Blizzard of Glass: The Halifax Explosion of 1917

By: Sally M. Walker
Publisher: Henry and Company
Copyright: 2011
Genre: Non-fiction
Setting: Nova Scotia, Canada (Halifax Harbor)

SUMMARY:
After a tremendous explosion on December 6, 1917 at 9:05 am, the towns of Halifax and Dartmouth would be changed forever. This devastating event killed and injured many but in the days and months after, these two communities’ encountered kindness and recovery that didn’t seem possible after such a horrific situation. This book follows the lives of many families before, during, and sadly after the disaster that changed lives forever.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
Sally M. Walker was born in New Jersey in 1954, and she aspired to being a writer, even as a child. Her father was a wonderful storyteller, which fed her interest in research and telling a tale herself. She is best known for writing about scientific subject matter such as Fossil Fish Found Alive: Discovering the Coelacanth (2005) or Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland (2009). Walker has also written books in both Spanish and English as seen in La Luz/Light (2007) and La Electricidad/Electricity (2007). She currently lives in Illinois. She is married with two grown children.

Other books written by the author:

Frozen Secrets: Antarctica Revealed
Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland
Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H.L. Hunley
Fossil Fish Found Alive: Discovering the Coelacanth
Life in an Estuary
Nature Watch series

SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:
Halifax : warden of the North, by Jill Foran;
Titanic Sinks!: Experience the Titanic's Doomed by Barry Denenberg.
Curse of the Narrows: The Halifax Disaster of 1917 by: Laura M. Mac Donald

Revised 2/01/2012
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (If question is related to a specific chapter, chapter is in parenthesis following question)

1. How do you think a town like this rebuilds physically and emotionally after a tragedy like this?

2. Do you feel that they made a good decision about what to do with the remaining 95 unidentified bodies? What else could they have done?

3. “Even in the darkest times, we look for a glimmer of hope.” Page 127. What’s this quote mean personally to you? Can you relate to the quote in a specific example? How does this quote relate to the story?

4. How did Sally M. Walker make this such a readable work of non-fiction?

5. Why do you think so few people know about this major man-made catastrophe?

6. What could have happened differently to avoid this disaster?

LITERARY LINKS or ACTIVITIES:

Language Arts (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

- Compare author Laura M. Mac Donald’s book to Sally M. Walker’s on the Halifax Explosion
  
  6.RI.9 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another

- Research how the Halifax Explosion and 9/11 compare
  
  6.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Challenging Words (pronunciation, spelling, defining) (include chapter and/or page #):

Dotted (pg. 2) amassed (pg 4) maelstrom (pg 5) trundled (pg 7) pall (pg 9) convoy (pg 13) batten (pg 12) munitions (14 and 33) loon (22) boisterous (25) diphtheria (30) wharf (30) pinafores (31) granules (38) detonate (48) mooring (55) obliterated (59) amid (64) commandeered (72) mired (85) marred (124) millinery (125)
Battle of the Book Questions available through the link on the Young Hoosier Book Award webpage.