

On the Blue Comet

Rosemary Wells

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Oscar Ogilvie Jr. is eleven years old and lives with his father in Cairo, Illinois. Oscar and his father have a passion for electric trains and they spend most of their free time setting them up in the basement. Everything is fine in their lives until the stock market crash of 1929, Oscar's father loses his job, is forced to sell the house and all their beloved trains to the banker Mr. Petticoat and move to California in search of work. In the meanwhile, Oscar moves in with his Aunt Carmen. He's sad and just wants to be back with his dad.

While living with his aunt, Oscar meets Mr. Applegate, a former teacher who has just moved to Cairo in search of work. In exchange for food, Mr. Applegate agrees to help Oscar with his assignments, he also teaches him about Einstein and poetry. They become close friends but when Aunt Carmen finds out Oscar had a stranger at the house she stops him from seeing him. Mr. Applegate gets a job as the night guard at the bank where Mr. Petticoat has set up the trains he purchased from Oscar's dad. Oscar often visits Mr. Applegate and the bank after hours and enjoys the trains with him. One night the bank is robbed, Oscar jumps to avoid being shot by the robbers and finds himself on the electric train and his time-traveling journey begins.

This is a hidden gem. Trains, time travel, history, and interesting characters all tied into one. Rosemary Wells has done a great job incorporating U.S history and fantasy in this book. Train lovers will be impressed by the amount of detail the author used to describe the trains. Oscar meets people on his journey whose names have stood the test of time. (John P. Morgan, Nelson Rockefeller, Joe Kennedy just to name a few) He will travel to 1941 California after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the draft is in full effect, then back to 1926 when no one believed Franklin Roosevelt could become president. The author doesn't go into details about these events so the story doesn't feel gloomy. I felt the story was very delightful and entertaining. A great buy for ages 9-12

Recommended Titles

Rodzina, by Karen Cushman

The School Train, by Helen Acker

Orphan Train Girl (Young Readers Edition of Orphan Train), by Christina Baker Kline

