



Q & A with Heidi Chiavaroli

Author of *Freedom's Ring*



Heidi Chiavaroli is a writer, runner, and grace-clinger who could spend hours exploring Boston's Freedom Trail. She writes women's fiction and won the 2014 ACFW Genesis contest in the historical category. Heidi makes her home in Massachusetts with her husband, two sons, and Howie, her standard poodle. Visit her online at HeidiChiavaroli.com.

1. What inspired you to write *Freedom's Ring*?

I've always been fascinated by Boston's Revolutionary history and knew a story was waiting there for me. When the Boston Marathon bombing hit so close to home, it really shook me up. I realized around that time how much I was living in fear. So what does a writer do to work out her problems? She writes a book about them! I added my love for a good historical story, grounded in another Boston tragedy almost 250 years earlier, and dove in with my characters, exploring the answer to my question: "How can I conquer fear?"

2. How do you expect this story to resonate with your audience? What are you most excited for your readers to experience through this novel?

Everyone has struggled with something they fear, or something in their past they would have done differently. This is both Annie's and Liberty's difficulty. Annie wonders how she will ever get past the day of the bombing and the subsequent choices she made. Liberty fears she will have to face the man she stole a ring from—a man who showed her nothing but kindness.

We have all done things we regret. We struggle over our inability to have do-overs. We spend precious time fearing we will make the same mistakes, or fearing that we are simply not strong enough, not smart enough, not enough at all. And maybe we're not. But that doesn't mean there isn't a hope greater than us and our abilities.

I'm excited to take readers to Revolutionary Boston! What a turbulent time in our nation's history. Too many times we come away from history lessons thinking the British were all bad and the Patriots were all good. But that simply wasn't true. I loved exploring this fact in *Freedom's Ring*. I'm also excited for readers to experience the separate love stories of both Annie and Liberty.

3. What role does faith play in the story?



The ring given to Annie the day of the bombing becomes an idol to her. The ring Liberty takes from a British soldier she loves becomes the same. Both women look to the ring and to themselves to find the strength they know they lack. But of course a piece of metal or even our abilities won't deliver us from fear and weakness and inadequacy. There's only One who can save us from resting in ourselves. One who's already finished the work we can't do for ourselves. And He did it so much better than we ever could!

4. What lessons or truths do you hope readers will take away from *Freedom's Ring*?

That being weak, being inadequate, isn't a bad thing. In fact, as soon as we think we've "gotten it right," then we often stumble on our pride. We often think we can look to ourselves for strength. Or if not ourselves, then our great faith. But maybe it's not how together we have it, or even how big our faith is. Maybe it's *whom* we put our faith in. Jesus is strong enough to take all our regrets and mess and make them into something beautiful.

5. As an author, what did you particularly enjoy about crafting this story?

I absolutely loved weaving Annie's and Liberty's stories into one. Telling two different stories that are connected definitely has its challenges, but when things finally came together, it was so rewarding!

6. How did writing this story influence your perspective on the Boston Massacre of 1770 and the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013?

When I began researching the Boston Massacre, I only had the hazy image of Paul Revere's engraving in my head—the one shown in most history textbooks that portrays the British Regulars as heartless tyrants shooting innocent civilians. While I knew that the Sons of Liberty used the engraving as a form of propaganda, I didn't know the true story behind the "massacre." In actuality, the crowd had been heckling the soldiers, daring them to fire, throwing chunks of ice at them, pressing in on them with clubs. They were looking for a fight. I began to see the events that led to the Revolution not only as a response to a king's oppression, but as a call placed upon every human heart—the call for freedom.

As an avid runner and a lifelong Massachusetts resident, the Boston Marathon bombing hit close to home for me. We're about an hour south of Boston and a half hour west of UMass Dartmouth (where the youngest bomber attended school), and in the days following the tragedy, when one of the bombers was still on the loose, a tax assessor in a black-and-white baseball cap came to our door (without an appointment). Not recognizing him, and glimpsing his dark hair, young face, and baseball cap, I hid with my kids in their room. Not long after, the police were in my backyard, guns drawn, searching my shed. Crazy, but I was scared. And while I felt foolish later, I was really able to explore this fear in the writing of this story. I loved seeing the many victims embrace good despite the evil of that day. They became my inspiration for Annie and her family.

7. Please describe both the fun and challenging aspects of writing a time-slip novel.



It is so much fun to explore the same themes within the same story but along two different story lines. But it's not an easy task. I wasn't always confident the stories would merge together nicely. I was having one of those rough writing days when my husband came home and said, "Hey, did you see that they uncovered a time capsule in the State House buried by Sam Adams and Paul Revere?"

What?!

It was those times—when real life handed the inspiration to me, when the timing between reality and story just absolutely fit together so perfectly—that it seemed God was affirming the novel.

Then all the headaches were totally worth it. 😊

8. *Freedom's Ring* features two main characters, Liberty Caldwell of colonial Boston and Annie David of modern-day Boston. Which character did you personally relate to the most?

Liberty is probably a little more gutsy than I would have been in colonial Boston. I don't like to rock the boat too much! She's probably more how I wish I was, so in that respect I'd have to say I relate more to Annie. I can relate to her fears, to her desire to run away from her problems, even. But I can also relate to her desire to break those chains and run free.

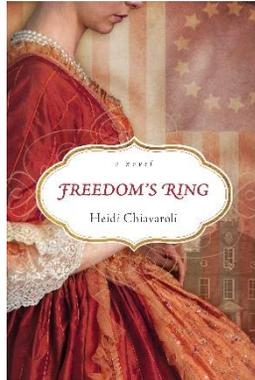
9. What is the best advice or encouragement you have received either personally or professionally?

My former Bible study teacher read a book that she spoke often about. The message was "Jesus + Nothing = Everything." I'm always trying to vainly add my own worth or goodness to what God has already finished. I'm not crazy about math, but this is one type of equation I need every day.

10. What are some future projects you're working on?

I just finished writing my second time-slip book with Tyndale, which should release next year.

I'm exploring my next story idea and also serving on the staff of the reNEW Retreat for New England Writing in October in Connecticut. Should be fun!



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