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Review: Isle of Swords

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

Description

Declan Ross is an unwilling but thoroughly efficient pirate. Taught the trade in a war which is now over, Ross is left with little reason to return to his home in Scotland, especially after the death of his wife. Captain Ross has carried his daughter, Anne, aboard ship since he chose the life of a brigand, and is facing the consequences of his single-parenting decision as the story begins. Since the open sea and thievery is the only life that the teen has known, Anne now pleads with her father to allow her to take the Articles and officially become a pirate with all its responsibilities, dangers, and rewards. In contrast is “Cat,” a young man who is rescued by Anne after he has been beaten severely and left to die on the beach of a lonely island. The pirate life is the last choice of Cat, but he has no option but to follow the leadership of Captain Ross, since he owes his life to the Ross family. Throughout the story, Cat and Ann each prove loyalty to the ship and the crew of the *William Wallace*. Overriding the violence and revenge of the story are themes of compassion, courage, and strength. Chapters alternate between glimpses inside the minds of Captain Ross and his arch-enemy, Bartholomew Thorne, who is the epitome of brutality in pirate garb, preparing readers for the ultimate clash between the two brilliant navigators.

Critique

Batson gives readers a tale of the sea that breaks the mold of most in the pirate genre. Key features include the love of a father, a rebellious daughter, and a lost boy. Readers care about the father-daughter relationship and are sympathetic to Cat, one so lost that he does not even remember his own name. Significant action and ingenious battles are executed with brave sacrifice and lots of gunpowder. Humor is provided by a wealthy French merchant who has his own reasons to see the villain Thorne blown away—literally. Violence there is, and cruelty aplenty, but evil is easily recognizable as evil, and good is clearly depicted as good with difficult decisions peppering the mix. This title is followed by *The Isle of Fire*.

Subject terms:

Loyalty, Courage, Compassion
Pirates, Father-daughter relationships, Sea life