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Review: Isle of Swords

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***Isle of Swords* Batson, Thomas Wayne, Thomas Nelson, 2007. ISBN: 005167856, Grades 9-12.**

Awards: Mom's Choice Award, Children's Gallery Award, Nominee for Clive Staples Award for Christian Speculative Fiction

Description

How do pirates become pirates? In some cases, there is no other recourse. Such is the plight of Captain Declan Ross, a Scotsman who is left with no other life after his talents have been cultivated in war and he no longer has a wife or home calling him back to land. However, Ross is a reluctant brigand, especially as his only child, Anne, blossoms into teen age and wants nothing more than to sign the Articles and become a pirate in her own right. Defiant, spirited, and determined, Anne pushes her father into a position of either allowing her to become a pirate with all of the consequences as well as the dangers, or compromise his honor and thus, his authority. In contrast to Anne, and on the same ship, is Cat, a sixteen-year-old boy who wants nothing less than to be a pirate. However, Cat has no choice since he was found on a lonely beach beaten nearly to death with no memory. Rescued by Anne, he was brought to the ship for healing. If this combination of honor, father-daughter love, and healing sound too mild for a pirate story, do not despair, there is a villain, Bartholomew Thorne, who is every inch the tyrant expected by the adventure-loving reader, and he has vengeance to wreak on Ross. Legendary treasure lies hidden on the Isle of Swords, and Thorne is running neck-and-neck with Ross to find the prize as the pulse-pounding story crescendos to its surprising conclusion.

Critique

Batson's tale of the sea breaks the mold of the pirate genre with Captain Ross, Anne, and Cat. Readers care about the father-daughter relationship and are sympathetic to "Cat," a lost boy who does not even know his name. The action is significant, and there are ingenious battles executed with brave sacrifice, and lots of gunpowder. Humor is provided by a wealthy merchant who has his own reasons to see Thorne blown away—literally. Chapters alternate between glimpses inside the minds of Ross and Thorne, preparing readers for the clash between the two. Violence there is, and cruelty aplenty, but evil is shown as evil, and good is clearly depicted as good, with difficult decisions peppering the mix. This reader is not a fan of pirate stories, but when finished with *Isle of Swords*, she wished for a copy of *Isle of Fire*, the sequel.

Descriptors

Adventure
Courage
Single parent family
Loyalty
Pirates