

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

Fever 1793

Laurie Halse Anderson

 **NOVEL UNITS**[®]



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FEVER 1793

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Parts of this novel deal with sensitive, mature issues. Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Identifying purpose, recalling, summarizing, deduction, analyzing

Comprehension

Compare/contrast, poetry analysis, decision-making, evaluating and supporting judgments, researching

Writing

Creative, expository, poetry, editorial

Vocabulary

Context clues, synonyms, definitions

Literary Elements

Similes, metaphors, climax, foreshadowing, prediction, imagery, suspense, character analysis, comic relief, tone, irony, plot

Across the Curriculum

Art—interpretation, collage, caricature; Drama—writing and performing a play; Science—spread of disease; History—life in eighteenth-century America, historical figures, Quakers, slavery, historical fiction; Social Studies—Free African Society, water preservation; Economics—running a business; Math—percent; Geography—maps

Chapters One–Four, pp. 1–23

Matilda Cook awakens to a regular day in her family’s coffeehouse. Begrudgingly, she prepares to help her mother with the day’s chores. Concern arises when Polly, the coffeehouse serving girl, does not show up for work. Mrs. Cook returns from looking for her and announces that Polly is dead. Matilda’s grandfather and the coffeehouse guests speculate about the rumors of illness in Philadelphia. Despite the suggestions of a doctor, they deny any possibility of an epidemic.

Vocabulary	
wretched (2)	
abhorred (3)	
dawdling (3)	
corpse (4)	
musket (10)	
disreputable (11)	
robust (15)	
perfidious (15)	
noxious (20)	
instructed (20)	
colleague (20)	
exhausted (22)	

Discussion Questions

- How would you describe the relationship between Matilda and her mother? (*The relationship does not appear to be very loving or affectionate. Matilda seems to resent her mother’s sour nature. Mrs. Cook is strict and demanding of Matilda.* pp. 1–14)
- What are some places or things the author refers to that let the reader know the story took place a long time ago? Discuss any that may be unfamiliar to you. *Answers will vary. Suggestions: washstand [1], quilt [2], stay-up long skirt [3], horsemen, carriages, and carriage blacksmith [4], butter churn [6], hearth [6], bonnet [10], pestle [11]*
- What are some things Mrs. Cook does that make you like and dislike her? (*Like: We see her concern for Matilda. She worries that Matilda might be sick. She seems to understand Matilda’s pain over Polly’s death. She wants Matilda to avoid any contact with sickness. Matilda offers some insight into why her mother is the way she is. Dislike: Her nagging and concern for Matilda seem to be short-lived.* pp. 15–17)
- Who seems to make life at the coffeehouse better for Matilda, despite her mother’s harsh ways? (*Polly, Eliza, and Matilda’s grandfather*)
- Compare and contrast Eliza and Mrs. Cook. (*Eliza and Mrs. Cook both lost their husbands, but Eliza emerged from her grief as a loving, nappy woman while Mrs. Cook remained bitter and unhappy.* pp. 8–9)
- Why do you think Eliza chose to move to Philadelphia after her husband bought her freedom? (*Philadelphia is home to the Quakers, who are opposed to slavery.* p. 8)
- Do you think Matilda imagines herself working in a coffeehouse the rest of her life? (*Matilda is a dreamer. She wants to own an “entire city block.”* p. 12)
- Matilda compares her mother’s life to a “battle.” Matilda’s grandfather has actually fought in many battles. How has this “battle” affected both of them? (*Mrs. Cook has emerged from her battle tired and bitter. The battles have made Grandfather stronger. He is tough but joyful, warm, and affectionate.* pp. 18–23)
- Prediction:** Why are mosquitoes frequently mentioned in the novel?

Supplementary Activities

- Literary Devices:** Begin the Clues on page 8 of this guide and the Metaphors and Similes chart on page 9 of this guide. Continue these activities as you read the novel.

- Poetry: Read the poem “Oh That Mine Eyes,” by Thomas Ellwood, a Quaker. You can find a copy of the poem at <http://www.qhpress.org/quakerpages/qwhp/tel318.htm> (active at printing of this guide). Based on the poem, make a classroom chart of Quaker beliefs and values.
- Characterization: Begin the Feelings chart for Mattie (see p. 10 of this guide).
- Critical Thinking: Begin the Prediction Chart on page 11 of this guide.

Chapters Five–Seven, pp. 24–53

Matilda goes to the market. She sees Mr. and Mrs. Colette, the owners of a stall at the market, and Nathaniel Benson, a young apprentice to local artists. The bells toll to announce another death in the city. Later, Mrs. Cook and Matilda receive an invitation to tea at the Ogilvies. Mrs. Cook, who has hopes of Matilda marrying Edward Ogilvie, convinces an unhappy Matilda to attend. Mrs. Ogilvie and her family treat Matilda and her mother rudely, but Mrs. Cook still tries to get information about Edward. The meeting takes a dramatic turn when Colette Ogilvie collapses.

Vocabulary	
accommodate	(26)
solemnly	(28)
drought	(29)
impudence	(31)
tolled	(32)
absentminded	(34)
complacency	(35)
busybody	(35)
droll	(37)
overwhelming	(44)
hilarious	(49)
dilemma	(49)
tedious	(50)

Discussion Questions

- How is Matilda's life different from that of a young girl today? (*Matilda spends her summer days working for her mother. There appears to be little leisure time. She has many skills that most young girls today wouldn't have—cooking, sewing, gardening, and marketing. There is already talk about whom she will marry [Edward Ogilvie]. She walks to the places she needs to go.*)
- Think about Matilda's description of the marketplace. How is it different from a modern-day grocery store? (*live poultry for sale, a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables, no processed foods or “junk” foods, homemade stews and soups prepared and cooked at the market, pp. 27–30*)
- What clues are there that Matilda likes Nathaniel Benson? (*Matilda's stomach “flips” when she sees him, she admires his appearance, she seems to remember her mother's attempts to keep her away from Nathaniel, their conversation is flirtatious, and Matilda feels the “weight” of Nathaniel on her shoulder” as she watches them walk away. pp. 32–33*)
- What does the conversation about their plans for the coffeehouse tell about the different personalities of Matilda, Grandfather, and Mrs. Cook? (*Matilda and Grandfather are dreamers and optimists. Mrs. Cook is pessimistic and practical. pp. 37–39*)
- Why doesn't Matilda want to go to tea at the Ogilvie's home? (*She thinks they're snobs who only want to make fun of her family. She has no interest in her mother's matchmaking plans. pp. 41–42*)
- Why is it so important to Mrs. Cook that Matilda marry into a wealthy family? (*Mrs. Cook came from a wealthy family and only wants a much easier life. Possibly, she wants Matilda to have the same and be spared a life of struggle. pp. 46–47*)
- What is your impression of the Ogilvies? Do you think Matilda should marry Edward? (*Answers will vary.*)

Decision-making Grid

Directions: The decision-making grid below is supposed to make it easier to find the best solution to a problem. Fill in criterion #3 with another question you believe is important to ask when making a decision. Then fill in the grid. Choose a solution and write a paragraph explaining the reasons behind your choice.

	Criterion #1	Criterion #2	Criterion #3
State the problem: Mattie must decide what to do with Nell.	Will the solution be best for Nell?	Will it make Mattie feel better?	
Solution #1:			
Solution #2:			
Solution #3:			
Solution #4:			