

# history theatre



## Orphan Train

November 19—December 18, 2016

### Play Guide

Story and Book by Patty Lynch

Music and Lyrics by Charlie Maguire



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# A History of the Orphan Trains



In 1853, the United States began surveying railroad lines to the Pacific, mapping four different routes. Posters, flyers and advertisements were sent to Europe and the rest of the world extolling the virtues of coming to America and getting free land. Many were led to believe America was the land of milk and honey they so desperately wanted for themselves and their children. As a result, the United States received a larger number of immigrants than any other country in

history. Between 1841 and 1860, America welcomed 4,311,465 newcomers. Many left their homelands because of poor harvests, famines, political unrest and revolutions. Agents of steamship lines along with the railroad companies attracted thousands to the United States with words such as “the land of opportunity” and “land of a second chance.” This brought laborers for the factories, tenants for western lands, and often chaos to young families when housing became a problem. In 1820, the U.S. population was about 9.6 million. Within four decades, 5 million European immigrants would arrive, nearly all from Ireland, England and Germany. By 1900, 16 million Irish had come to America, and the population was 76.1 million.

The first U.S. orphanage reportedly was established in 1729 after Indians massacred settlers near Natchez, Miss. But institutional solutions were uncommon before the early 19th century, and relatives or neighbors usually raised children who had lost parents. Arrangements were informal and rarely involved courts.

About 1830, however, the problem of homeless children mushroomed in large Eastern cities that were ports of entry for immigrants, particularly New York. In 1850, when New York City’s population was 500,000, an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 homeless children lived in the streets or were warehoused in more than two dozen orphanages. During those years orphanages were few in number and often grossly overcrowded. Children typically received minimal food, education and attention. Many were sons and daughters of down on their luck immigrants.

Children's Aid Society,  
106 EAST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

The Society reserves the right to remove the child previous to legal adoption if at any time the circumstances of the issue become such as in the judgment of the Agent are inurious to the child's future prospects.  
Children are not allowed to correspond with any friends or relatives without obtaining permission to do so from the Society.

NAME OF CHILD: Edward Hoyt (born May 1<sup>st</sup> 1902) AGE: 8 yrs  
TO LIVE WITH PARTY UP: J. Irving Spence  
TOWN: Valley Falls COUNTY: Irving Spence STATE: Kans.  
DATED: Jan 13 1911  
J. W. Swan  
PLACING AGENT

Some children were orphaned when their parents died in epidemics of typhoid, yellow fever or the flu. Others were abandoned or orphaned by parents victimized by grinding poverty of the slums, relentless diseases or drug and alcohol addiction.

In 1865, 10 Boston businessmen formed the New England Home for Little Wanderers to care for the children orphaned by the Civil War. The agency began sending children out west, not as indentured servants but for adoption. The first orphan train left Boston in 1850 and carried 30 homeless waifs to New Hampshire and Vermont. They were wards of the Children's Mission to the Children of the Destitute, a Protestant charity that was the first to send agents to search the streets, docks, theaters and railway stations for children in need of supervision. Many were the children of impoverished Irish Catholic immigrants or immigrants themselves. Later, they included children whose fathers were killed in the Civil War.

There were two main institutions responsible for this mass emigration of children from New York. Those institutions were The Children's Aid Society, and The New York Foundling Hospital. While this placement effort of orphans was not entirely original to these two institutions, they are the institutions that most often come to mind when discussing the Orphan Train movement. The first train went out from The Children's Aid Society on September 20, 1854, with 46 ten-to-twelve year old boys and girls. Their destination was Dowagiac, Michigan. All 46 children were successfully placed in new homes.

### **Rev. Charles Loring Brace and The Children's Aid Society**

Brace, a 26-year-old Congregational minister, found his calling a little closer to street level than the that of the pulpit. He started to have concerns in 1853 about the growing number of homeless children he saw wandering the streets of New York. He joined together with other reformers and founded the Children's Aid Society. Brace's early outreach consisted of boys meetings at which time they received food and Bible instruction. Unlike other charitable institutions of the time, he wanted to provide them with more than just food, clothing, and a place to sleep. He felt that education and the opportunity to learn a trade were necessary ingredient in properly caring for these children. For a short while, he tried helping these children with his institutions in New York City; establishing schools for them, teaching the boys a trade, inviting volunteering ladies to help teach the girls the proper way to behave and dress, establishing a savings bank to teach the boys to save their money rather than gamble it away. But just a year after founding the Children's Aid Society he quickly realized that something more needed to be done. He decided the solution was work.



