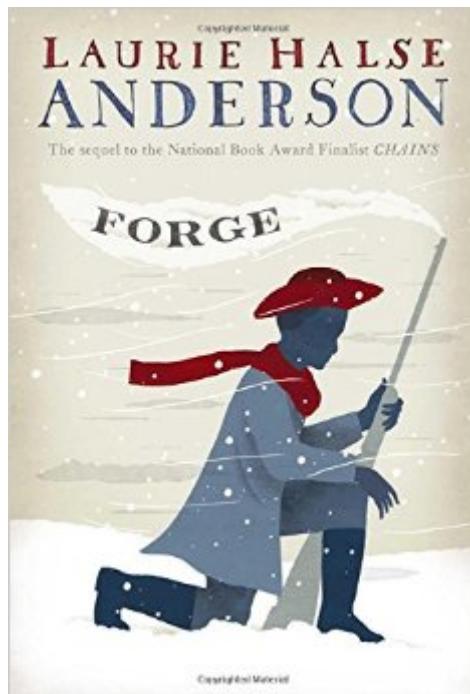


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# Forge



## Synopsis

Blistering winds. Bitter cold. And the hope of a new future. In this compelling sequel to *Chains*, a National Book Award Finalist and winner of the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, acclaimed author Laurie Halse Anderson shifts perspective from Isabel to Curzon and brings to the page the tale of what it takes for runaway slaves to forge their own paths in a world of obstacles—and in the midst of the American Revolution. The Patriot Army was shaped and strengthened by the desperate circumstances of the Valley Forge winter. This is where Curzon the boy becomes Curzon the young man. In addition to the hardships of soldiering, he lives with the fear of discovery, for he is an escaped slave passing for free. And then there is Isabel, who is also at Valley Forge—against her will. She and Curzon have to sort out the tangled threads of their friendship while figuring out what stands between the two of them and true freedom.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 6-10—This sequel to *Chains* (S & S, 2008) opens with Curzon, an enslaved teen who was freed from prison by Isabel, recalling his escape and anticipating the future. After an argument with Isabel about where they should go next, the 15-year-old battles the British at Saratoga and winters in Valley Forge with the Patriots. He reveals many details of the conditions endured by the soldiers during the winter of 1777-1778, including the limited food supply, lack of adequate shelter, and tattered clothing. When Curzon and Isabel meet again, they have both been captured and must devise a plan of escape once again. While the Patriots are fighting for the freedom of a country,

these young people must fight for their personal freedom. This sequel can be read alone but readers will benefit from reading the first book, which develops the characters and reveals events leading up to the winter at Valley Forge. An appendix clarifies historical facts and real-life characters. A list of colloquial terms used throughout the novel is appended. Denise Moore, O'Gorman Junior High School, Sioux Falls, SD © Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Anderson follows her searing, multi-award-winning novel *Chains* (2008) with this well-researched sequel, also set during the Revolutionary War and narrated by a young African American. This time, though, her central character is male, and the heartbreak drama shifts from *Chains*' domestic town houses to graphically described bloody battlefields. After a narrowly successful escape from Manhattan, former slaves Isabel and Curzon separate, and Curzon is once again on the run. He finds necessary food and shelter as a private with the Continental army, and through Curzon's eyes, Anderson re-creates pivotal historical scenes, including the desperate conditions at Valley Forge. Curzon isn't as fully realized here as Isabel was in *Chains*, resulting in a less-cohesive and -compelling whole. Once again, though, Anderson's detailed story creates a cinematic sense of history while raising crucial questions about racism, the ethics of war, and the hypocrisies that underlie our country's founding definitions of freedom. Chapter heads excerpted from historical documents and a long appendix that offers research suggestions and separates fact and fiction add further curricular appeal. Grades 5-8. --Gillian Engberg --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The wolves terrified him. Curzon scrambled down the ravine, thinking about the bodies that the beasts had dug from their graves after the battle at Freeman's Farm. An escaped slave like him didn't stand a chance if they'd caught his scent. Gunfire blasted into the glade. Musketballs peppered the trees, nearly ripping his ear. Curzon threw himself to the ground, hoping no British or rebel fire would strike him. When the smoke cleared, a young rebel was staring down the barrel of a British soldier. Curzon hurled a rock at the redcoat and struck him hard in his shoulder. Seizing his chance, the rebel fired. His enemy screamed as blood spurted over dead leaves. The shaken rebel soon prepared to rejoin his comrades, and Curzon was off with him to the thick of the battle fighting for the freedom of the men who had enslaved him. Valley Forge. Curzon found himself serving in the army as a freeman, without papers

