

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Pretend you are a child who rode the "Train to Somewhere." Write a letter back to Mrs. Randolph a year later, telling her about your new home.
2. Write a poem about hopes and copy it onto a large paper feather. Arrange and display the feathers.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Find out why there were so many orphans in the 1800s. Report your findings to the class

2. Research areas of the world where there are many orphans today. Write a report listing problems, causes and possible solutions.
3. Find out about the Children's Aid Society in your state. Report to your class about how elementary schools are involved in helping children through this organization.
4. Write a research paper about the Orphan Trains. (Keywords: Orphan Train Riders Research Center) Use your favorite search engine to find stories and photographs of children who rode the Orphan Train.

ART

1. Draw a child on the Orphan Train. In a "think bubble," write some hopes he or she might have had.
2. Use watercolors to paint a background for your hope poem. (See Language Arts #2.)

Train to Somewhere

Eve Bunting
1996
New York: Houghton Mifflin

HOPE
USA
Historical Fiction
Reading Time: 19 minutes

CONCEPTS

Hope
Courage
Respect

SUMMARY

From the mid-1880s until the late 1920s an estimated 100,000 homeless children were sent by train from New York City to small towns and farms in the Midwest. Charles Loring Brace of the Children's Aid Society hoped to place them with caring families. This is the story of fourteen orphan children going West and dreaming of a better life. Illustrations executed in water colors and gouache reinforce the moving storyline.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to define and discuss hope, courage and respect as they apply to this story. The student will understand that helping homeless people has a long history in our nation.

After the Story

Train to Somewhere

DISCUSSION

1. Why were the children on the train? Share what you imagine they were thinking.
2. Why did they change clothes at each stop? Talk about the different reasons people had for adopting children from the Orphan Trains. How do you think the children's lives might have changed after they were adopted?
3. What did Marianne hope for? How were her hopes shattered? What did the feather represent in the story? Think of other symbols and discuss them (the train, hard seats, the puppy).
4. Describe Mr. and Mrs. Book. Mrs. Book said, "Sometimes what you get turns out to be better than what you wanted in the first place." Why did she say this to Marianne? In what ways did Mr. and Mrs. Book and Marianne show their hopes in this story?
5. Share a time you hoped for something but got something else that turned out to be better.

ACTIVITIES

1. Find New York City and Iowa on the world map and place story pins.
2. In small groups, list Marianne's hopes. Make a second list of things children hope for today. Compare and report to class.
3. In groups of three or four, create a conversation among several children on the train. The script should reflect hopes and concerns. Present to your class.
4. Invite a guest from the Department of Social Services in your community to visit the classroom and tell how orphaned children are cared for today. A student might share the story with the guest before he or she speaks.

JOURNAL

1. Write about hopes for yourself, your family and a friend. Reflect on why you selected these hopes.
2. How did you feel listening to this story? How do you think Miss Randolph felt during her journey? Explain.

HOME CONNECTION

1. Retell the story at home. Ask if anyone has known an orphan. Learn who cared for him or her. With permission, share with the class.
2. Ask an adult to share his or her hopes for your future. Write them down and put them in a private place to read every year on your birthday.

VOCABULARY

orphan
larkspur
stowaway

muff
misery
ringlets