However, New York labor refused to employ boys. He hitched the idea of foster care and jobs with the expanding railroad system. Thus, he took up the plan that Boston had tried ten years earlier which involved taking orphans from the street, sending them west on trains and placing them out to families at the various stops along the way who were willing to adopt them.

The Boston plan had also allowed for children to be taken on as indentured servants, but this was not an acceptable option to Brace. He developed what he called the family plan. This meant that the child should be taken into a home and treated as part of the family. He expected the adoptive families to provide for the orphans with the same food, clothing, education, and spiritual training that they would for their own biological children. Sometimes this happened, sometimes it didn't. Overall, Brace felt these orphans had a better chance at life with placement in a new home out west than they did remaining on the streets of New York. He also felt moving these children west was better for them health-wise than remaining in the city. The first group was sent out on September 20, 1853 —and America's first foster children were placed.

Most children on the trains were white. The largest number of trains went to the Midwest, much of which had been settled by immigrants from Western Europe. Society officials knew that children with the best chance of a new home were those with backgrounds similar to those of prospective foster families. Language could also be a consideration. An attempt was made to place non-English speakers with people who spoke their language. Babies were easiest to place, but finding homes for children older than 14 was always difficult because of concern that they were too set in their ways or might have bad habits.

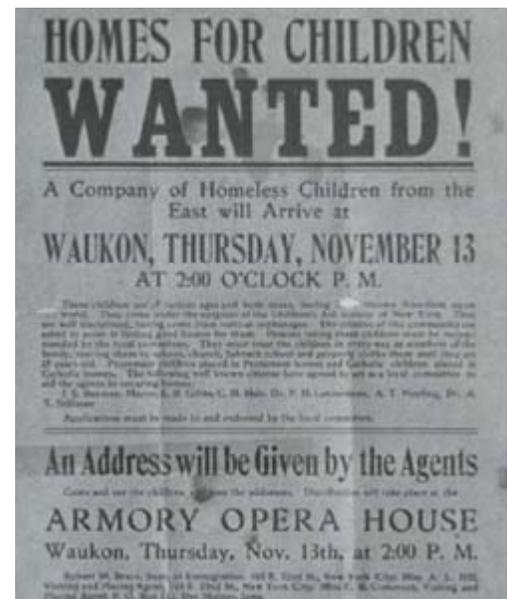
The basic procedure for adopting children from The Children's Aid was to determine which children were to be sent out. If a child was not a true orphan release for placement was obtained from whatever parent/guardian remained available. It was then decided where the train would travel, and what towns it would stop at.

Advance notice of *Homes Wanted for Orphans* would be placed in key newspapers by the placing agents who were to accompany the children. It was desirable to have one male and one female agent accompany each group, but this was not always the case. Shortly before the day of departure (oftentimes just the night



before) the children would be told that they were going on the train. They would be bathed, given new clean clothing, and their hair tended to. Then they would board the train and would be off to their new destiny.

When the trains pulled into the stations, the caretakers would get the children cleaned up and ready for inspection. The children would typically arrive in a town where local community leaders had assembled interested townspeople. The children would usually be put up on a stage like podium for viewing and inspection. This became known as being "Put Up For Adoption". Children might sing or dance to attract interest. The townspeople would inspect the children, perhaps feeling muscles and checking teeth, and after a brief interview take the chosen ones home. Some children became indentured servants to their host families, while most were adopted, formally or informally, as family members.



One of the saddest parts of this procedure was often the new parents could not take more than one child. If brothers and sisters were lucky, they were taken by families in the same area so they could visit. If they were not lucky, brother, or sister, would get back on the train without them and go many miles further down the track. It was not uncommon for brothers and sisters to lose contact with each other completely. Most children lost any means of contacting their relatives. They were never to speak, or think of their families again. The children were encouraged to break completely with their past and completely start over with new families. The older children would remember their old life while the babies would have no memory of life in New York.

Although the demand was motivated by a need for labor, the Children's Aid Society took pains to ensure the children were well cared for. Families applying to take children had to be endorsed by a committee of local business owners, doctors, and journalists. According to the society's "Terms on Which Boys are Placed in Homes," boys under twelve were to be treated by the applicants as one of their own children in matters of schooling, clothing, and training, and boys twelve to fifteen were to be sent to a school a part of each year. Representatives from the society would visit each family once a year to check conditions, and children were expected to write letters back to the society twice a year.

### **Sister Irene and the New York Foundling Hospital**



The story of Sister Irene and the New York Foundling Hospital runs parallel with that of Rev. Brace and the Children's Aid Society. However, there were a few key differences in how they placed children in new homes.

The Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul created the Catholic Charities of New York in 1869. Through The New York Foundling Hospital, they had always taken in abandoned babies. In the foyer of their building stood a white cradle where mothers could anonymously leave their children to be cared for by the Sisters. But as knowledge of the cradle spread, it wasn't long before there were more children than they could adequately care for. Thus, began the Foundling Hospital's mercy trains also known as baby trains. The Sisters worked in conjunction with Priests throughout the Midwest and South in an effort to place these children in Catholic families. While the Children's Aid Society requested that the children they place be given spiritual training (the choice of religion was left up to the adoptive family), the Foundling Hospital's placements were strictly to Catholic families.

Probably the largest difference in how the Foundling Hospital placed their children is that the children were not sent out to be randomly adopted from a town hall or opera house, but were requested ahead of time by families who wanted a child. Requests would be sent to the NYFH for a child and then the Sisters would do

their best to find a matching child. They would then send the requesting family a receipt for the child telling when and where the child would arrive by train. This notice requested that the family be at the station ahead of time so as not to miss the train. When the train arrived, the new parents were to have their notice of arrival with them which they were to present to the Sisters. The notice had a number on it that would match up with a child on the train. Once the match was made, the parents signed the receipt for the child and they were free to leave with their new child.

The orphan trains had detractors. In New York, Brace was called a child stealer and criticized for shipping them wholesale into the country. Some of the states where children were sent complained they were placed indiscriminately in poorly supervised foster families. Abolitionists described the displays of children as 'slave auctions.' In Boston, they were criticized for turning immigrant Catholic children to Protestants, since children were sent away to mostly Protestant families.

The number of Orphan Trains began to decline dramatically in the 1920's. Many factors contributed to the decline and eventual end of the placing out programs. Perhaps the most significant road block for the orphan trains was the growing number of state legislatures that began passing laws to restrict or forbid the interstate placement of children. New laws limited hours children could work, and others made it difficult or impossible for trainloads of orphans to move from one state to another.

In 1887, Michigan passed the first law in the United States regulating the placement of children within the state. Again in 1895, Michigan passed a state law requiring out-of-state, child-placement agencies to post a bond for each child the agency brought into the state. In 1899, Indiana, Illinois and Minnesota enacted similar but stricter laws which had the effect of prohibiting the placement of incorrigible, diseased, insane or criminal children within their state boundaries. Using these state laws as models, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, and South Dakota passed similar laws within five years.

Over the 75-year span of the Orphan Train movement, it is estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 orphan children were relocated to new homes via the Orphan Trains. The Orphan Train Movement led to a host of child welfare reforms, including child labor laws, adoption and the establishment of foster care services, public education, the provision of health care and nutrition and vocational training. The orphan train



movement and orphan train placements were not the driving force for modern laws. Instead, many of these reforms came about to specifically oppose orphan train practices.

# Orphan Train Riders in Minnesota

The Orphan Train Riders of New York-Midwest is the oldest orphan train rider group in the nation. The organization has been meeting annually since the first gathering in Wahpeton, North Dakota in 1961. Beginning that year, a group of nine people who had arrived in the Midwest via the orphan trains met and decided to assemble yearly to share their experiences and memories. The next year, thirty-five riders from across the country met. The organization grew over the years, with attendees eventually including family members of the riders and those with an interest in and a desire to keep the stories alive. The 56<sup>th</sup> meeting took place in Little Falls, Minnesota in September. Most of those attending in recent years are children and grandchildren of the original riders, seeking to find out and reminisce about family experiences.



The orphan trains ran for 75 years, from 1854 to 1929. During that time, it is estimated that 5000 to 6000 children were sent to Minnesota, nearly half of whom arrived between 1882 and 1892. The Midwest was seen as a quiet and honest place in contrast to densely populated cities where the children originated from, a place in which to learn how to work hard and learn family values.

By the time the Orphan Trains officially stopped running, many states had passed legislation regulating the care of dependent children. Orphanages, state schools, and private organizations began to take on more and more responsibility. Children's Home Society of Minnesota got its start in 1889 when Reverend E.P. Savage established Children's Aid Society of Minnesota in St. Paul, intent on finding homes for deserted and neglected children during the time when many were arriving to the Midwest.



In 2010, Governor Tim Pawlenty declared June 19 Orphan Train Riders Recognition Day.

Earlier this year on May 22, Sophia Kaminsky Hillesheim-Kral passed away at the age of 101. She was the last surviving orphan train rider in Minnesota.

