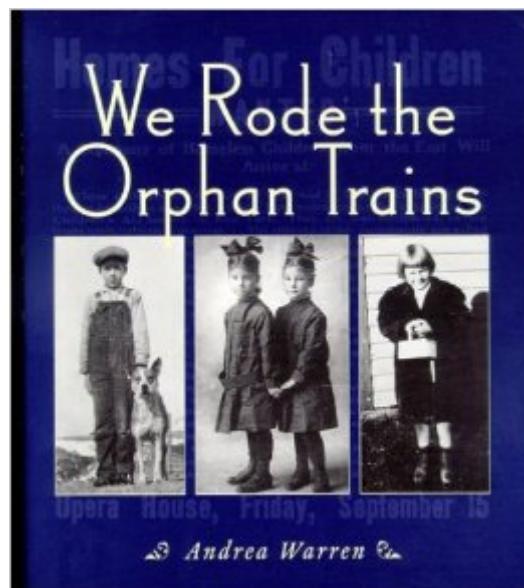


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# We Rode The Orphan Trains



## **Synopsis**

They were âœthrew awayâ • kids, living in the streets or in orphanages and foster homes. Then Charles Loring Brace, a young minister working with the poor in New York City, started the Childrenâ™s Aid Society and devised a plan to give homeless children a chance to find families to call their own. Thus began an extraordinary migration of American children. Between 1854 and 1929, an estimated 200,000 children, mostly from New York and other cities of the eastern United States, ventured forth to other states on a journey of hope. Andrea Warren has shared the stories of some of these orphan train riders here, including those of Betty, who found a fairy tale life in a grand hotel; Nettie Evans and her twin, Nellie, who were rescued from their first abusive placement and taken in by a new, kindhearted family who gave them the love they had hoped for; brothers Howard and Fred, who remained close even though they were adopted into different families; and Edith, who longed to know the secrets of her past. Listen to these and other child orphans as they share their memories of transition and adventure, disappointment and loneliness, but ultimately of the joy of belonging to their own new families.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 940 (What's this?)

Paperback: 144 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (63 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #129,172 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #114 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s #196 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes #627 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

Imagine you're on a train to a place you don't know, with hundreds of other children riding with you.

At the next stop you get off and you're on display for people to see. Complete strangers come over to examine you and scrutinize over whether to adopt you, one of the orphan train riders, into their homes. *We Rode the Orphan Trains* by Andrea Warren narrates the accounts of seven riders who experienced what it was like to ride the orphan trains. First the author gives a short review of what the orphan trains are all about and the life of one agent who rode with the children to their new homes. Any child who was orphaned or abandoned could be put on the orphan train. These trains then went from town to town where the children, some infants, others in their teens, were put on display and the townspeople wanting to adopt would come over. After that any child wanted by a family would go and live with them. In the case of Arthur Field this worked out well and he grew up living a happy life. Nettie and Nellie Enns suffered under a cruel mother and were promptly taken to a new home where they found happiness. *We Rode the Orphan Trains* is quite engaging and leads you into the minds of those people who rode the Orphan Trains. The book is packed with useful information and invaluable to anyone learning about the orphan trains. Two introductory chapters help you understand what the orphan trains is all about. The next seven chapters deal with the lives of seven riders and include excerpts and background on each rider. The last chapter discusses briefly the future of the orphan trains. You don't have to wade through a huge, heavy book on the history of orphans to learn about the orphan trains. *We Rode the Orphan Trains* presents the material in an enjoyable manner and whether you're writing a paper or reading just for pleasure, this book fulfills both tasks. The novel is very well written and thought provoking. Not all people agreed with the orphan trains. Some thought it unfair and cruel to "give away" children to complete strangers. Many times siblings could not be taken together. Others argued that the orphan trains were the best way to find homes for orphaned children. Shelters and orphanages were often poor and overcrowded with kids. Also, after children were placed in a home, an agent came every year to check on them, much like modern day adoption. *We Rode the Orphan Trains* is, unlike some history books, fun and easy to read and understand. If you're enjoying something it's likely you'll get more out of it. Fast paced and overall fascinating are adjectives I'd use to describe this book. The narratives of the various people interviewed are interesting to read and lead you into the mind of the orphans who rode the orphan trains. I highly recommend *We Rode the Orphan Trains*. It contains great historical information presented in a lucid and engaging style. A. Marshall

I enjoyed this book but I had not known it was so short. There are less than 125 pages. It is typed double-spaced and there are many pictures, some of them taking up a full page. I greatly enjoyed the pictures but I just hadn't expected a book I could go through so quickly. Please read the

comments. It changes everything.

I had never heard of the Orphan Trains until I visited The Little White House in Warm Springs, GA and noticed some books on the subject. Since that time, I have researched and purchased quite a bit of written material regarding the Orphan Trains since that time. This book was extremely well researched and documented. The first-hand stories were incredible. It is a shame that the families were unable to keep their children in the desperate economic times.

Interesting, informative read...A good way to learn about the Orphan Trains...History with a human touch...Rather than curse the darkness, the Children's Aid Society of New York, tried to light that one small candle. As imperfect as that candle may have been, the CAS tried to do something, something that, in the end, led to better lives for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of children orphaned and alone in New York. There were, of course--there had to be--stories that did not have happy endings, but this book offers positive stories of the Orphan Trains as told by the children, now aged adults, who lived through the experience and, for the most part, thrived and lived happy, fulfilling lives. There is some mention of children--brothers and sisters usually--who did not fare well after being separated from their siblings, but for the most part this is a story of Orphan Train successes. Yet, as positive and uplifting as this book is--and it is positive and uplifting--there is a lingering feeling that this is a sanitized version of the Orphan Train story. A haunting image comes to mind again and again when thinking about the Orphan Trains. What must it have been like, what must it have felt like, to have been the only child not chosen, to have been the last child on the train when it reached the end of the line and you still haven't been chosen. One can't imagine the feelings of unworthiness and loneliness that child must have felt. This book doesn't eliminate that thought, that concern, but it does celebrate success stories, and while that may not be the whole story of the Orphan Trains, it is a worthwhile thing to do. Better to light that one candle...A parting thought: The Children's Aid Society didn't just ship these children off, find places for them to live and forget about them, leaving them on their own to fend for themselves. Every year the Society sent someone west to check on the children as best they could in a continuing effort to let them know they were not forgotten and not alone. 'Tis good to light that candle and to keep it burning. However imperfect that candle may have been...

They were throwaway kids, not always orphans, from the streets and orphanages of the city who rode the orphan trains to the rural areas of the Midwest and given away at stops along the way.

Some found happy homes, some landed in brutal homes, many went to homes of people looking for cheap labor. Charles Loving Brace, a young minister in New York City, started the Orphan Train movement through his Children's Aid Society. The trains ran from 1854 to 1929 and an estimated 200,000 children made the journey. In this book, Andrea Warren reports on true cases. among them, Lorraine Williams who found loving parents; Blanche Thomas who lived in several homes and orphanages before she found a home to call her own; And her sister Ruth who found a good home, but far from her sister. These are a few of the children's stories in We Rode the Orphan Trains.

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