

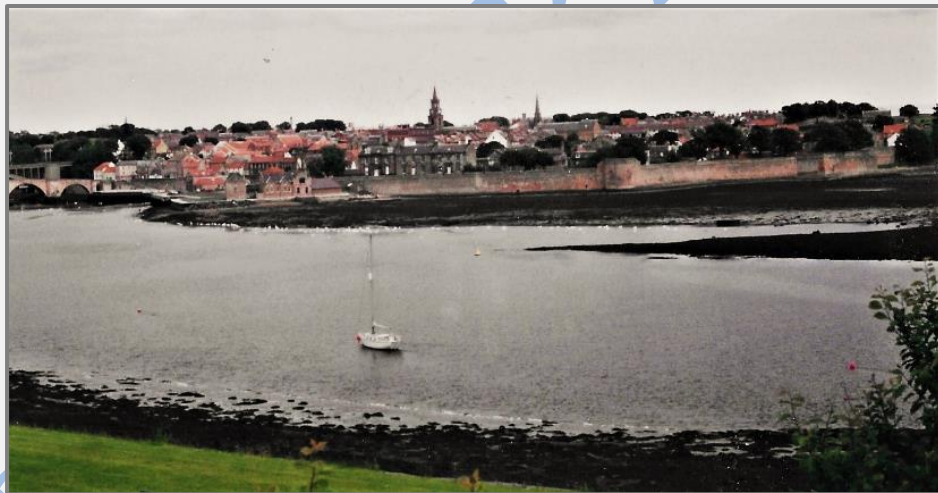
## PREVIEW for “The Great Siege”

The best resources are those you can use in many places.

- I’ve used “The Great Siege” in history classes as reader’s theatre when we are studying the Middle Ages.
- This has also been an example used in my English classes when we are talking about choices.
- As a drama teacher I’ve used this in showcases where I have many scenes and skits from history.
- I’ve used this in my Middle Ages Educational Fayre – a day-long event.

This is in my bag of tricks!

- Rebecca Locklear



Looking from Tweedmouth across the river to Berwick-upon-Tweed, North Sea to the right.

# Skit Notes: The Great Siege

Rebecca Locklear

**Summary:** Scottish parents are forced to make deliberate choices during war with King Edward III of England in order to save their sons. Two versions of what might have happened are acted out before what really transpired is revealed.

**Grades:** 6-12, adults

**Type:** True event

<b>Cast of Characters</b>	<b># of Lines</b>
Narrator	16
Lady Seaton, Sir Alex's wife	29
Sir Alex, Deputy-Governor of Berwick	21
Messenger	2

**Setting:** 1333; Governor's house, Berwick-upon-Tweed, England (at the time, Scotland)

**Props:** Chairs, tables, knife for Lady Seaton.

**Performance Time:** 5 minutes

## **Background Information**

**The English plan of attack:** King Edward III of England, although recognizing Scotland as an independent country in 1328, invaded Scotland and chose Berwick as the first town to attack. This was mainly because his father had lost that town and had failed to recapture it. "Elaborate preparations were made for the siege of Berwick including the construction of two huge engines for throwing stones...as well as provisions sent up from Newcastle (Macnaughton, 11)." The English army had 8,000 men.

**The Great Siege:** The *Siege of Berwick* in Scotland, began on April 4 or 12, 1333 and King Edward III arrived on May 16, pitching his tent in the town of Tweedmouth, across the river from Berwick. "All attempts to scale or breach the walls were unsuccessful as also was an attack from the river. The English ships were set on fire or repulsed. However the English continued the

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**NOTE: If you are interested in what happened AFTER "The Great Siege," pick up the skit, "The Battle of Halidon Hill." The background information is great.**

# The Great Siege

Based on a play by Sir Edward Jerningham  
Adapted by Chris Green; modified by Rebecca Locklear

**NARRATOR:** I now present to you an engaging drama of the *Siege of Berwick* by Sir Edward Jerningham of Longridge Towers, as it was played before distinguished Lords, Ladies, and other persons of Quality at Covent Garden Theatre in 1794.

The time is 1333 and the place is the Scottish town of Berwick. The town of Berwick has been under siege by the English for five months and their situation is desperate.

At the point where we take up the action, Sir Alexander Seaton, Scottish Deputy-Governor of Berwick and father of two, has to make a painful choice.

**SIR ALEX:** (*enters, stands*)

**NARRATOR:** Alexander's sons have been captured by the English and are being held hostage. King Edward III has stated that unless Sir Alexander surrenders the town immediately, his sons will be executed.

**LADY SEATON:** (*rushes in*) What does thou intend to do, my husband?

**SIR ALEX:** My duty.

**LADY SEATON:** Is it then your duty to destroy your children?

**SIR ALEX:** I dare avow what honor bids me do.

**LADY SEATON:** The untamed Arab, who exists on plunder, lets FALL his booty to assist his child. But you, whom polished manners should adorn, whose pure religion wears a softer feature, do you reject the impulse of compassion for the stern morals of imagined honor? For this you would condemn my sons?

**SIR ALEX:** Dare you assert I do not love my children?

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**CHRIS GREEN, British Playwright**

**REBECCA LOCKLEAR, Educational Writer**

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