For more information and personal stories, go to the Orphan Train Riders of Minnesota website:

<http://www.orphantrainridersofminnesota.com>

# Railway Systems

## New York to Chicago and Chicago to Minnesota

Before the first railroad existed the main transportation on the East Coast was water steam boats. In the west it was by wagon, horse, or on foot. The railroads of the United States have a rich and sordid past of take overs, bankruptcy, and greed. They played a large role in the development of the United States from the industrial revolution to the settlement of the West. The American railroad mania began with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1828 (initially using horses to pull train cars) and flourished until the Panic of 1873 which bankrupted many companies and temporarily ended growth.

Railways in the New York area in the 1840's were broken up into ten different railroad companies, often only running less than 100 miles. Erastus Corning, President of the Mohawk Valley Railroad, organized a meeting of executives and stockholders in March of 1853 and convinced them to merge to create a more efficient regional system.

### The Vanderbilt Era



Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. was born on May 27, 1794 in Richmond County (now known as Staten Island) to Phebe Hand Vanderbilt and Cornelius Vanderbilt Sr. While owning a farm Cornelius Sr bought a periauger, which is a two mast boat, and began trading with his neighbors in New York. In his youth, Cornelius purchased his own periauger and used it as a passenger boat to bring people to and from Staten Island. During the War of 1812, he contracted with the US Government to ship supplies to outposts. Such was his energy and eagerness in his trade that other captains nearby took to calling him The Commodore in jest - a nickname that stuck with him all his life.

At age 70, Vanderbilt turned his attention more closely to railroads, acquiring the New York & Harlem and Hudson Line. In 1867 he brought the New York Central Line to its knees and then purchased the railroad. In 1869 he acquired the Lake Shore and Michigan Lines. He eventually consolidated his hold on rail traffic from New York to Chicago. This new conglomerate revolutionized rail operations by standardizing procedures and timetables, increasing efficiency and decreasing travel and shipment times.

### Minnesota and the Railroad:

The completion of a railroad in Minnesota was not an easy feat, as the costs of a railway were extremely expensive to a newer state. Finding funding was a huge undertaking after the 1857 market crash that made investors very nervous to invest in land development. Funding from the Minnesota Legislation was pulled more than once and then brought back. During the Civil War, with men being away and money going towards the war, the railway was at a standstill until the war was over and legislation was signed and

funders from the east coast were procured. The names of these men that worked to build the railroad in Minnesota may only be remembered now due to the streets that are named after them; David Chauncey Shepard and Edmund Rice.

May 20, 1862 President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act that encouraged people to move out west to Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas. If they made the move, they would be given land to farm and live off to make a living. In July of 1864 Lincoln signed a charter of the Northern Pacific Railway the second transcontinental railroad. During the 1870s' to the 1890s' the population in the Midwest grew from 200,000 to nearly 3,000,000. In those 20 years St Paul shifted from the gateway city of oxcarts and steam boats to railroads.

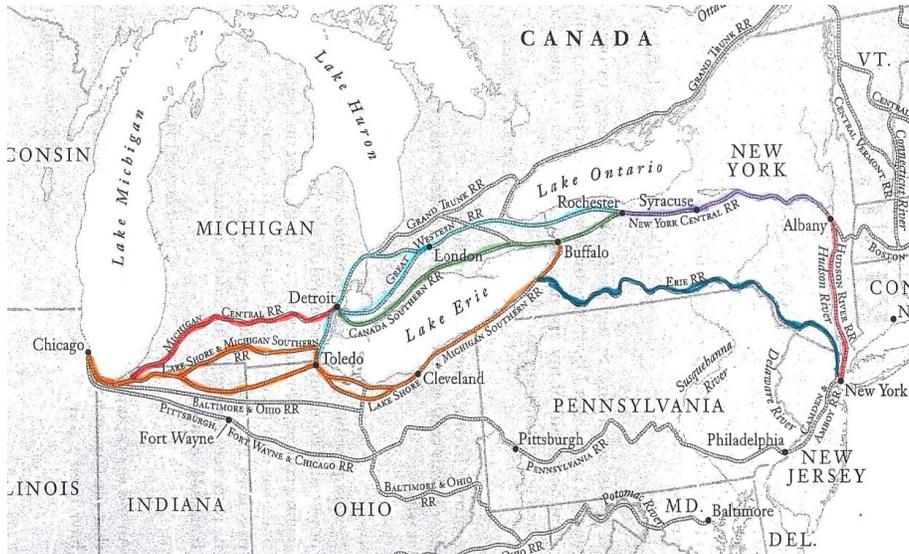


The most famous Minnesotan railroad magnate was J.J. Hill. In 1857 the line between St Paul and St Anthony began, but was short lived due to the market crash, but in 1859 it was started again. However, there were many who believed that the mainline from Stillwater for St Anthony was no longer the focus and the line from St Paul was the only thing being worked on. After years of struggling to build the line it was finally completed for commercial rides in June of 1862.

