FEVER 1793, Laurie Halse Anderson
Discussion Questions

CHAPTERS 1 - 4
1. Why is Mother angry as she tries to awaken her daughter Matilda?
2. Why does Eliza like living in Philadelphia?
3. What do Mattie's mother and Eliza have in common? In what ways are they different?
4. What does Mattie plan for her future?
5. After Polly dies, why does Mrs. Cook forbid Mattie to pay her respects to the family or attend the funeral? How does Mattie react to this?
6. With Polly gone, what are Mattie's chores in the coffeehouse?
7. What is the reaction of the people in the coffeehouse when the doctor mentions yellow fever?

CHAPTERS 5-7
1. Why is the coffeehouse busier than ever?
2. Why is Mattie anxious to go to the market?
3. Why does everyone in the market become still when they hear the ringing of the bells?
4. Why do Mother and Grandfather object to Mattie's seeing Nathaniel Benson?
5. What difference of opinion occurs in the family over how to spend the profits from the coffeehouse?
6. Why is Mother delighted to be invited to the Ogilvie's for tea? Why does Mattie agree to go?
7. Why does Mrs. Ogilvie have the Cooks to tea?
8. How does Jeannie show scorn for Mattie and her mother?

CHAPTERS 8 - 10
1. Why is there so much noise in the city of Philadelphia?
2. Why is business so slow at the coffeehouse?
3. Why are Mattie and her grandfather shocked by what they learn from their visit to the newspaper office?
4. How is Mattie's mother brought back home after coming down with the fever? What does this suggest about the way the sick were treated during the 1793 epidemic?
5. What signs reveal that Mr. Rowley is incompetent and unfit to treat the sick?
6. How does Mrs. Cook react when Mattie tries to care for her during their night alone in the coffeehouse? Why does she react this way?
7. What is Dr. Kerr's diagnosis and what does he prescribe for Mrs. Cook?
8. Why does Mattie resist going to the country? What does this suggest about her?
9. How does Grandfather treat the trip to the country? Why does he do this?

CHAPTERS 11 - 14
1. Why aren't Mattie and Grandfather allowed to pass through Pembroke?
2. How does the farmer driving the Cooks manage to get permission to pass?
3. After Grandfather and Mattie are left on the road, how does she manage to find water and food?
4. Why does Grandfather call himself a fool?
5. What scares Mattie more than anything?
6. Why does Mattie's effort to catch a fish fail?
7. What signs are there that Mattie is coming down with the fever?
8. Why is it fortunate that Mattie is taken to Bush Hill?
CHAPTERS 15 - 17
1. Why is Mattie moved from the large room in Bush Hill to the barn? In what ways is the barn preferable to the room Mattie was in?
2. Why do Mattie and her Grandfather have a disagreement with a clerk when she is ready to be released from the hospital?
3. What warning does Mrs. Bowles give Mattie about living in the coffeehouse?
4. Why does Philadelphia seem to be a “dying city”?
5. Why is Grandfather upset and Mattie close to tears when they return to the coffeehouse?
6. What evidence suggests that Grandfather’s health is fading?

CHAPTERS 18 - 20
1. In what ways does September 25 turn out to be a good day for Mattie?
2. Why is it a mistake for Mattie to leave the shutters unlocked at night?
3. Why does the short robber leave in a hurry?
4. Why does the tall robber leave?
5. Why is Grandfather’s death particularly difficult for Mattie?
6. How does Mattie’s presence at her grandfather’s grave site change the way the grave diggers have been burying the dead?
7. Why does Mattie experience feelings of grief and disappointment when visiting the town?

CHAPTERS 21 – 23
1. Why does Mattie take Nell along with her rather than leave her on the doorstep?
2. How does Mattie find Eliza?
3. How does Eliza give Mattie hope of finding her mother?
4. Why have black people in Philadelphia been helping fever victims?
5. In what way does Mother Smith remind Mattie of her mother?
6. Why does Mother Smith advise Mattie to take Nell to the orphanage? Why doesn't she leave her there?
7. What clue suggests to Mattie that Nathaniel Benson may be alive and living in Philadelphia?

CHAPTERS 24-26
1. What disturbs Mattie the most as she makes the rounds of the sick with Eliza?
2. Why does the epidemic continue in Philadelphia into the month of October?
3. Why is Eliza angry at the apothecary?
4. Why is Eliza surprised by Mattie’s dedication as she makes the rounds of the sick with her?
5. Why do Eliza and Mattie decide to take the ailing twins and Nell to the coffeehouse?
6. Why is caring for the children harder than caring for any of the patients Mattie and Eliza had visited?
7. How does Mattie convince Eliza not to have the children bled?
8. Why is Mattie pleased when the first frost comes?
9. What different thoughts does Mattie have about her future if it turns out that her mother is dead?

CHAPTERS 27 - 29, Epilogue
1. Why is Mattie bitter as she sees people return to Philadelphia?
2. How is Nathaniel becoming a member of Mattie's new “family”?
3. How does Eliza first react when Mattie asks her to be a partner in the coffeehouse?
4. How does Mother Smith help resolve the issue?
5. Why does Joseph suggest that they have a lawyer draw up papers for the partnership?
6. Why is the reopening of the coffeehouse such a success?
7. Why does Mattie feel hollow even though the coffeehouse is a success?
8. What does the return of George Washington mean to the people?
9. In what way is Mother’s return bittersweet for Mattie?
10. Why does Mattie enjoy her solitary moments in the morning before anyone else is awake?
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CHAPTERS 1 - 4

Literary Element: Setting

In literature, the setting is the time and place in which the story occurs. Setting is especially important in a historical novel such as this one.

