

ESL Book Club 2024 – Discussion Questions for:

Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline

Discussion Date: Oct 4, 2024, 10:30 am – 12 pm in Central Park Library – Sycamore Room

Orphan Train is a fictional story, but it's based on the true history of orphan trains, which shipped about 200,000 children orphaned, abandoned, and homeless children from the coastal cities of the eastern United States to the Midwest between 1854 and 1929.

1. Had you heard of the orphan trains before reading this novel? Do you think there were benefits to the system? What were the downsides that the novel highlighted?
2. In what ways are Molly and Vivian similar? How are they different?
3. Vivian moves from family to family and each family is different in some ways while being similar in others. How are all of the families she lives with similar? How are they similar to Molly's foster family?
4. Why does Vivian seem unable to get rid of the boxes in her attic?
5. Do you have things that you don't use or are stored away but you can't part with? What are those things and why do you keep them?
6. Molly's charms on her necklace are mentioned throughout the story. What did Vivian's Claddagh cross, and Molly's charms mean to them?
7. Molly is enthusiastic about Vivian's reunion with her daughter but makes no further efforts to see her own mother. Why is she unwilling or unable to affect a reunion in her own family? Do you think she will someday?
8. How has Molly changed Vivian's life? How has Vivian changed Molly's life?
9. Were there times you disagreed with a character's actions? What would you have done differently?

10. How did you feel about the way the author ended the story?

11. If you were to write additional chapters to the book what would happen to Vivian, to Molly?

12. How did the book make you feel?

13. How would you rate this book? (10 = fantastic, 1 = terrible)