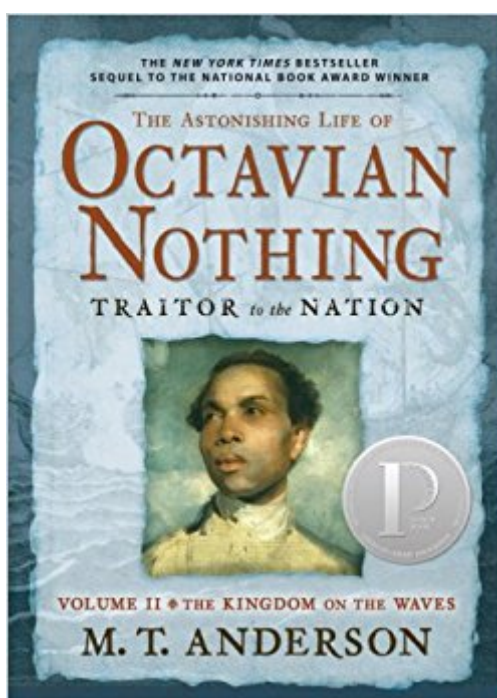


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# The Astonishing Life Of Octavian Nothing, Traitor To The Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom On The Waves



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

Series: Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation (Book 2)

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## Customer Reviews

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)

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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 Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or

unavailable edition of this title.

"The Kingdom of the Waves," M. T. Anderson's second volume in the series, *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation*, is an intense, highly personal novel. It provides the reader with a very different perspective on the American Revolution and its meaning to various groups of the citizenry. Continuing the story of Octavian Nothing, following his escape from The Novanglian College of Lucidity, the book begins as he, along with his tutor Dr. Trefusis, seeks safety in Boston. With the city under siege, Octavian decides to cast his lot with the British who promise freedom to rebel-owned slaves joining the King's forces. However, as the Revolutionary War progresses, Octavian begins to realize that his sheltered upbringing is of little use in the midst of the struggle. Although a slave and the subject of the Novanglian College of Lucidity's experimentation, he was raised as an educated dilettante. Thus, Octavian possesses few practical skills and grows to appreciate the clever, sometimes cunning, talents that his fellow soldiers exhibit. It is during this maturing process that he begins to recognize the British promise of freedom is illusory and that he has traded one type of enslavement for another. The novel is written as a combination of first person narrative interspersed with Octavian's journal entries; these present his view of the Revolutionary War and its import to the slaves who have chosen to side with the British. Additionally, there are excerpts from broadsides and correspondence written between British officers and between colonists which present differing perspectives on the war. M. T. Anderson's writing is complex and intelligent. Using arcane spellings and phrasing, he infuses authenticity into the fictional correspondence and journaling. Character development moves logically through the various stages of Octavian's emotional growth. Octavian's reactions and his eventual counterrevolutionary activities are consistent with his growing maturity and understanding of his situation's reality. Anderson's portrayal of Octavian's fellow soldiers, all who have different background stories, provides the reader with a glimpse into what slaves endured in their quest for freedom. Emotion can be raw, as can the scenes involving violence against soldiers and civilians. More sensitive readers may find this aspect of the work off-putting. However, it is appropriate within the context of the novel and reinforces the authenticity of the story. This is a fine historical novel which should be read after "The Pox Party," volume I in *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing* saga. Even more mature youthful readers will find it challenging both in language and subject matter. It is definitely a five-star read and will be taking its place on my bookshelves.

This book opened a page in history for me that i had never considered..... The plight of the african

men and women who were caught in the middle of a fight not of their making! Awesome read.....  
Much food for thought and meditation!

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.

John Green highly recommended this, that is why I bought it. It was a bit tedious though, mixed with intermittent very colorful and interesting moments. Some great descriptions of historical costume and lifestyles, but not enough to keep me involved. Just a bit slow paced and a bit wordy for me. I couldn't get 1/2 way through then donated it to a needy library.

Part 2 of 2, this book Complete's Octavian's truly astonishing journey through the American Revolution. This series is absolutely perfect for anyone who loves history, as it is entirely based on true events, and Octavian's narrative will make you rethink our history, and reveal some shocking truths. What is liberty? Is everyone a hypocrite? Was George Washington really a good guy? Were the British truly anti-slavery? M.T.Anderson has created a beautifully written story that will suck you in and leave you wanting more.

A very good read...If you read volume 1 you must read volume 2...I feel as though I have learned so much more than I knew about slavery and the recompenses of being in bondage. I recommend these volumes to anyone interested in our National Heritage and where it has lead us. Freedom is truly a Blessing.

With its focus on historical accuracy and flowing language, this is one of the best young adult novels I have read along with the first volume, The Pox Party. The story is told from the point of view of a slave in Boston pre-Revolution and reveals a great deal about the plight of slaves even in the North. This second volume in the story follows Octavian in his bid to win his freedom. Anderson's use of language is simply amazing. I was caught up in it immediately, although younger readers may find it too cumbersome. I believe Anderson uses the language to emphasize the untenable situation of Octavian Nothing. This is a beautifully written book and one I would recommend to all.

This is an amazing novel. This should be required reading in every high school history class, and an excellent study of superb historical fiction.

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