

Rodzina**Karen Cushman****Reviewed by: Rachel Johnson, 42****Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**www.bethestaryouare.org

Rodzina is a 12-year-old girl whose family is from Poland. Her father, mother and brothers have all died and she is left an orphan. She was homeless on the streets of Chicago before being taken in by a local orphanage. Soon after arriving at the orphanage, she and a group of other children must board a train heading west in hopes of finding a family. Rodzina has heard stories of families buying children to turn into slaves and she has no interest in going, but she has no choice.

Rodzina meets Miss Doctor and Mr. Szprot at the train depot and finds out they will look after the kids on the journey and help them find homes. She is not fond of either. She is the oldest and given the task of watching over some of the younger children. The journey is long and uncomfortable. Children are examined and placed with families at different stops. Rodzina is chosen a couple of times along the journey but the families are not a good fit. Along the way Rodzina learns interesting things about the adults and children she is traveling with. All Rodzina wants is a family that wants her, but she is not sure about her future.

This story is a historical fiction that depicts the Orphan Trains that ran from the late 1800s thru the early 1900s in the United States. The characters are believable with their own unique stories. Throughout the story you are introduced to polish words which are then translated at the end of the book. Most of the story takes place aboard the train, giving descriptions of what the long journey is like, the children's past struggles and their current fears. Parents should be aware that there is an instance in the story where one man thinks he can take 12-year-old Rodzina as his wife and mother to his children, and another where she recalls men making sexual suggestions to her when she was homeless. There are adults smoking and drinking. The story closes with a happy conclusion, although the topic is sad. This book would make a great gift because it gives young people a chance to learn about a period in American history. I would recommend it to 12+

Recommended Titles

Girl in the Blue Coat, by Monica Heese

The Book Thief, by Marcus Zusak

In Alexa's Shoes, by Rochelle Alexander