

I'm not a robot



Chains book summary

Thirteen-year-old Isabel and her five-year-old sister, Ruth, are enslaved—but Isabel believes they'll be free, since the girls' owner, Miss Mary Finch, has just died. Miss Finch stipulated in her will that the girls would be freed upon her death. But since the will is missing, Isabel can't prove she's free. Miss Finch's nephew, Mr. Robert, takes the girls to Newport to sell them. Being enslaved, Isabel can't even bring Ruth's rag doll—she doesn't own it. But she brings some seeds Momma saved, though she doesn't know what they'll become. At a tavern in Newport, a wealthy Loyalist couple, Master Lockton and Madam Lockton, purchase the girls. Isabel will help in the kitchen, and since Ruth is "simple," she'll be "an amusement in the parlor." Isabel is distraught: the Locktons live in New York, which means she and Ruth will have to leave behind the ghosts of their parents, Momma and Poppa, since ghosts can't cross water. Immediately upon arriving in New York, Isabel meets an enslaved boy, Curzon. Curzon explains that his master, Bellingham, is a Patriot—and the Patriots will free slaves. He asks Isabel to spy on the Locktons, who are Loyalists, and in exchange for information Bellingham might free Isabel and Ruth. Isabel initially refuses—she doesn't care about the war, just about figuring out how to free and protect herself and Ruth. She begins work in the Lockton home, which is huge and lavish, and she plants her seeds in the garden. Madam is exacting and cruel. The paid maid, Becky, coaches Isabel on how to protect herself and Ruth: do exactly what Madam says. Madam begins dressing Ruth in fancy clothes and always keeps Ruth with her. Isabel, meanwhile, manages to make Ruth a new doll out of cornbushs. One day, Isabel is called to introduce herself to Lady Seymour, Lockton's wealthy aunt. Upon learning Isabel's name at this point, Madam renames Isabel Sal. Isabel is then called to serve Lockton and his friends—and she discovers that Lockton has a chest of money that he plans to use to bribe Patriots. Isabel passes this information to Curzon, but when Bellingham comes to look for the money, he can't find it. Weeks later, Isabel hears that Lockton and his friends are plotting to assassinate General Washington. Then, Ruth has a seizure in front of Madam. Madam believes Ruth is possessed by demons and threatens to sell her, so Isabel takes a list of those involved in the plot to kill Washington to the Patriot Captain Regan. He promises to help Isabel. Though the Patriots hang a man for his involvement in the plot, Lockton escapes the city, and Madam continues to threaten Ruth. Soon after, British ships drop anchor in the harbor. Madam is thrilled—and one night, she decides it's time to change how she treats Isabel and Ruth. Isabel gets home from running errands to the news that Ruth is back serving Madam in the parlor. Madam made gingerbread and spiced milk for Isabel and served the same to Ruth earlier. Isabel enjoys her treat and falls fast asleep. When she wakes up the next morning, she finds Becky has been crying—and discovers that Madam drugged Isabel and Ruth so she could sell Ruth. Isabel confronts Madam on the stairs, but Madam hits Isabel with a painting, and Isabel runs away. She runs straight to Captain Regan, but when Madam arrives moments later and demands Isabel, Regan says he can't help. Isabel then runs to the Patriot fort—but when Madam comes looking for her, Isabel leaps out the window to escape and loses consciousness due to the impact. She's drug through the streets and jailed for several days, and then she stands trial. Madam lies to the judge about what happened, but he believes her and agrees to punish Isabel by branding her cheek with an I for "insolent." Men lock Isabel in the stocks and brand her cheek, and Momma and Poppa's ghosts comfort Isabel's pain with their tears. Six days later, Isabel wakes up in an attic bedroom at Lady Seymour's house, where the lady explains that Isabel contracted a serious fever while imprisoned and in the stocks. Curzon fetched the lady, who insisted on bringing Isabel to her house to recover. But Lady Seymour can't keep Isabel; she returns her to Madam. The next few weeks pass in a blur. Isabel feels like she has a hive of angry bees living in her; they keep her from remembering Ruth or from thinking too hard about anything. Curzon continues to ask Isabel to spy, but she tells him to leave her alone. Not long after, the British win an important battle and invade New York—and rumor has it that the British are willing to free enslaved people. Curzon, who is now an American soldier, insists enslaved people should nevertheless support the Patriot cause. But when Madam sends Isabel to shop for a celebratory dinner, Isabel seeks out a British captain, Captain Campbell, and offers to work for him. When he learns that Isabel's owners are Loyalists, though, he reveals he can't free her: the British will only free enslaved people owned by Patriots. Master