11. Curzon admits that he was wrong about freedom and the war. Trace this long journey of discovery. How long does it take a person to admit that he or she is wrong? Why does Curzon say that only "people like us" understand the true meaning of freedom?

12. Discuss the title of the novel. How is it an appropriate title for the final book in the trilogy?

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## Discussing the SEEDS OF AMERICA TRILOGY by Laurie Halse Anderson

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### What would you risk to be free?

It's 1776 and Isabel, Curzon, and Ruth have only ever known life as slaves. But now the young country of America is in turmoil—there are whisperings, then cries, of freedom from England spreading like fire, and with it is a whole new type of danger. For freedom being fought for one isn't necessarily freedom being fought for all...especially if you are a slave. But if an entire nation can seek its freedom, why can't they? As war breaks out, sides must be chosen, death is at every turn, and one question forever rings in their ears: Would you risk everything to be free? As battles rage up and down the Eastern seaboard, Isabel, Curzon, and Ruth flee, separate, fight, face unparalleled heartbreak, and, just like war, they must depend on their allies—and each other—if they are to survive. Which leads to a second, harrowing question: amidst so much pain and destruction, can they even recognize who their allies are?

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.7–8.1, 2, 3, 4) (SL.7–8.1, 3, 4, 6) (L.7–8.1, 3)

1. How is *The Seeds of America* an appropriate title for the trilogy?

2. *Chains* is told in first person from Isabel's point of view. *Forge* is told in Curzon's voice. Why do you think the author wrote *Ashes* from Isabel's point of view?

3. How does Isabel give a different meaning to the "I" branded on her cheek in the three novels? Discuss how

her explanation reveals her growth as an individual.

4. Fear is something that Isabel has lived with all of her life. Trace the way she deals with fear throughout the three novels. In *Ashes*, she says, "I want to live the rest of my days without fear." Debate whether that ever happens for Isabel.

5. The author divides *Chains* and *Forge* into three parts. What is the purpose of this organization? How does it contribute to the readers' understanding of the "order" of events? Why do you think *Ashes* isn't organized in the same way?



CAITLYN DLOUHY BOOKS





# *The Award-Winning and Bestselling* SEEDS OF AMERICA TRILOGY

By *New York Times* bestselling author Laurie Halse Anderson

## *The Ideal Classroom Companion*

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### *Praise for CHAINS:*

- ★ “Searing, fascinating story.” —*Booklist* (starred review)
- ★ “Readers will care deeply about Isabel.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
- ★ “A fast-moving, emotionally involving plot.” —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

### *Awards for CHAINS:*

ALA Best Books For Young Adults • ALA Notable Children's Books • ALA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults – Top Ten • Beehive Award Master List (UT) • Booklist Editors' Choice • CBC/NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book • Capitol Choices List (DC) • Charlotte Award Suggested Reading List (NY) • Garden State Teen Book Award Nominee (NJ) • Georgia Children's Book Award Nominee • Golden Sower Masterlist (NE) • Grand Canyon Reader Award Nominee (AZ) • IRA Teachers' Choices • Maine Student Book Award Master List • NYPL 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing • National Book Award Finalist • Nutmeg Children's Book Award Nominee (CT) • Pacific Northwest Young Reader's Choice Award • Pacific Northwest Young Reader's Choice Award Master List • Parents' Choice Gold Award Winner • Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award Nominee • Publishers Weekly Best Books • Rebecca Caudill Award Master List (IL) • Rhode Island Teen Book Award Nominee • Rodda Book Award Nominee • Scott O'Dell Award • Texas Tayshas Reading List • Thumbs Up! Award Master List (MI) • Truman Reader Award Nominee (MO) • Volunteer State Book Award Master List (TN) • Washington Post Best Books • West Virginia Children's Book Award Master List

### *Praise for FORGE:*

- ★ “Not only can this sequel stand alone, for many readers it will be **one of the best novels they have ever read.**” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
- ★ “A deeply satisfying tale that will leave readers hungry for the final volume.”  
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
- ★ “Anderson seamlessly weaves her fictitious characters into history.” —*The Horn Book* magazine (starred review)
- ★ “A terrific return not only to the colonial era but to historical accuracy.”  
—*The New York Times Book Review*
- ★ “*Forge* (like *Chains*) would be an ideal classroom companion.” —KidsReads.com

### *Awards for FORGE:*

ALA Best Books For Young Adults • CCBC Choices (Cooperative Children's Book Council) • Horn Book Fanfare • IRA Teachers' Choices • Kirkus Best Children's Book • Volunteer State Book Award Master List (TN) • Young Hoosier Book Award Master List (IN)

### *Praise for ASHES:*

- ★ “Yes, readers, it was **worth the wait.**” —*Booklist* (starred review)
- ★ “A strong conclusion to a monumental tale of the American Revolution.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
- ★ “A gripping finish to an epic journey that speaks resoundingly to the human capacity to persevere.” —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
- ★ “Compelling, must-have historical fiction series.” —*School Library Journal* (starred review)

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For more about The Seeds of America Trilogy and Laurie Halse Anderson, visit [SeedsofAmericaTrilogy.com](http://SeedsofAmericaTrilogy.com)

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[MadWomanintheForest.com](http://MadWomanintheForest.com)

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