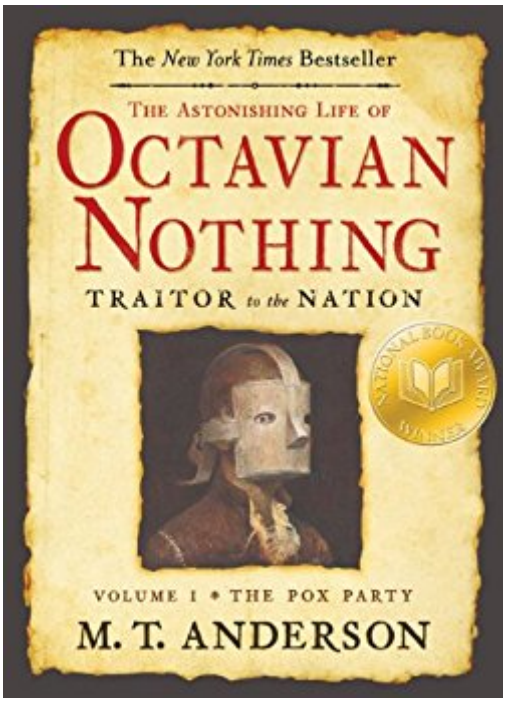
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The Astonishing Life Of Octavian Nothing, Traitor To The Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party: 1



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Synopsis

National Book Award Winner!This deeply provocative novel reimagines the past as an eerie place that has startling resonance for readers today.It sounds like a fairy tale. He is a boy dressed in silks and white wigs and given the finest of classical educations. Raised by a group of rational philosophers known only by numbers, the boy and his mother Ã¢â ¬â • a princess in exile from a faraway land Ã¢â ¬â • are the only persons in their household assigned names. As the boy's regal mother, Cassiopeia, entertains the house scholars with her beauty and wit, young Octavian begins to question the purpose behind his guardians' fanatical studies. Only after he dares to open a forbidden door does he learn the hideous nature of their experiments Ã¢â ¬â • and his own chilling role in them. Set against the disquiet of Revolutionary Boston, M. T. Anderson's extraordinary novel takes place at a time when American Patriots rioted and battled to win liberty while African slaves were entreated to risk their lives for a freedom they would never claim. The first of two parts, this deeply provocative novel reimagines the past as an eerie place that has startling resonance for readers today.

Book Information

File Size: 1396 KB

Print Length: 370 pages

Publisher: Candlewick Press (December 21, 2010)

Publication Date: December 21, 2010

Sold by:Ã Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004GEB1QI

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #135,798 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #11 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Historical Fiction > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary Periods #22 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Literature & Fiction > Geography & Cultures > United States > African American #43 inÃ Â Kindle

Customer Reviews

...then perhaps, you are nothing. M. T. Anderson’s fine novel, "The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing" allows the reader to explore this premise through the eyes of Octavian Gitney, a young boy who has not yet come to the realization that he is a slave. Set in pre-Revolutionary Boston, "The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing" highlights the often ignored fact that slavery existed not only in the southern colonies, but also throughout the northern colonies. While these individuals may have been referred to as "servants," the fact is they were slaves, owned by those who had purchased them. The story is narrated by Octavian, personalizing the work and making the events occurring throughout the text intimate and very intense, much more so than a third person narrative would have done.Octavian and his mother are the subjects of an experiment being conducted by the Novanglian College of Lucidity, a group of scholars. The experiment seeks to determine whether individuals of African descent are able to be taught and accomplish the same niceties as individuals of European ancestry. Ironically, in treating Cassiopeia and Octavian as experimental "animals," the College negates the possibility of proving whether the premise is valid or not. Further, Octavian, his mother, and the other servants are the only individuals, initially, who are referred to by name. Members of the college have been assigned numbers, which dehumanizes those individuals in the same way they have attempted to dehumanize others. It is only as the novel proceeds and individuals begin to show some sympathy for Octavian that a name is given the particular individual within the story’s context.This is an extraordinary novel. The provocative themes which run throughout the book cause the reader to pause and consider what might have been had slavery not existed for nearly 100 years following the American Revolution. Written partly as a personal narrative, but also incorporating fictionalized examples of newspaper clippings and postings, the era in which the novel is set is reinforced in both its tone and attitude. While the novel is purported to be geared toward readers from ninth grade and beyond, it is really a novel for any reader who seeks literature that is thought-provoking and intelligently written. I recommend "The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing" for anyone who loves to read. This is a novel that will stay with you long after you have placed it on the shelf.

I read "Feed," by M.T. Anderson years ago and loved it. I hadn’t read anything else of his until "The Pox Party," so I was very excited. I loved the story, the plot, and the characters. My only complaint

is that the second part of the book, told from multiple points of view via letter, moves a bit slowly, especially after the first part. It's a good idea and it got better as it went along, but I found myself scanning and moving forward without actually reading. It felt a bit sluggish, although, as I said, I appreciate the artistry in the approach. I enjoy well done historical fiction, and this is certainly well done. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series.

I gave as a gift but have read it myself. It's by an author who really knows how to write a great story...and there's so much knowledgeable information contained between the pages.

The book arrived on time and as promised. I ordered it for my son's 9th grade Literature class. He is in 8th grade. I was a little surprised at the content of this book...it call me a prude, but my son is not accustomed to reading or discussing a lot of what this book is about, specifically the "experiments" and data collection details, or the waywardness of the mother. I am disappointed that this is one of the books that the teacher thought to be a good one for her class.

This is really a good book....about the Black American Slaves and those who were free during the 1770's and the Revolutionary War and their participation in the Black Brigades. But it there is mor;, Octavain and his experimental upbringing and the consequences thereof...really interesting! I am now reading Volume II and went directly from Volume I to continue Octavian's life adventures and where it will lead him. Fascinating! I will read more of M.T. Anderson's books if they are of the same quality.

Interesting read. I love how the story is told through the eyes of an African child as he grows, protected from the ravages of slavery under the guise of kindness and experimentation. This book explores a certain depth of a civil depravity, the belief that humans are chattel and how completely vulnerable children are. Octavian was not a traitor to the nation, he was a simply a child trying to understand his role in America...and escape it.

I loved reading Octavian Nothing. It reveals the Revolutionary War from the point of view of a slave who had been given a classical education as an experiment. What a brilliant idea! The characters are extraordinarily complex -- some truly lovable. The book is really two books -- you cannot stop after reading volume one as nothing is resolved until the end of volume two.

The author’s mastery of eighteenth century diction, grammar, and vocabulary is something I’ve not seen from others, which makes this a unique and interesting read among other reasons. Overall very impressed.

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