Lockton comes to shore soon after Captain Campbell, since New York is safe for him again now that the British hold the island. Becky vanishes at this time, so Isabel is the only staff left at the Locktons' home. The British require Loyalists in New York to house soldiers—and since Lady Seymour took in a dozen Hessians compared to the Locktons' two British soldiers (and recently had her maids quit), she requests that Isabel work at her house. Isabel takes Ruth's doll with her. One night, Isabel wakes up and the city is on fire. She tries to bring the doll out of the house with her, but Lady Seymour begs for help saving her own precious belongings. Isabel is able to save Lady Seymour and several of the lady's things, but not the doll. Following this, Lady Seymour becomes extremely ill and moves in with the Locktons. The Locktons take in five more soldiers whose wives are in the Colonies with them, so a pregnant woman named Sarah takes over as boss in the kitchen. Isabel discovers that her seedlings died at about the same time as the British win another battle and take thousands of men prisoner—including Curzon. To celebrate the win, Madam throws an elaborate banquet. Isabel saves the scraps, and a few days later, she sneaks them to the prison. She discovers that Curzon is injured and ill, but alive. From then on, Isabel visits the prison daily. Lady Seymour catches onto this fact and warns Isabel that while she has no problem with Isabel doing this, Madam will not be pleased if she finds out. Just before Christmas, Isabel runs some errands for Lady Seymour, and a stationer catches on to the fact that she can read. He gives Isabel a copy of Thomas Paine's political pamphlet Common Sense, which Isabel sneakily reads by the fire late at night. She also discovers that Curzon's cellmates are stealing his rations and blankets, so she strikes a deal with a Private Dibdin to bring food and carry messages to their captain, Captain Morse, if they ensure Curzon gets medical attention. Though Isabel is supposed to get Christmas day off, Madam makes her work well into the afternoon. Isabel thinks of Momma and decides to follow Momma's advice to "keep Christmas" by baking a bread pudding for a houseless family. This helps Isabel feel more at peace. Two days after Christmas, Isabel carries a loaf of bread with a message hidden in it to the prison—General Washington won a surprise victory on Christmas Day. The Patriots win another battle just after New Year's Day. Master Lockton leaves on a ship for England to tell the king the bad news. Not long after this, Lady Seymour—who is again gravely ill—asks Isabel to sit with her. She reveals that she tried to buy Isabel and Ruth to save them from Madam's abuse, clearly expecting this to make Isabel feel grateful. Isabel isn't grateful, though—she doesn't want to be bought and sold. Queen Charlotte's birthday is coming up, and there's going to be a grand ball in her honor. Madam begins preparing by ordering a dress, and Isabel continues to read Common Sense in secret, finishing it the night before the ball. Isabel knows the words are dangerous—but she can't bring herself to burn the book. On the day of the ball, Isabel agrees to take a penny to a Captain Farrar for Captain Morse, which is payment for a bet Morse lost. Farrar asks Isabel to take a note back to Morse for him, but Isabel is too busy to deliver the note. When Isabel gets back to the Locktons', Madam beats her with a riding crop—a friend saw Isabel speaking to Captain Farrar. Isabel throws the note in the fire rather than hand it over, so Madam has one of the soldier's wives lock Isabel in the potato bin. Madam also reveals that she couldn't sell Ruth; Ruth is actually on the Lockton estate in Charleston, South Carolina. Once Madam leaves for the ball and the house is quiet, Isabel kicks out of the bin. She's going to rescue Ruth. Isabel steals a map of the Colonies and, for the first time in a long time, sees her reflection in a mirror. She realizes she looks like Momma and like Poppa—and that her scar makes her who she is. The I, she decides, stands for Isabel, and when she forges a pass for herself, she decides her last name is Gardener. Isabel stokes Lady Seymour's fire just before she leaves. The lady lets Isabel take money, and she tells Isabel to run. Isabel decides she can't leave without rescuing Curzon too, so she tells the guard she's come to clean out cells. Curzon is very weak and ill, so it's not hard to pretend he's dead and sneak him out of the prison and into a rowboat at the wharf. Isabel rows them across the river and sees figures in the mist—ghosts can move across water. She passes out, and when she wakes in the morning, she sees New York behind her. She and Curzon are free. Official Site: 2015 Had joint winners. No award 2003 due to committee reorganization.From January 1 through mid-FebruaOfficial Site: 2015 Had joint winners. No award 2003 due to committee reorganization.From January 1 through mid-February, schools and libraries across