

Octavian by m.t. anderson



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Octavian The book is divided into two volumes; The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party and The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves. It is written by M. T. Anderson. The book tells the story of Octavian, a boy of African-American heritage who lives with his mother at The Novanglian College of Lucidity. He is brought up among scientists and philosophers and is given luxurious treatment throughout his life. In the first volume, we learn about the education of Octavian; he is proficient in music and religious studies, and music studies have made him a talented violinist. Initially Octavian was under the impression, or it could be that he had the illusion, that each of the members living at “ The Novanglian College of Lucidity” is equal. However, as a result of a mistake committed by his mother, both of them are thrown out of the college and have to live with Richard Sharpe. Octavian believed that he was a free member of the Utopian society but his dreams are shattered by Sharpe’s plan to experiment on him to prove that the African race is inferior to white and other races. Thus Octavian comes to find out the reality of living in the old America. After he is able to capture his mother he joins the Royal Ethiopian Regiment who promises to release all the slaves. When he goes inside this new world he comes to realize that even though he had learnt everything in the “ The Novanglian College of Lucidity”, he had in fact learnt nothing and the reality was on the contrary to the illusion he had. As he matures he realizes that all the education regarding music and religion that he had received during his stay at “ The Novanglian College of Lucidity” was not enough as he had supposed. Before coming to this new world he had thought that in his previous life he had been educated like a European prince, but now that he

comes between people of his own race he realizes that all the education he gained has gone to waste. Octavian believed that the freedom of slaves would be easy but this too soon proves to be an illusion or a delusion after he realizes that to attain freedom lives will be sacrificed and blood will be shed. A change in his behavior is visible as in the first volume he appears to be less mature and confident in expressing his views as compared to in the second volume. What he thought about war has changed and what he now believes in has a different perspective. One thing that could have saved him but didn't was his education. At "The Novanglian College of Lucidity", all the scientists and philosophers were of the same intellect as his and he had no problems with adjusting; but when he arrives here, he realizes that the education he had received back in "the College of Lucidity" is of no use with these strangers he now has to interact with. He finds it difficult to fit in because of his education, despite having the misapprehension that his education will let him survive anywhere he wants. Works Cited Anderson, Matthew Tobin. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party*. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2006. —. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume II: The Kingdom on the Waves*. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2008.