

Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Fever 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

1. Much of the first part of the story takes place in the Cook Coffeehouse. Describe the activities that go on there before, during, and after the guests arrive.
2. At the time, no one really knows the true cause of the yellow fever epidemic. What are some of the possible causes suggested by various townspeople and doctors?
3. Toward the beginning of the story, Matilda wants to go to the market place in town. Why does she want to go there?
4. Why does Mrs. Cook want Matilda to join her for tea at the Ogilvies'? Why does Matilda agree to join her that afternoon?
5. Throughout the book, Matilda and her mother never say they love each other, yet we know they do. What evidence is there in the story that the two feel deeply for each other?
6. In good times, how are the farmers outside the city dependent on the city-dwellers of Philadelphia? How are the city-dwellers dependent on the farmers?
7. Authors sometimes subject their characters to difficult tasks. What are two tasks Matilda accomplishes?
8. What evidence is there in the story that grandfather enjoyed his earlier years as a soldier?
9. Matilda changes a great deal from the beginning of the novel to the end. Give three specific examples of those changes.
10. During the story, the people of Philadelphia face many dangers, including the risks of disease, starvation, robbery, and assault. Describe a dramatic incident in which Matilda faces one of these dangers and point out the personal qualities that help her survive.
11. Based on what you know of Matilda's character and experiences throughout the story, what, to Matilda, would make a perfect day?
12. How would Matilda's life have changed if Mrs. Cook had stayed healthy and remained with her daughter at all times during her story?
13. Do you think it is fair of the town council of Pembroke to prevent fever victims from escaping the city of Philadelphia and entering their town?
14. What is your opinion of Matilda's decision to make Eliza a partner in the Cook Coffeehouse?

Note: The following questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-4; Comprehension: 5-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-14.

Activities

1. *Fever 1793* contains many words or expressions that were commonly used in those days but are rarely used today. Create a dictionary for unusual words or phrases found in the book. For each word, include a definition. Suggested entries: stays (p. 3); the necessary (p. 24); ninny (p.33); flagstones (p.35); mucky (p. 69); headed for a lark (p. 76).
2. Excerpts from diaries of people living in Philadelphia during the yellow fever epidemic appear on each chapter's opening page. Create a fictional diary entry, written by a Philadelphian in the summer of 1794.