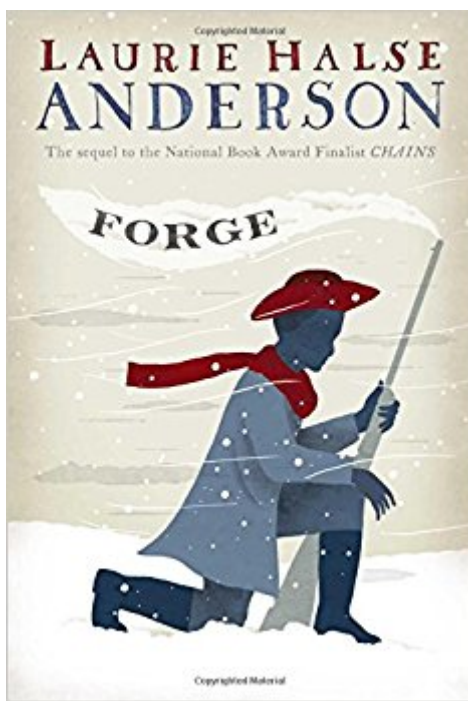


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# Forge (The Seeds Of America Trilogy)



## 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'Ell 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

If by some chance you missed *Chains*, you'll want to read it before delving into this sequel--the second volume of a planned trilogy. *Chains*, set at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, focuses on the story of Isabel, a 13-year old slave owned by a prominent New York City family who support the British. Isabel meets another slave, Curzon, with ties to the Patriots, and becomes a spy for the Patriot cause--with the hopes of obtaining her freedom. In *Forge*, the story begins where *Chains* ends, with Isabel and Curzon escaping to freedom, but the focus of the story quickly changes from Isabel to Curzon. The two have separated again, with Isabel running away to try to find her sister

and Curzon finding himself in the middle of the Battle of Saratoga, then enlisting in the Patriot army. The irony of a slave fighting for the freedom of others does not escape Curzon, who attempts to argue his case with his friend and fellow soldier Eben. Curzon questions whether bad laws deserve to be broken, but Eben is frustrated by Curzon's logic. "Two slaves running away from their rightful master," he says, "is not the same as America wanting to be free of England. Not the same at all." But when the army arrives at the winter encampment at Valley Forge, white and black soldiers alike are unprepared to deal with the conditions there: about 12,000 soldiers with no barracks, bitter cold, and no meat. The author begins each chapter with a quote from a contemporary source, many of which are increasingly desperate reports from General Washington to the Continental Congress on the need for supplies of all kinds, from food to shoes to clothing.

I fell in love with strong Isabel in Laurie Halse Anderson's first book, *Chains*. She is a compelling, original character that, although her status as a slave, didn't accept things as they were. Living in New York City, she befriends another boy in a prison named Curzon, who together escapes to a better life. The sequel, *Forge*, picks up the story, with a shift in narrators, and tells an equally compelling story of American independence mixed with slavery. Escaping together, Isabel quickly ditches Curzon to find her only surviving family member, younger sister Ruth. Curzon quickly finds himself enveloped once again in the fight for liberty, enmeshing himself with a group of patriots, some more accepting of his skin color than others. Bad timing. The Continental army is spending a very cold winter at Valley Forge. Everyone fights off cold, near starvation, thievery and infighting, until a surprise twist whisks Curzon away into a new set of complications I honestly didn't see coming. For those of you like myself that adore Isabel, and may have been put off with a change in narrators, I encourage you to not to give up hope. Anderson's book is definitely Curzon's story. It ends up being interesting to view Isabel through this lad's eyes. You get quite a different sense of her, which I truly appreciate. In some ways, Isabel becomes more alive this way, more rounded, more real. It all comes down to Halse's writing style. Brisk, extremely well researched without dwelling in period details or language that would leave the reader lost, the story moves along at a great pace.

When Laurie Halse Anderson's novel *CHAINS* was published in 2008, it became a finalist for the National Book Award and won the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. The book introduced young people to an important --- and often overlooked --- chapter in American history, as Anderson told the story of the dawn of the American Revolution through the eyes of a young slave

girl. Anderson now continues this work in *FORGE*, the second book of what will eventually be a trilogy. Here the narrative shifts gears from Isabel to her friend Curzon, a fellow runaway who becomes separated from Isabel but finds safety --- of a sort --- when he enlists as a soldier fighting on the American side during the Revolutionary War. As one of the few black soldiers, he is disrespected --- and worse --- by some of his peers and his officers. With his customary courage, hard work and loyalty, however, Curzon gains the respect and even the friendship of many of his fellow soldiers. All the young men's fortitude is brutally tested, however, when they are told to report to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, during the winter of 1777 and 1778. As Curzon and his comrades struggle just to survive, Anderson vividly brings to life the horrifying details of life in Valley Forge, unflinchingly documenting the hardships that most high school history books just gloss over. From surviving days without food to digging trenches in frozen ground to trudging through snowdrifts in just a pair of wet, stinking socks, Curzon's story, and that of all the men, will both repulse readers and remind them of the soldiers' remarkable fortitude and bravery.

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