to prove he wasn't a slave. The cold of deep winter set in, freezing the feet of any soldier left without boots. Icy winds swept through the camp on nights too cold for pitching tents. All the barrels of salt pork spoiled. With nothing to eat but handfuls of flour, starvation chewed through the rebel army. Veteran soldiers poured muddy water and crushed grain over heated rocks to make scorched firecakes. Little choice for food remained, other than stealing pumpkins from surrounding farms. Trapped in a world of hunger, freezing weather, and vicious assaults from his own comrades, Curzon missed his friend Isabel fiercely. She had been the one to free him from Bridewell Prison, rowing all night with bleeding hands to save his life. One cold day, Curzon's former master rode into camp. When their eyes met, past and future caught in one life-changing moment. Freedom and slavery exchanged places. Curzon's world was about to begin over again. Isabel was alive, but collared in iron, making another escape all but impossible. Laurie Halse Anderson writes dramatic history that quickly captures your heart. She is a New York Times bestselling author. She's won numerous awards and honors, including two National Book Award nominations, the Margaret A Awards Award, and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents Award.

Forge, the outstanding sequel to *Chains*, by truly gifted YA author Laurie Halse Anderson, will turn even reluctant readers into lovers of historical fiction and make history buffs out of even the most resistant student (young or old). The very accurate descriptions of the horrid living conditions in the colonial military camps during the winter of 1777 sound like something out of a holocaust history. The battle scenes are equally accurate, equally horrifying and action packed. Anderson also does a great job of capturing the idealism, optimism and courage of the young inexperienced colonial fighters. Even more gripping than the story of the war is the story of the slaves who were promised freedom if they enlisted for the colonies and were also promised freedom and riches if they spied on their masters for the British. Adult readers know neither side has any intention of keeping its promise, but YA readers with their strong sense of fairness and clearly defined ideas of right and wrong will be shocked at the callousness and cruelty of the slave owners and some of the soldiers. I loved that Anderson begins each chapter with quotes from letters actually written by people involved in the Revolution and the events of the novel. Some of the quotes are from leaders like Thomas Payne and Abigail Adams, and some are from ordinary colonists. Forge will be a great movie and a classic YA novel.

I know that this is the second in a series of three books by Laurie Halsey Anderson. I'd read the first

"Chains" while inpatient for a medical treatment. It had been provided by the shelves of the sharing rooms library. For where I've been myself I'm not sure of what I'd thought that it been recommended for reading levels as young as high school junior years. When I was from the SouthWest as teenage we'd hardly been told any truths about the NorthEast territories during the Revolutionary war. But although mainly fiction except for some quotes posted before the chapters, I'm trying to learn a little about the NorthEast lands original histories. With my lengthlento the second book though actually, about four chapters, I'm wondering if Curzon will come back up alive. He was not awake when the boat met coast, still bruised from the foul conditions of rebel prison and used to starving which I hope saves his life and he waked up later.

Forge is narrated by Curzon. The pace of action is nicely sprinkled with Curzon's recollections of his separation from Isabel after she rescued him. We also learn more about his past and how he came to be Bellingham's slave. His resourcefulness and wise judgement of character once again guide him on his path, which ultimately leads once again to Isabel.

Is packed into this historical fiction story. The strength and endurance of early American slaves come to life in this novel.

It required, it actually requested by my 11 y.o. Son, after reading "Chains" by the same author, which was required. He has told me it was exciting !

I bought this book because my daughter's class at school is reading it and I wanted to check it out & make sure it was suitable for a youngster to read. I read the whole thing in one sitting, couldn't put it down, and it made me cry. There was no inappropriate/adult content. Definitely a great read, and I would recommend it for adolescent reading material for learning about the revolutionary war. I started reading the second book, Forge, and am not as into it, haven't finished it... I just want to skip ahead to the third book which isn't written yet, I if understand correctly.

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