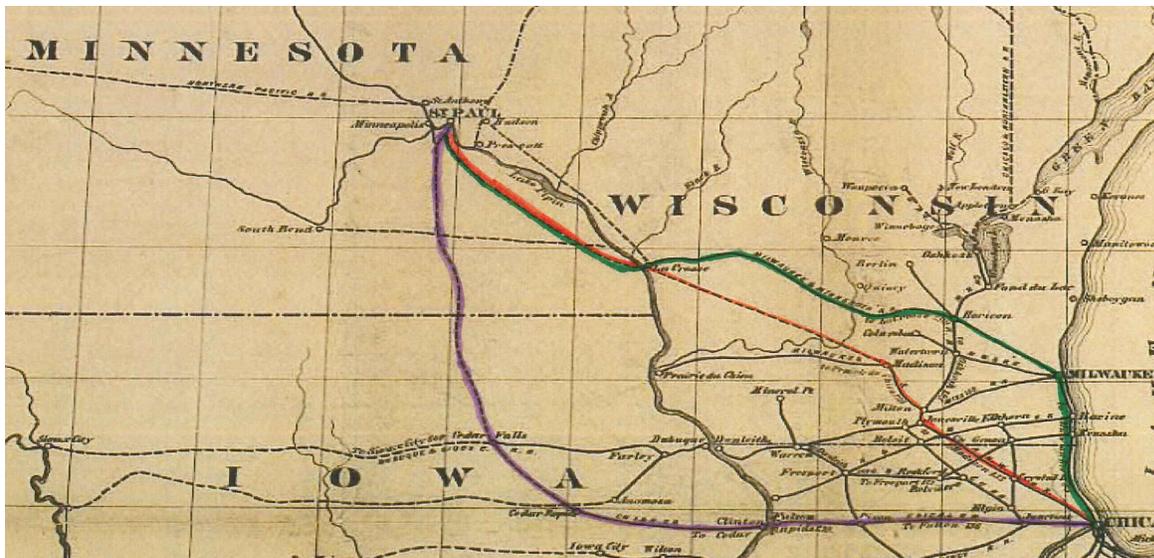
By 1889, Hill decided that his future lay in expanding into a transcontinental railroad. The Great Northern was the first transcontinental built without public money and just a few land grants. It was one of the few transcontinental railroads not to go bankrupt. The Great Northern energetically promoted settlement along its lines in North Dakota and Montana. This "Dakota Boom" peaked in 1882 as 42,000 immigrants, largely from northern Europe, who poured into the Red River Valley running through the region.

**New York to Chicago. The different colors stand for the different railroads, they are described below.**

- 1) Hudson River Rail Road (Pink) to New York Central (Purple) went through New York and then splits to the Great Western (Light Blue) to Detroit then became the Michigan Central Rail Road (Red) to Chicago or Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Line (Orange).
- 2) New York Central (Purple) to Canada Southern Rail Rode (Green) to Detroit, Michigan Central (Red) or the Lake Shore and Michigan Line (Orange).
- 3) New York Central (Purple) to Lake Shore and Michigan Southern line (Orange).
- 4) Erie Rail Road (Teal) to Lake Shore and Michigan Southern line (Orange).



**The Train Ride from Chicago to St Paul**



- 1) Milwaukee and Minnesota Rail Road (Green)
- 2) Chicago and North West Rail Road (Red)
- 3) Chicago, Iowa, and Northern Rail Road (Purple)

# Time-Line

- 1850** The first Orphan Train leaves Boston from the Children's Mission to the Children of the Destitute
- 1851** Massachusetts passes the first modern adoption law, recognizing adoption as a social and legal operation based on child welfare rather than adult interests.
- 1853** Rev. Charles Loring Brace founded the Children's Aid Society of New York.
- 1854** The Children's Aid Society of New York launches the orphan trains.
- 1858** Minnesota admitted to the Union
- 1860** Abraham Lincoln elected president
- 1862** President Lincoln signs the Homestead Act to encourage people to move out West.
- 1868** 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment grants citizenship to African-Americans
- 1868** Massachusetts Board of State Charities begins paying for children to board in private homes. This was the beginning of indentured or "placed-out" a movement to care for children in families rather than institutions.
- 1869** Sister Mary Irene Fitz Gibbon and two other Sister of Charity welcome their first abandoned infant
- 1872** New York State Charities Aid Association is organized. It is one of the first organizations in the country to establish a specialized child-placement program, in 1898.
- 1869** Transcontinental Railroad completed
- 1873** Massive bank failures plunge nation into severe depression
- 1878** The Great Dakota Boom begins (over 1,000,000 acres settled)
- 1901** Kansas passed legislation mandating that the State Board of Charities had authority to scrutinize all organizations or institutions placing children. With the passing of that legislation, the board immediately ruled that no homeless children could be brought into Kansas without a certificate of good character and a five-thousand-dollar security bond.
- 1909** First White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children declares that poverty alone should not be grounds for removing children from families.
- 1912** Congress creates the U.S. Children's Bureau in the Department of Labor "to investigate and report on all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people".
- 1912-1921** Baby farming, commercial maternity homes, and adoption ad investigations take place in Boston, New York, Baltimore, Chicago and other cities.