Rhode Island make ballots available to middle school and high school students who have read three books from a selected list of titles so they may vote for their favorite.Rhode Island was on the forefront of having a statewide book award for teens. Thanks to some cutting edge teachers and library media specialists connected with the Rhode Island Education Media Association (RIEMA), work to start such an award began in 1998. Over the course of two years, the group expanded to include some local young adult librarians from public libraries. The first chairperson of the RITBA committee was Joe Light, one of the media specialists at Westerly High School at the time.The first thing the initial award committee needed to do was design a series of goals and criteria to use to narrow the selection of titles for a nominee list. It was clear from the beginning the committee did not want to just select a title on its own. Instead, it would compile a list of nominees tweens and teens could read and judge. They opted to focus on timeliness, requiring the nominees to be printed within two years of the list's announcement.Since that first year, the list has grown and prospered. The Rhode Island Library Association joined RIEMA in sponsoring the award in 2002. Every year, the number of participating voters and school/library sites increases. The RI Teen Book Award has been deemed such a success that librarians and school library media specialists from the Bay State utilized it as a model for their own award. The Massachusetts Teen Choice Book Award is sponsored by the Massachusetts Library Association Youth Services Section and the Massachusetts School Library Association.The RITBA Committee welcomes any school or library that would like to participate in the election.—from the official site The Truman Readers Award encourages Missuri students in the early teen years (Grades 6-8) to express their unique voice through exploring new literary The Truman Readers Award encourages Missouri students in the early teen years (Grades 6-8) to express their unique voice through exploring new literary genres, communicating with their peers about young adult literature, and honoring authors writing for young teens. ...more 96 Miles by 4.07 avg rating — 3,301 ratings Truman Readers Award (2023) The Unteachables by 4.34 avg rating — 17,707 ratings Truman Readers Award (2022) Not If I Save You First by 3.86 avg rating — 23,561 ratings Truman Readers Award (2021) To Catch a Killer (Erin Blake #1) by 3.75 avg rating — 6,765 ratings Truman Readers Award (2020) Projekt 1065: A Novel of World War II by 4.35 avg rating — 20,623 ratings Truman Readers Award (2019) Red Queen (Red Queen, #1) by 3.99 avg rating — 1,118,213 ratings Truman Readers Award (2018) Famous Last Words by 4.14 avg rating — 10,377 ratings Truman Readers Award (2017) Prisoner B-3087 by 4.44 avg rating — 41,854 ratings Truman Readers Award (2016) The Raft by 3.80 avg rating — 17,165 ratings Truman Readers Award (2015) Legend (Legend, #1) by 4.15 avg rating — 552,480 ratings Truman Readers Award (2014) Girl, Stolen (Girl, Stolen #1) by 4.02 avg rating — 27,027 ratings Truman Readers Award (2013) The Maze Runner (The Maze Runner, #1) by 4.05 avg rating — 1,623,350 ratings Truman Readers Award (2012) The Hunger Games (The Hunger Games, #1) by 4.34 avg rating — 9,450,592 ratings Truman Readers Award (2011) Eighth Grade Bites (The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod, #1) by 3.93 avg rating — 37,611 ratings Truman Readers Award (2010) Life As We Knew It (Last Survivors, #1) by 3.89 avg rating — 131,900 ratings Truman Readers Award (2009) We Dream of Space by 4.11 avg rating — 8,336 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Tornado Brain by 4.13 avg rating — 2,020 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) The Stars We Steal by 3.45 avg rating — 4,477 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) The Light in Hidden Places by 4.53 avg rating — 32,896 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) The Canyon's Edge by 4.21 avg rating — 8,327 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Splinters of Scarlet by really liked it 4.00 avg rating — 1,612 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Glitch by 4.20 avg rating — 2,800 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Fighting Words by 4.64 avg rating — 12,335 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) The Kinder Poison (The Kinder Poison, #1) by 3.86 avg rating — 7,894 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Closer to Nowhere by 4.24 avg rating — 3,634 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Before the Ever After by 4.18 avg rating — 15,563 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2023) Genesis Begins Again by 4.34 avg rating — 8,756 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2022) Other Words for Home by 4.42 avg rating — 33,166 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2022) Tiger Queen by 3.89 avg rating — 1,399 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2022) Right as Rain by 4.23 avg rating — 1,089 ratings Truman Readers Award Nominee (2022) « previous 1 2 3 4 5 next » Chapter Summaries & Analyses Quick Summary: Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson tells the gripping story of Isabel, a young enslaved girl in colonial America, who struggles for freedom while facing the harsh realities of her life and the fight for independence during the Revolutionary War.Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson Book SummaryThe story begins in the year 1776, during a tumultuous time in America's history. Isabel, a thirteen-year-old enslaved girl, lives in New York City with her younger sister, Ruth. The girls are sold by their owner after their mother's death, which leaves them vulnerable and at the mercy of a new, cruel master. On their arrival at their new home, Isabel quickly realizes that life will not be easy, especially when it becomes evident that the promises of freedom made to her by her former owner are empty.Throughout the story, readers witness Isabel's plight as she diligently works to protect Ruth, who has a developmental disability. Despite their difficult conditions, the bond between the sisters remains strong, and Isabel's determination to secure her sister's safety and freedom becomes a central theme. As Isabel navigates her new life, she faces various challenges, including a harsh mistress, a powerful master, and the all-too-frequent terror of being separated from her sister.As the story unfolds, the backdrop of the American Revolution plays a significant role. Isabel's new master, Mr. Bellingham, is a Loyalist, aligning himself with those who support British rule. Isabel finds herself caught in a conflict where she must choose which side she believes offers her the best chance for freedom. On one hand, the rebels seem to promote the ideas of liberty and independence, while the Loyalists strictly enforce the oppressive system of bondage. This internal struggle reflects the broader themes of liberty and autonomy that permeate the Revolution.Throughout her journey, Isabel meets various characters, including the bold and determined Curzon, a soldier aligned with the Patriots. He introduces significant ideas about freedom and offers friendship and support to Isabel. The challenges she endures ultimately cultivate her resourcefulness and resilience, making her a dynamic and compelling character. There are moments of deep despair where Isabel contemplates her circumstances and her lifeless circumstances in bondage, but there are also instances of hope and determination that fuel her will to escape.After several harrowing events, Isabel becomes embroiled in a dangerous plan to gain her freedom. This journey takes her to unexpected places and requires incredible courage as she confronts her deepest fears. Isabel discovers that freedom will not simply be given to her; she must fight for it, even against formidable odds. The novel draws to a heart-wrenching climax that decides not only Isabel's fate but that of Ruth, who depends on her sister for protection and independence. Ultimately, the resolution of the story emphasizes the importance of fighting against oppression and the unbreakable bond between sisters.Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson In-Depth ReviewChains is a remarkable blend of historical fiction and a coming-of-age story, beautifully crafted by Laurie Halse Anderson. The author has a brilliant storytelling style that brings the era of colonial America vividly to life. The dialogue is authentic, reflecting the vernacular of the time, while the characters are deeply developed with rich backstories that resonate with readers. The emotional weight of Isabel's journey is palpable; readers are given insight into her internal struggles, including feelings of loss, fear, and hope.Anderson's writing often explores themes of power and oppression, emphasizing the harsh realities faced by enslaved individuals. She does not shy away from depicting the brutal truth of slavery, showcasing the physical and emotional trauma that Isabel endures. This raw depiction serves as a stark reminder of the historical context in which the narrative takes place, and it prompts readers to reflect critically on themes of injustice and inequality. The character development throughout the novel is exceptional, especially with Isabel, who evolves from a frightened girl into a courageous fighter for her and her sister's freedom. Readers witness her transformation as she learns to navigate the complexities of her world. Additionally, characters like Curzon introduce new dynamics to Isabel's life, challenging her perceptions and aiding her development. Each character plays a critical role in the overall narrative, representing various ideologies and the spectrum of human morality during this historical period.One of Chains' strengths is its ability to highlight complex moral issues in a relatable way for young