



Behind the Walls

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Lucy Staines](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Nicola Pierce is a very accomplished writer of historical fiction for children. **Behind the Walls** tells of the 1689 siege of Derry, and her description of the siege, and the events that led up to it, is accurate and detailed, brought alive by typically skilful characterisation and imaginative detail.

She tells the story through the eyes of some of those teenage boys who slammed shut the gates of the city on King James's army, inventing a family and background for brothers Daniel and Robert Sherrard. There are affectionate and convincing portraits too of Colonel Adam Murray, for most people the hero of the siege, and his father Gabriel. Animals play their part in bringing the story to life too, Murray's horse, Daniel's dog. This ground's-eye approach to the action provides an emotional narrative that will help readers follow a convoluted series of events, but it also works to highlight those small incidents and accidents of character that together shape history. She depicts the characters on both sides of the walls with equal respect: there might be heroes, but there are no villains.

Pierce also returns to what seems to be a favourite theme, certainly one that she examines in [Spirit of the Titanic](#) [4] and [City of Fate](#) [5]: how people respond, and the depths of strength, courage and resilience they show, when in terrible and extreme circumstances. The descriptions of the effects of the siege on the residents of the city is shocking to read, especially since by then the characters have become our friends. As the people bear the agonies of starvation, not because by then there's much logic to the siege, but because it's what they feel is right, the reader has to wonder how they would cope in such circumstances, while hoping they never have to.

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