# American Folk Music in the late 19<sup>th</sup> & Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

American folk music is an all-encompassing term that describes various musical genres either created or developed in the United States, including traditional folk music and roots music. Roots music falls under the umbrella of the term folk music. It is used to refer to a broad range of musical genres, which includes blues, gospel, traditional country, zydeco, Tejano, and Native American Pow-Wow. At the beginning of the 20th Century, the term "folk music" was used by scholars to describe music made by whites of European ancestry, often in the relatively isolated rural South. As the century progressed, the definition of folk music expanded to include the song styles, particularly the blues, of Southern blacks as well. In general, folk music was viewed as a window into the cultural life of these groups. Folk songs communicated the hopes, sorrows and convictions of ordinary people and their everyday lives. Increasingly, music made by other groups of Americans such as Native Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Cajuns came under the umbrella of "folk music." It was sung in churches, on front porches, in the fields and other workplaces, and at parties. The melodies and words were passed down from parent to child, though songs, and their meanings, often evolved to reflect changing times.

Academically and within the tradition of American folk music, a folk song is one that uses traditional melodies to speak on a particular topic. Often, topical folk songs address social and political issues such as work, war, and popular opinion, although not all folk songs are topical or political. Some are personal dirges or ballads about family stories, love songs, or even nonsense songs. A folk song can be passed down within a family or community, and can evolve to reflect issues of the day. Like many traditions in early American, folk music has roots in a variety of different sources. Early settlers would bring over their own musical styles, which included popular ballads such as Barbara Allen from England and Scotland. African-American folk music can trace its origins to slavery and emancipation. Early spirituals described the hardships of slavery along with Christian elements and values.

Soon, folk music developed and evolved in America, forming genres and traditions unique to the American experience. Songs that survive to this day, such as Yankee Doodle, reflected the "New World" and the distinct nature of having multiple cultures contribute to a new style of music. Eventually regional forms developed, such as Appalachian in the eastern United States. It is derived from European and African influences, including English, Irish and Scottish ballads and hymns. The music is typically characterized by the use of banjo, fiddle, and guitar. Another distinct regional form is the blues, originating in the Deep South by African-Americans. Blues incorporated spirituals, work songs, and field songs to create rhythms and grooves to relate the troubles experienced in African-American societies.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the accessibility of records led to folk music spreading out from its various regional areas to reach listeners all across the country. "Hillbilly" and "race" records became profitable recording industry genres that popularized regional music. The emergence of radio broadened audiences and helped the cross-fertilization of various musical forms. A movement was also begun with scholars and music industry entrepreneurs traveling throughout the nation to record authentic folk music from musicians both amateur and professional.

In the 1960s, awareness of folk songs and musicians grew, and popular musicians began to draw on folk music as an artistic source as never before. "Folk music" then became a form of popular music itself, popularized by singer/songwriters such as Bob Dylan, who helped pioneer the intimate, often acoustic performing style that echoed that of community-based folk musicians. Music writers, scholars and fans began to look for new ways to describe the diverse array of musical styles still being sung and played in communities across America, though most often not heard on radios. 13

# ACTIVITIES



## Discussion and Writing Activities

1. Discuss whether or not the Children's Aid Society child placement program would be appropriate today. What must people consider when designing a foster care program? Brainstorm a list of goals for such programs.
2. Ask students if the first-hand accounts in the play affected how they viewed the whole story. Who didn't they hear from directly? If they had heard from these other people, how do they think it might have affected their view(s)?
3. Have students research the history of foster care in the United States. Ask them to consider how changes in this system have reflected changes in society's view of children. After students finish their research, have them work in small groups to outline a successful foster care program, then present their ideas to the class.
4. Ask students to imagine life as a homeless child in the 1800s living on New York City's streets, taking an orphan train, then living with a family in rural America. Have them write a story or poem about the experience.
5. Introduce students to the topic of orphan trains by showing them the videos of individual orphans from the trains on YouTube. Working in groups of two or three, have students brainstorm words describing the situation of the orphan train riders and record them. Encourage students to come up with as many descriptive words as possible. When they have finished, have students use their descriptive words to create a word cloud with [Wordle](#) or [Tagxedo](#).

