

Book Review

Through Many Dangers



Mrs. Annemarieke Ryskamp

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P. M. Kuiper. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2021.

Book 1: 208 pages.

Book 2: 216 pages.

Set: \$23.95.

The book *Through Many Dangers* by P. M. Kuiper is written for boys and girls of middle- and high-school age, but my two sons, who are in their twenties, and I, their mother, enjoyed it very much. This is the mark of a really good book.

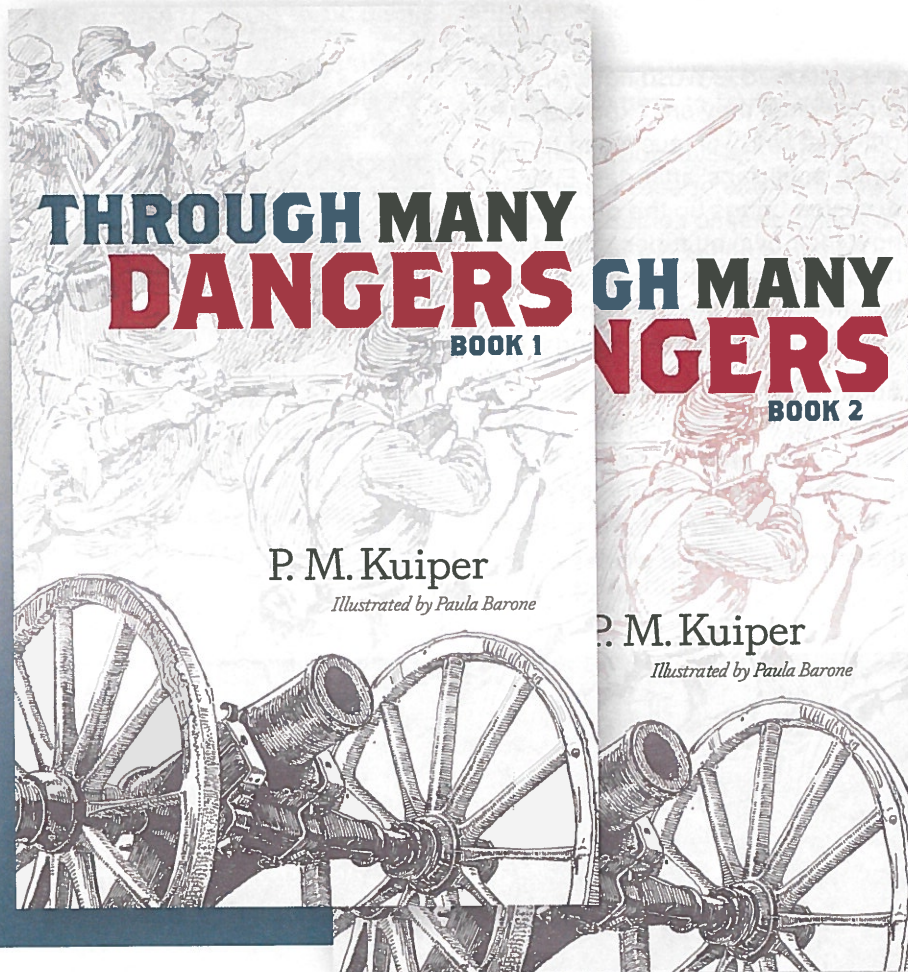
The author states in his Afterword: "Historical fiction presents a number of challenges, one of which is how to weave historical events into a fictional story." Not only did he stay close to his sources, but also he wrote a great story that is compelling, moves quickly, and stays with readers for a long time.

The Civil War timeline and the glossary of unfamiliar terms are helpful. The book is beautifully illustrated by Paula Barone, but in the story the drawings are made and sent home by the main character, Harm.

The book is published in two parts, but buyers get both parts for one price. This means two kids can read it at the same time.

While kids learn in school about the Civil War and might learn in church about the Dutch settlement in Holland, Michigan, rarely do these topics overlap.

The Reformed and Dutch *dominie* Albertus Van Raalte fled persecution in the Netherlands and emigrated with his whole



congregation to the United States, where they would enjoy freedom of religion. They settled in West Michigan, where they founded the town of Holland. Soon more settlers came and started other towns with Dutch names surrounding Holland.

Van Raalte was much more than a pastor for his congregants—settlers during the first extremely difficult years. He was a leader who succeeded in keeping the whole community close to God in faith. He was strongly against slavery and encouraged the young men in the community to join the Union Army

during the Civil War. This is where the story starts.

We follow the group of Dutch young boys on their adventures as part of one company from Michigan as they make their way all the way to Atlanta. They are being trained as soldiers and have to fight in several battles. There are times of plenty and rest, and times of shortages and cold winters. When they finally return after three years, they all have grown into men.

Most remarkably, the book seamlessly engages with some

historic Reformed debates, particularly regarding how Christians ought to interact with secular art, culture, friends, and the government. It does so while naturally and fairly representing multiple sides of the debate. For example, the questions regarding how Christians can remain in the world but not be of it come up on several occasions. When the boys are stationed in Washington, D.C., for a winter, they are exposed to different kinds of music and to some politicians' attitudes. Every occasion brings up the discussion of how their own attitudes should be regarding these things of the world, and there certainly are considerable differences among the friends!

Another part of the issues that boys (and girls) face when growing up is the relationships they have with their family members and friends. The main character, Harm, joins the army against the wishes of his

father, and we see throughout the story how he struggles and how eventually this problem is solved. We also see the tensions that rise when some friends want to obey God but get tempted by friends who don't care about their faith. Every time good reasoning and arguments are provided for the reader to make them his own.

When they are in Georgia and the general orders them to feed themselves from what they can take from local residents, the young men must decide whether to disobey orders and starve, or steal and live. The book presents legitimate arguments for both sides and therefore will help the reader to think through the kind of issues that we all have to face when growing up and maturing in our faith.

The story moves along at a fast pace, and it's hard to put the book down. It's a page turner, and even

boys who don't like to read will be pulled into the story. A book that's so successful in combining a great adventure story with a historically accurate background, all the while presenting the reader with balanced discussions on faith and on moral and ethical issues, will be a classic for the boys and the girls in your family. It will stay with them, and they—and you—will all be happy to have read it.

Mrs. Annemarieke Ryskamp

was born and raised in the Netherlands. She graduated with a master's degree in Dutch Language and Literature from Utrecht University and worked for the Dutch L'Abri and as a secondary school teacher at United World College in Singapore. She attends Dutton United Reformed Church (MI), where she leads various Bible study groups and mentor groups. She has two sons who are currently in graduate studies.