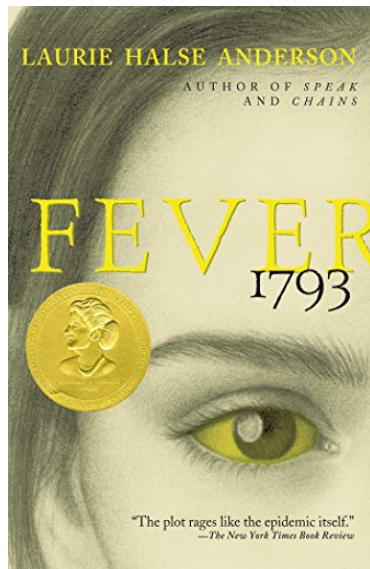


## **Fever 1793 Book Summary, by Laurie Halse Anderson (archive)**

by Allen Cheng

<https://www.allencheng.com/fever-1793-summary-laurie-halse-anderson/>



*Fever 1793* details the yellow fever plague in Philadelphia a decade after the Revolutionary War through the eyes of young 14-year-old Matilda Cook. With great respect for historical accuracy and a keen voice, Laurie Halse Anderson describes the fear and decay that destroyed the nation's capital and killed thousands of people in three months. Anderson's keen attention to human emotions and connections lifts this coming-of-age story from the depths of darkness to the light of courage and survival.

### **1-Page Summary of Fever 1793**

When a deadly yellow fever rips through the U.S. capital of Philadelphia in 1793, the lives of the 40,000 residents come to a grinding halt. **For one girl, 14-year-old Matilda Cook, the journey through the three-month epidemic is both empowering and tragic.**

Matilda lives with her mother, Lucille, and paternal grandfather, Grandpa William, over their popular family-owned coffeehouse. Business is good, with mostly politicians, gentlemen, and businessmen

dropping by for a bite to eat and the latest gossip. So when one of their serving girls is late for work, Lucille is livid to be left short-handed. She forces Matilda to pick up the slack, something Matilda's had to do more of since getting older.

Matilda feels more like a servant than a daughter and can't wait to get away from her mother's strict discipline. But all of **Matilda's plans of escape vanish when she learns the serving girl died the night before from a strange fever.**

## **The Fever Grows**

Although the number of people dying from fever continues to grow, many in the city believe it's just a normal autumnal illness and no big deal. But over the next few weeks, as proof of yellow fever becomes impossible to ignore, nearly half the citizens flee the city for the country. Businesses shut down, food markets close, and yellow ribbons are tied to doors and windows to signify the sick.

Lucille was one of the first to worry about the fever and wanted to send Matilda away, but both Grandpa and Matilda didn't listen. However, **they wish they had when they come home to find Lucille sick with the fever.** Grandpa agrees to take Matilda to a family friend's farm in the country to keep her safe. Matilda says goodbye to her ailing mother and leaves her in the care of their black cook, Eliza. She hopes she will get to see her mother again.

Along the road to the farm, Matilda and Grandpa are kicked off the carriage they hired because Grandpa coughs, and a doctor checking people passing through town for the fever declares Grandpa too sick.. Matilda and Grandpa are left in the middle of nowhere with no supplies. Grandpa falls ill, and Matilda tries to protect him from the scorching heat. But **without food and water, neither has enough strength to make it back home.** She ventures out to find help but falls to the ground along the way.

## **Sickness**

Matilda wakes up in a mansion-turned hospital with yellow fever. The doctors are able to help, and she makes a full recovery. Fortunately, Grandpa didn't have the fever, just summer gripe and a weak heart.

When it's time for them to leave the hospital, the doctors suggest Matilda go to the orphanage for safety. But Matilda won't leave Grandpa and is eager for news of her mother. **She and Grandpa return to the coffeehouse to find both Lucille and Eliza gone and the place destroyed by thieves.**

That night, Matilda tries to figure out how to find food in the abandoned city. It's not safe to venture outside with the thieves lurking around and the dead lying in the streets. She decides to sleep on it and opens the windows to cool the stuffy coffeehouse down, a decision she'd regret forever.

That night, two men enter through the window and search the house for anything valuable. They find Matilda and try to beat the information out of her. But Grandpa comes downstairs with a rifle and threatens the men. A fight ensues, and **one of the men ends up killing Grandpa, leaving Matilda alone and broken-hearted.**

## Survival

After taking Grandpa's body to the mass grave in the town square, Matilda wanders the city lost and bereft. She seeks help from some of her family's acquaintances, but everyone is either gone or too distraught to assist her. She finds herself in a bad part of town and is about to return home when she hears a whimper from the shadows. Matilda finds a little girl whose mother has died. **She takes the girl, hoping to find a neighbor who will care for her. What she finds instead is Eliza walking along the wharf, alive and well.**

Eliza has been caring for her sick brother and his family, as well as others in the community. She tells Matilda that Lucille recovered from the fever and went to find her in the country. If they can all make it till the first frost, when the fever will be over, they can reunite.

## Salvation

Eliza and Matilda agree to raise the orphan girl themselves alongside Eliza's twin nephews. Then all three children catch the fever. **Matilda and Eliza fight for days to keep the children alive, finally catching a break when the first frost of the year hits the city.** The children recover and the fever disappears.

Matilda decides to reopen the coffeehouse with Eliza as her partner. For months, business booms again now that everyone has returned from the country. Everything seems to be going great, but Matilda can't find joy in it. She misses Grandpa, and Lucille has not come home.

One day, President Washington returns to Philadelphia. Enough time has passed for the fever to truly die out. Many have been waiting for his return as a sign that it is safe to come home. One of those people is Lucille. She's grown weak from worry and a failed search and rescue mission for Matilda that left her near death by the side of the road. Lucille can no longer run the business, but she is home. **Matilda becomes the new head of the household, and the city moves on,** leaving only the ghosts as a reminder of what happened.

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## Full Summary of Fever 1793

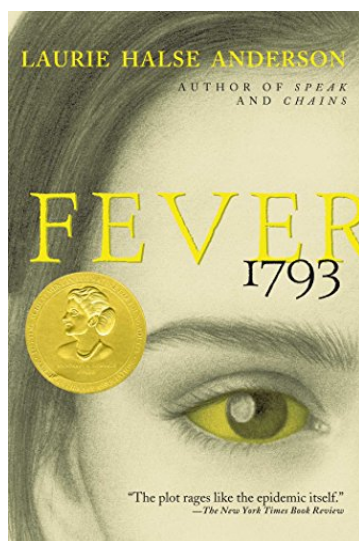
### Chapter 1: The Calm Before the Storm—Aug 16, 1793

Fourteen-year-old Matilda Cook and her mother, Lucille, shared a cramped bedroom in an apartment above their coffeehouse in Philadelphia. There were only two beds, a wash station, and a large wooden trunk. Across the hall lived Grandpa William, Matilda's paternal grandfather.

It was a hot day in August, another in a series of long, hot days, and Matilda was dreading it. She wanted to slip down to the docks later, where she hoped to see Nathaniel Benson, a young man who understood her desire to break free from the ties that bound her. Those ties belonged to her mother.

Matilda's mother was ...

## ---End of Preview---



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Here's what you'll find in the **full Fever 1793 summary**:

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- Chapter 2: A Pandemic in the Making—Aug 23-31, 1793
- Exercise: Finding a Scapegoat
- Chapter 3: A Family in Jeopardy—Sep 2-9, 1793
- Chapter 4: The Balance Between Heaven and Hell—Sep 10-27, 1793
- Chapter 5: The World Comes Crashing Down—Sep 26-27, 1793
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