## Home

Ask students to develop a concept of home based upon their own personal experiences and preferences. Have them consider such basic factors as food, shelter, safety, and comfort and then move on to areas such as security, stability, family and community, etc.

Have students work in groups to establish 10-point descriptions of HOME by incorporating 10 sentences that begin with, Home Is...

## Trains

Ask students to research travel by train in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America. Having them work in pairs, ask them to create a travel itinerary which begins in New York and ends in a city of their choosing somewhere in the Midwest. Have them trace their route on a map of the U.S., and estimate distances and travel times. Ask them to imagine and describe what they might see and experience on such a 19<sup>th</sup> century journey.

## New York City

Have students research turn-of-the-century New York City by utilizing library and/or Internet resources. Ask them to imagine and describe life on the streets and theorize how they would struggle to survive if forced to live on the streets, by considering questions such as the following: What would be their number one priority? Where would they sleep? What would they eat? Have each student write a fictional, first-person account using a diary-like day-in-the-life format.

## Adoption

Have students research the evolution of current adoption laws and their historical precedents. Ask them to outline what moral and ethical issues led to these changes and identify what areas of controversy still remain with adoption practices in today's world.

# Migration

## Objective

Students will understand purpose and reasons for migration within the United States during the turn of the century. Students will focus on one migration in particular, children on the Orphan Train, an experience of moving children from the crowded big cities of the East like New York and Boston to the rural Midwest. Students will use literature and primary sources to gain an understanding and to discover important historical and geographical aspects of migration in the United States.

## Day One: Teacher will begin the lesson by asking:

Why do individuals and families move from one place to another? Possible responses:

- To find a better life
- To find work
- To be closer to family or relatives
- To get away from poverty

Students will be asked and then given the definition of migrate, immigrate, emigrate. Teacher will point out that some reasons for moving are one's own choice and others are not.

## Find photos

Teacher will model observation and inference questions of photos:

- What do you see in the photo?
- What were the living and working conditions like?
- What are the people wearing? Is it cold?
- Where are they? How do you know?
- Where are they going? Why?

## Student Activity

Divide the classroom into groups of four to six students. Each group will be given a different photo related to the Orphan Train experience to examine. (These can be easily found on the internet). In their groups, each student will be asked to study the photograph for two minutes and to form an overall impression from the photo and the particulars of each photo. (Examples: looking at an individual's facial expression, clothes, or body language, or looking at or the size and condition of the buildings.) One student at each table will be selected to share their findings and to combine them into one list on the worksheet labeled Photo Analysis. Teacher will call on a representative from each table to share their observations with the class.

## Student Activity

Have the students look for pictures of Syrian refugees. Have the students ask the same questions that they did for the Orphan Train photos. What are the comparisons between these photos with the ones they studied of the Orphan Train riders.

# Photo Analysis Worksheet

## Step One

Study the photograph for two minutes. Form an overall impression of the photo and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photo.

People	Objects	Activities

## Step Two

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from the photo.

# Orphan Train Rider

## Objective

Back in the late 1800s, there was an overpopulation of homeless children in New York City. Many of the children had parents that had died or were too sick to care for them. Since New York was also the entry for immigrants, the overpopulation of New York City caused housing issues and food was scarce.

At the same time, out West, populations were small. There were many small farming towns that did not have enough people to manage all the farm land and tend to the fields.

Your job is to come up with three solutions to these problems. You will be divided into two groups. One group will represent the people in New York City where there is an abundance of homeless children. The other group will represent the farmers out West who don't have enough people to take care of the farms. Each of you will be required to think up at least one idea for your group. As a group, you will also decide who will write down the ideas and who will present them to the class.

Keep in mind, back in 1880, there were no computers, no internet, no cars, no TV. The telephone was just invented and could only be used over a span of less than 10 miles.

## Farmers:

How will you get the work done on your farm? Who will prepare the fields, tend the fields, harvest the fields?

## East Coast:

What can you do with all the homeless children? Who will feed and care for them? Where will they live?

## **Procedures:**

Students will be divided into two groups. One group will be the farmers and one group will be East Coast people. Each group will be asked to create three solutions to their problem. Students should be given 20 minutes to work in their groups.

