

Forge - Historical Thriller



If you thought this winter in Bloomington was a fierce one, you may feel it was downright balmy after reading about the winter the Revolutionary War soldiers experienced at Valley Forge in 1777-1778.

In Forge, Laurie Halse Anderson continues the compelling story she started in her award-winning novel Chains, which describes the involvement of African American slaves in the Revolutionary War. Chains was told from the perspective of Isabel, a slave who spies for the rebels during the start of the war. She meets Curzon, a slave whose owner required him to enlist as a soldier and fight in the war in his place, with the promise that Curzon would become free when the enlistment time expired.

Curzon is the main character in Forge, and we learn from his perspective of the extreme hardships of being a soldier at Valley Forge, where food and clothing were scarce. These conditions would be difficult to endure in warm weather, but the soldiers at Valley Forge were required to build their own log cabins for shelter. As Curzon puts it: "The enormity of our task hit home. We had to chop down trees and build our own shelter with little equipment and less training. In the snow. Whilst hungry."

Curzon served as an equal with his peers as long as his status as a fugitive slave was not discovered. While Forge addresses the desires of the United States to be recognized as an independent nation, Curzon speaks directly to the desire of an individual to obtain his own liberty.

Recommended for grades 6 and up, Forge is richly layered with details about life at Valley Forge, and Anderson smoothly weaves reference of actual events and people who played a role in the Revolutionary War into this fictional account. Anderson includes source notes at the end of the story, which she describes as "historical thriller."

Posted by Lisa C. on February 16, 2011

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