



The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves

By M.T. Anderson

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Sequel to the National Book Award Winner!

"A novel of the first rank, the kind of monumental work Italo Calvino called 'encyclopedic' in the way it sweeps up history into a comprehensible and deeply textured pattern." — THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Fearing a death sentence, Octavian and his tutor, Dr. Trefusis, escape through rising tides and pouring rain to find shelter in British-occupied Boston. Sundered from all he knows — the College of Lucidity, the rebel cause — Octavian hopes to find safe harbor. Instead, he is soon to learn of Lord Dunmore's proclamation offering freedom to slaves who join the counterrevolutionary forces.

In Volume II of his unparalleled masterwork, M. T. Anderson recounts Octavian's experiences as the Revolutionary War explodes around him, thrusting him into intense battles and tantalizing him with elusive visions of liberty. Ultimately, this astonishing narrative escalates to a startling, deeply satisfying climax, while reexamining our national origins in a singularly provocative light.

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The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves By M.T. Anderson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, October 2008: With the publication of *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Volume I* back in 2006, M.T. Anderson assured readers that his gripping account of the American Revolution from the perspective of a young slave in colonial Boston would continue. Volume I received the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, and the anticipation among critics and readers inevitably grew for the story to continue. Thankfully, Anderson is a man of his word. With *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves* Anderson has not just delivered an equally haunting second and final act to his hero's story, he's also completed a literary masterpiece that simply blows away its limited categorization as Young Adult lit. *Octavian II* engages the reader (teenaged or otherwise) to reimagine the birth of the nation from an unfamiliar perspective--that of an African American slave compelled by incredible circumstance, and the hope of freedom, to fight in a counterrevolutionary army. No less than David McCullough and Joseph Ellis, Anderson turns everything you thought you knew about American history sideways. Through his expert incorporation of historical detail and colonial-era voice, the novel transports us deep into the perilous military and moral battles that defined the American Revolution. That these historical conflicts continue to inform today's charged debates about national identity and purpose makes his novels all the more relevant and powerful. --*Lauren Nemroff*

Read a Letter from the Author on What Inspired *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing*
(CLICK on Image to Enlarge)

The ASTONISHING LIFE of
OCTAVIAN NOTHING
TRAITOR TO THE NATION
—♦—
VOLUME II
THE KINGDOM ON THE WAVES

DEAR READER:

Eight years ago, attending the two hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary reenactment of the battle that opened the Revolutionary War, I found myself confronted by Redcoats, and realized that I had to write a book about it.

The men of my town—Stow, Massachusetts—were some of the first to engage in combat against their own nation's army on that fateful day. As I stood there at the reenactment, watching the terrifying advance of the Redcoats through gun smoke and haze, I asked myself: Would I have been able to stand firmly in the face of this onslaught? What did it mean to be a rebel before the whole mythology of the Revolution was born?

This line of questioning led me to write *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation*, a set of two novels following the fortunes of an unusual boy who has to grow up quickly when he's confronted by the realities of war.

While doing the research for Octavian's story, I came across a fact that startled me, and that became the central event in this second volume, *The Kingdom on the Waves*: During the first year of the Revolution, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, issued a kind of limited emancipation proclamation, decreeing that slaves who fled their masters and fought for the king would immediately be freed. Thousands escaped bondage; hundreds reached the governor's fleet. He founded a new regiment—Lord Dunmore's Royal Ethiopians—and armed them for battle against Patrick Henry and the Patriot armies of the South.

As I read the scanty sources regarding this largely forgotten chapter of the Revolution, I was deeply moved. Here was a profoundly American story: a regiment, fighting for freedom, in which every soldier—every one—had, by definition, a story of bravery, defiance, and escape. Simply to stand in that regiment, with the words *Liberty to Slaves* emblazoned on their chests—this was a proof of heart-rending heroism.

In writing this section of Octavian's story, I wanted to try to imagine the stories that might have been told by those men and women. My aim was to weave together the scraps that we do know to explore those tales that shall never really be known, those narratives of individual bravery that are lost forever. In doing so, I hope to recapture the spirit of liberty that inspired these forgotten American heroes to fight—to give their lives for a dream that would not be fully accomplished for another two centuries.

Yours,

M. T. Anderson

RECIPIENT OF FIVE STARRED REVIEWS:

★ *Booklist* ★ *Kirkus Reviews* ★ *Publishers Weekly* ★ *School Library Journal* ★ *The Horn Book*

ON SALE OCTOBER 14, 2008 - HC: 978-0-7636-2950-2 - \$22.99 (\$25.00 CAN)

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From *School Library Journal*

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up—Octavian, the 16-year-old slave whose story began in *The Pox Party* (Candlewick, 2006), continues his search for identity in this brilliant, affecting, and philosophical sequel. Octavian and his tutor escape from Octavian's master to relative safety in Boston where Octavian finds work as a violinist in a military band. After hearing of Lord Dunmore's promise of freedom for slaves, he enlists in the Royal Ethiopian Regiment. Following a loss at Norfolk, they then take up quarters aboard British ships, barely fending off starvation and smallpox. Octavian's uncertainty and doubt are tangible throughout. His detailed first-person narration is written in the richly expansive 18th-century prose introduced in volume one. He records the story while reviewing (and revealing to readers) his diary entries from the past year, so that "none of this shall pass from remembrance." He endures abuse, shame, grief, and humiliation, and comes close to despair; however, he is ultimately hopeful that humanity can aspire to more than warring and despoiling. Teens will identify with Octavian's internal tumult, how he experiences events as being acted upon him, and his transition from observer to participant, from boy to man. More than fascinating historical

fiction, this is also a thoughtful and timeless examination of the nature of humanity and a critique of how society addresses (or ignores) identity, freedom, and oppression. Anderson's masterful pacing, surprising use of imagery and symbolism, and adeptness at crafting structure make this a powerful reimagining of slavery and the American Revolution dazzle.—*Amy J. Chow, The Brearley School, New York City*
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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review The story begun in *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation; v. 1: The Pox Party* (2006), a National Book Award winner and a Printz Honor Book, continues in this volume, which offers more awe-inspiring reinterpretations of America's birth. After escaping the members of an Enlightenment college, Octavian, a teenage black slave, flees with his sympathetic tutor to the imperiled city of Boston, where the pair pose as loyalists to the Crown. As the war escalates, Octavian joins a Loyalist navy regiment that promises freedom to African Americans and enters into battle against the Patriots. Aside from a few essential interjections from others, Octavian narrates in the same graphic, challenging language used in the previous book, which Anderson has described as a "unintelligible eighteenth-century Johnsonian Augustan prose." But readers need not grasp every reference in the rich, elegant tangle of dialects to appreciate this piercing exposé of our country's founding hypocrisies. Even more present in this volume are passionate questions, directly relevant to teens' lives, about basic human struggles for independence, identity, freedom, love, and the need to reconcile the past. Viewed through historical hindsight, Octavian's final, wounded optimism ("No other human generation hath done other than despoil, perhaps we shall be the first") will resonate strongly with contemporary teens. Grades 10-12. --Gillian Engberg

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Marc Gaul:

This *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves* are generally reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The explanation of this *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves* can be on the list of great books you must have is giving you more than just simple reading food but feed an individual with information that might be will shock your preceding knowledge. This book will be handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed people. Beside that this *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves* forcing you to have an enormous of experience for example rich vocabulary, giving you trial of critical thinking that we all know it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

Jane Garner:

Precisely why? Because this *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves* is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will jolt you with the secret that inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book possess such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking method. So , still want to delay having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Edward Donnelly:

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