When the students have completed their three solutions, they will present that information to the class. Teacher will ask questions to facilitate discussion. Students will be divided into two groups. They will gather in opposite ends of the room to work on their solutions. When time is up, one student from each group will come to the front and present their ideas.

# Citizen Action

**Prior Knowledge:**

Students have been studying the orphan trains and understand that this was a philanthropic effort to help homeless children.

**Essential Question:**

How can I help?

**Objective:**

Students will learn that homelessness is still prevalent today. They will identify current organizations that help homeless children. They will demonstrate how they can make a difference.

**Procedure:**

Students will be divided into five groups. Each group will be given a website to research (see groups below or they can choose one of their own). Students will research the organization and determine the best way to share the information with other students – options include poster board, pamphlet, flyer, PowerPoint presentation. Student will present their information to the students in their class. The presentations will then be posted in the hallway.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on the details of their findings; including the organization's name, purpose, audience (who they help), volunteer opportunities (how they can help). Students will also be asked to share three facts about homelessness that they obtained from the internet – citing their source(s).

Students will also manage a collection drive – food or clothing drive. Students will create poster boards to advertise their collection drive. Students will work with staff to set up tables and begin their collections. Teacher will manage the transfer of goods from the school to the local organization.

**Organizations that work with homeless youth in the Twin Cities**

Avenues For Youth

Bridge for Youth

Hope Street

Out Front MN

Rezek House

Safe House—Saint Paul

Street Works MN

Stand Up for Kids

YouthlinkMN

Youth Moving Forward

## For Further Reading

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Baker, Christine Kline. *Orphan Train*. Deckle Edge, April 2013.

Fry, Anette. *The Orphan Trains*. New York: New Discovery Books, 1994.

Holloran, Peter. *Boston's Wayward Children: Social Services for Homeless Children, 1830-1930*. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickerson Press, 1989.

Holt, Marilyn. *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

Katz, Michael. *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*. New York: Basic Books. 1986.

Langsam, Miriam Z. *Children West: A History of the Placing-Out Program of the New York Children's Aid Society 1853-1890*. Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1964.

Parr, Joy. *Labouring Children*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983.

Patrick, Michael, Evelyn Sheets and Evelyn Trickel. *We Are A Part of History: The Orphan Trains*. Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Co., 1990.

Stiles, T.J. *The First Tycoon: The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*. Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, April 20, 2010.

Wendinger, Renée. *Last Train Home an Orphan Train Story*. Legendary Publications, MN, 2015.

Nixon, Joan Lowery:

*A Family Apart*. New York: Bantam, 1988.

*Caught in the Act*. New York: Bantam, 1989.

*In the Face of Danger*. New York: Bantam, 1989.

*A Place to Belong*. New York: Bantam, 1990.

*Dangerous Promise*. New York: Delacorte, 1994.

*Keeping Secrets*. New York: Delacorte, 1995.

**Podcast:** Stuff You Missed in History Class

<http://www.missedinhistory.com/podcasts/orphan-trains.htm>

### Videos

The Orphan Trains. By Janet Graham and the Ed Gray Film Co., New York City (shown on PBS Video)

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/55310532> (Lee's Story)

<https://vimeo.com/55309537> (Katie's Story)

**Websites:**

Children's Aid Society's account of Orphan Train [www.childrensaidsociety.org/orphan-trains](http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/orphan-trains)

PBS program on The Orphan Trains [www.pbs.org/article/orphan/](http://www.pbs.org/article/orphan/)

Focus on the Kanas Orphan Trains [www.lkancoll.org/articles/orphans/](http://www.lkancoll.org/articles/orphans/)

The New York Foundling Hospital Time line of the hospitals history including The Orphan Trains  
[www.nyfoundling.org/about/history](http://www.nyfoundling.org/about/history)

New York Central System Historical Society, Inc

<http://nycshs.blogspot.com/2008/05/nyc-railroad-history.html>

Erie Railroad <http://www.rierailroad.org/>

**Organizations**

Children's Aid Society

Office of Close Records

150 45<sup>th</sup> St E

New York, NY 10017

<http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/about/history/victor-remer-historical-archives>

Orphan Train Heritage Society of America (OTHSA)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Central Arkansas Library

100 Rock St

Little Rock, AR 72201

[www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2400](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2400)

New York Foundling Hospital

Department of Closed Records

590 Avenue of the Americas

New York, NY 10011

<http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/foundling/bioghist.html>

National Orphan Train Complex

Orphan Train Depot

300 Washington St

Concordia, KS 66901

[www.orphantraindepot.org](http://www.orphantraindepot.org)