adults. Isabel's internal conflicts often mirror the larger ethical dilemmas present in society. The struggles for freedom and the quest for identity resonate with today's audiences, as they continue to grapple with similar themes of equity and justice. Readers can draw parallels between Isabel's journey and modern society's ongoing fight against oppression and inequality, making the novel an important conversation starter in today's context.Anderson's use of symbolism and motifs, such as the chains that physically bind Isabel and represent her situation, enhances the book's themes. The concept of chains not only signifies enslavement but can also be interpreted as the emotional and psychological chains that bind individuals in various forms. These symbols enrich the narrative and provoke thought about freedom in all its forms, asking readers to consider what chains they themselves may carry in their own lives.Key Themes and Takeaways From Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson1. The Quest for FreedomThe quest for freedom is at the heart of Chains. Isabel's journey is not simply about escaping the physical constraints of slavery but also about claiming autonomy over her life and choices. Anderson illustrates how the concept of freedom can vary depending on context – for Isabel, true freedom means being able to live without fear, protect her sister, and make her own decisions.This theme resonates deeply, showing readers that freedom can often be an ongoing struggle rather than a singular event. Isabel's path to liberation is fraught with obstacles, making her journey relatable as many individuals continue to fight for their freedoms and rights even today. The representation of freedom as a constant pursuit rather than a final destination serves as a powerful message in the book.2. The Power of Family BondsFamily is another profound theme explored in Chains. Isabel's relationship with her younger sister, Ruth, drives her actions and choices throughout the story. Their bond illustrates the lengths to which individuals will go to protect loved ones, even in the face of overwhelming odds.The bond between sisters also highlights the idea of familial loyalty and sacrifice. Isabel's commitment to Ruth reinforces the notion that love can serve as a source of strength, giving individuals the courage to confront challenges. The portrayal of family dynamics in the book encourages readers to reflect on their own relationships and the sacrifices made for their loved ones.3. The Complexity of Moral ChoicesChains does not provide straightforward answers regarding morality. The characters grapple with complex ethical dilemmas throughout the story, forcing readers to confront the idea that morality is often nuanced and multifaceted. Isabel faces choices that pit her instincts against her moral compass, and these decisions underscore the struggles faced by individuals during turbulent times.The exploration of morality prompts critical thinking about right and wrong, particularly in contexts where societal norms do not align with individual values. The characters' journeys showcase the imperfections of humanity, making them relatable and allowing readers to explore their own moral beliefs and values.Who Should Read Chains by Laurie Halse AndersonChains is a compelling read for middle-grade and young adult audiences. The themes of freedom, family, and moral complexity are universal, making the novel appropriate for people of all ages. Educators and parents should consider introducing this book to their children as it provides a unique perspective on an important part of American history while also encouraging critical thinking and discussions about social justice. Additionally, those interested in historical fiction or looking to explore narratives centered on social issues will find Chains to be an enriching choice. The book serves as a starting point for important conversations about race, equity, and history, making it a valuable addition to anyone's reading list.Final Thoughts & RatingIn conclusion, Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson is a powerful novel that expertly weaves historical accuracy with emotional depth. The characterization of Isabel provides a heartfelt lens through which readers can explore the themes of freedom, family, and morality. Anderson's evocative prose and rich storytelling engage readers while challenging them to reflect on these crucial themes. As a historical narrative, Chains offers an essential perspective that resonates with contemporary discussions surrounding human rights and justice.I would rate this book 4.5 stars out of 5 for its impactful storytelling and importance in educational and social contexts.If you found this summary engaging, you may also want to explore other topics. For more insights on spiritual growth, check out Explaining the Bible. You can also find plenty of thought-provoking content on leadership and community values. Happy reading! Get 1 free answer with LitCharts AI New