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The Railway Children (Puffin Classics)



Synopsis

The Railway Children is the classic children's story by E. Nesbit. When Father is taken away unexpectedly, Roberta, Peter, Phyllis and their mother have to leave their comfortable life in London to go and live in a small cottage in the country. The children seek solace in the nearby railway station, and make friends with Perks the Porter and the Station Master himself. Each day, Roberta, Peter and Phyllis run down the field to the railway track and wave at the passing London train, sending their love to Father. Little do they know that the kindly old gentleman passenger who waves back holds the key to their father's disappearance. One of the best-loved classics of all time, with a wonderful introduction by Jacqueline Wilson. Edith Nesbit was a mischievous child who grew up into an unconventional adult. With her husband, Hubert Bland, she was one of the founder members of the socialist Fabian Society; their household became a centre of the socialist and literary circles of the times. E. Nesbit turned late to children's writing. Her first children's book, *The Treasure Seekers*, was published in 1899 to great acclaim. Other books featuring the Bastable children followed, and a series of magical fantasy books, including *Five Children and It* also became very popular. *The Railway Children* was first published monthly in the *London Magazine* in 1905, and published as a book in 1906, which has been in print ever since. Other children's books by E Nesbit: *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*; *The Wouldbegoods*; *The New Treasure Seekers*; *Complete History of the Bastable Family*; *Five Children and It*; *The Phoenix and the Carpet*; *The Story of the Amulet*; *The House of Arden*; *Harding's Luck*; *The Railway Children*; *The Enchanted Castle*; *The Magic City*; *The Wonderful Garden*; *Wet Magic*; *Five of Us and Madeline*

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 3-7-This dramatic adaptation of the 1906 classic by E. Nesbit is read by an ensemble cast of four actors. They read with conviction and help the story come alive. The story is told from the monster's point of view, a more immediate and engaging way than Nesbit's use of a narrator. It presents a loving family of three children who pull closer to their mother after their father mysteriously disappears one evening after dinner. The family is forced to move from their rather posh home in the city to a simple one in the country, and often have to "make due." The railway plays an important part in their lives. The adaptation includes all of the major events in the book, and there is a smooth transition from one adventure to another. Minor characters are foils against which the family reacts and there is no real character development, more just a series of incidents and coincidences building to the father's return. This is a comforting version for fans of Nesbit, and one that will attract new converts. Edith Ching, St. Albans School, Washington, DC Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"Her child characters were remarkable in her day because they are so entirely human. They are intelligent, vain, aggressive, humorous, witty, cruel, compassionate... in fact, they are like adults." --Gore Vidal --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Roberta (Bobbie), Peter, and Phyllis live very happily with their parents. But when two mysterious men show up, everything changes. Their father is gone and their mother frequently cries. They move to a small house with mice in the walls and must start saving money. The children are afraid to ask what's wrong, and their mother doesn't want to talk about it. Every day they go down and wave at people on the 9:15 train, and an old man always waves back. Through their own ingenuity, courage, and thoughtfulness they gradually come to know the old man, the railway employees, the villagers, a Russian immigrant, and even the barge people on the river, who are initially mistrustful. Convincing and appealing children in a heartwarming story.

The Railway Children is a sweet book with a lovely ending. It is very, very, very dated which I suppose makes it a bit quaint, but also makes it a bit annoying to read. Regularly, the author as

narrator inserts their random thoughts into the story which is a bit jarring and pulls you out of the story. The children have interesting adventures, but nothing in how they are told is especially engaging. It's a decent enough book to read for adults and children alike.

I read this book first as a child; when I saw it available from Kindle now, when I am almost 70, I remembered nothing except that I had liked it. So--I got it. I am glad I did, because I promptly then took a serious fall and ended up in the hospital, with a crushed knee, wanting to read something gentle and simple, not my usual fare. I found "The Railway Children" on my Kindle, and began to lose myself in it. It has enough plot to keep you going (What happened to the children's father? Why is the family suddenly living in straitened circumstances? Will they return to their earlier high-class life?), but the plot is not the point; not at all. You are drawn to the believable simplicity of these innocent children--two sisters and a brother, all with "boys' names" and all living adventures their times and cultures might have restricted to boys. They have moved to live near the railway with their mother, who writes both serious things (that you suspect have something to do with their missing father), and children's poems and stories. Instead of focusing on the gracious life they must have lost, they look for the adventures and beauties of their new world. The first of many "life lessons" the book teaches. There are more, and each child approaches the elements of their new lives in his or her own special way. Bobbie is the more reflective and perceptive of the three, and it is often through her eyes that we watch other people and events. We see the children dare to make friends even with people who start out gruffly rejecting them--we see embodied the Buddha's teaching "Not by hatred does hatred cease, but by love hatred ceases." Not that the book is using such language or pretending to be an apology for any particular religious or spiritual culture. It is simply showing what happens when these innocent children consistently choose honesty, trust, generosity and love over the ways most of us are accustomed to choose. Does this mean the book becomes a mere vehicle for obvious preachments? I think not; it would have irritated me if it had! No, it simply, over and over, through showing how the children interact with each other, other people, and situations, shows us the benefits of living by the "good old fashioned values". We keep feeling fresh and innocent ourselves, and cheering the children on in their efforts to solve mysteries and make good things happen. We end up relishing such innocence for ourselves. I was sorry when the book ended, because I knew I'd now go back to the thrillers and political intrigue stories I tend to read; they would interest me, educate me, and in some way dismay me. I'd escape their impact saying "This is only fiction anyhow." But I didn't want to escape the impact of "The Railway Children", and I hope very sincerely that this book is NOT "only fiction anyhow".

I bought this for the daughter of a friend. She is 9 and I haven't heard yet what she thought of it. I think it should be on children's Must Read List for a few reasons. 1. A picture of bygone times helps us understand the past and the struggles others face today. 2. A realistic picture of children's relationships within the family. Some are gentle and loving and others times they show the stress of life. 3. It shows the worthiness of fighting for a right and just cause against corruption and oppression. 4. It has a happy ending and while as adults we know there are not always such endings, a part of childhood should be to have confidence in them and fight for them. 5. As the children learn to change their lives and expectations with their new circumstances the lessons they learn are shared with the reader. A parent or teacher might have to translate some of the words and concepts for a young reader, after all, who wears red flannel petticoats anymore? Some of the cultural mores of the times should also be addressed. Enjoy a children's classic!

Such a delightful story... perfect for reading to children at bedtime. I read it after finding out that it was one of CS Lewis's favourites. An avid CS Lewis fan, I was curious to read and try to figure out the reason for his fascination with this book. Glad I did. Innocent, with believable characters and story line.

This is one of the best children's stories ever written. It is set in very much simpler times. The children do not have drug dealers on their way to school or guns in their faces, but they do have problems. Their problems are serious ones. Their Dad is falsely imprisoned. They must leave their home and become poor for the first time in their lives. From this point they work to solve the problems they face and do so in an interesting fashion. This book empowers children to take on the difficulties they face, even today. And if you are a parent worried about your child reading horrors and gore, have no worry. This story is about children and for children not about all the garbage adults do and wallow in in this "modern world" of greed, cruelty and gore. Let your kids be kids--Let them read a book.---This one would be a good one.

I give this book 100 sets of five stars. It is a classic, it is refreshingly innocent, imaginative, constant in its expression of human nature, and absolutely delightful. I recommend this book to children of reading age who need to see how wonderful the simple life can be. And for adults who need a corner of a soft chair, a warm fire, and a cup of hot tea, and a reminder of the sweetness of innocence and heroism and love of family.

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