What is the setting of this novel?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

What details about the setting make the characters' times and lifestyles seem real?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Literary Devices:

Point of View - In literature, the point of view refers to the person telling the story. It can be narrated in the first person by a character in the novel or in the third person by the author.

From whose point of view is this story written?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Why do you think the author chose this point of view?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________
**Metaphor** - A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a comparison between two unlike objects is suggested or implied. There is an extended metaphor in the following example:

*Life was a battle, and Mother a tired and bitter captain.*

What is being compared?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

How does the metaphor help convey Mattie's feelings about her life and her mother?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Find one more metaphor in these chapters and write it below.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
CHAPTERS 5 - 7

Literary Devices:

**Simile** - A simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike objects are compared using the words "like" or "as." For example:

> As I crossed Fourth Street, the noise from the market splashed over me like a wave.

What is being compared in this simile?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What is the effect of this comparison?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Find two more similes in this section and write them below.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Onomatopoeia** - Onomatopoeia is the use of a word that imitates or suggests the sound of the object it describes. Some examples of onomatopoeia are the words "snap," "buzz," and "hum." Underline the examples of onomatopoeia in the following sentences adapted from the novel:

> Chickens clucked and geese honked as customers argued about the price of pears.

> The bell at Christ Church tolled heavily: Bong, bong, bong.

> Mattie's stomach rumbled from hunger.
Literary Devices:

**Personification** - Personification is a literary device in which an author grants human qualities to inanimate objects. For example:

* A slight breeze waltzed through the room.

What is being personified?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What is the effect?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

**Simile** - What is being compared in the following simile?

* He [Dr. Kerr] led me [Mattie] down the stairs like a lamb on a string.

What does this comparison reveal about Mattie's physical and mental state?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

**Irony** - Irony refers to an unusual or unexpected turn of events. What is ironic about the way the people of Philadelphia are fleeing the Yellow Fever epidemic?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Characters in literature are revealed by what they say and do and by what others say about them. Begin a chart, such as the one below, in which you describe the traits of some of the characters in the novel and give examples of words or actions for each trait.

As you continue to read the book, write additional descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Words or Actions That Show the Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mattie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTERS 11 – 14

Literary Device: Cliffhanger

The cliffhanger is a device borrowed from serialized silent films in which an episode ends at a moment of suspense. In a book it usually appears at the end of a chapter to encourage the reader to continue on in the book.

What is the cliffhanger at the end of Chapter Thirteen?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Literary Element: Conflict

A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces. An external conflict is a character’s struggle against an outside force, such as nature, society, or another person. An internal conflict is a personal struggle that takes place within a character’s mind. In the chart below, list the conflicts that have occurred in the story so far. Indicate how some of these problems have been resolved. As you continue the story, add to the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Conflicts</th>
<th>Resolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Conflicts</th>
<th>Resolutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the conflicts listed above is the main conflict in the story? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
CHAPTERS 15 -17

Literary Devices:
Personification - Personification is a literary device in which an author grants human qualities to inanimate objects. What is being personified in the following passage:

Yellow fever was wrestling the life out of Philadelphia...

How is this more effective than if the author had said, "Yellow fever was changing life for the worse in Philadelphia"?

Symbolism - A symbol in literature is something or someone who represents an idea or set of ideas. What does the color yellow symbolize in this novel?
CHAPTERS 18 - 20

Literary Devices:

**Irony** - Irony of situation refers to the contrast between what is expected and what actually occurs. What is ironic about the psalm Mattie reads before retiring: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety"?

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**Building Suspense** - High interest in the outcome of a story is called suspense. The author builds suspense by placing the characters in danger, leaving the reader uncertain of the outcome. In what ways does the author build suspense during the robbery in Chapter Nineteen?
CHAPTERS 21 - 23

Literary Elements:

**Humor**-Humor in a story is the quality that makes you laugh aloud or smile. Even though this novel deals with a serious topic, there are humorous sections. Why is the fate of the Ogilvies humorous? Why do you think the author included this in the novel?

Characterization-Mother Smith is a very interesting character. Fill in each section of the wheel below with a word or phrase that tells about Mother Smith.
Literary Devices:

**Hyperbole** - Hyperbole is a figure of speech that uses exaggeration for special effect. For example:

*Where were Mother and Grandfather and the dead mouse that flew out the window a hundred thousand years ago?*

What is exaggerated?

____________________________________________________________________________________

Why does the author use hyperbole?

____________________________________________________________________________________

**Symbolism** - What does Blanchard's balloon symbolize for Mattie? Why does she think of this in her moment of despair?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

**Metaphor and personification** - A metaphor and an example of personification are underlined in the following passage:

*The entire yard sparkled with diamonds of frost that quickly melted into millions of drops of water with a gentle kiss of the sun.*

What is compared in the metaphor?

____________________________________________________________________________________

What is personified?

____________________________________________________________________________________

What mood do these descriptions convey?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
CHAPTERS 27 - 29, Epilogue

Literary Elements:

Theme - A theme is a central idea or message that is carried throughout a book.

Consider what the novel is saying about the following themes:

- strength and courage

- dealing with adversity