

A Family Apart: A 5th Grade Literacy Focus Unit

Created by: Kathryn Moore



FEATURED SELECTION

A Family Apart by Joan Lowery Nixon. New York: Random House Children's Books, 1995.

So what happens when all of the sudden a mother can no longer take care of her children? When the Kelly children's widowed mother realizes that she can no longer care for all of her six children, the Children's Aid Society puts them on the orphan train which takes them to live in rural Missouri. These children have never been out of the state of New York and this trip proves to be quite an adventure. One by one each child is adopted by a new family. Throughout this separation Frances comes to understand why their mother split up their family, and how she did it out of love.

RELATED MATERIALS

- *Caught in the Act* by Joan Lowery Nixon. New York: Random House Children's Books, 1996.
 - This is the second book in the Orphan Train Adventure series. This book focuses on the second oldest child introduced in *A Family Apart*.
- *Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story* by Andrea Warmen. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.
 - This book not only gives facts about the Orphan Train, but it also provides a detailed description of Lee Nailling's trip to Texas via the orphan train.
- *Orphan Train* by Verla Kay. New York: Penguin Young Readers Group, 2003.
 - This book introduces the idea of brothers and sisters being separated and sent to live with different families in an easy to read format.
- *Beyond the Orphan Train* by Donna Nordmark Aviles. Boston: Wasteland Press, 2004.
 - This book introduces challenges encountered by children who take the Orphan Train west, then leave their adopted families. It describes the struggles of a boy who did just this in order to find his brother who he was separated from.
- *Orphan Trains: Placing out in America* by Marilyn Irvin Holt. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.

- This book is meant to enhance the reader's knowledge of the Orphan Trains. It helps describe how the west has become what it is today through the orphans brought over on the Orphan Trains.

GOALS:

- Students will gain knowledge about the Orphan Train was.
- Students will study land forms that the Kelly children encountered on their trip west.
- Students will discuss the differences between modern medicine and how illnesses were treated back in the early 1900's.
- Students will grow to appreciate music from the 1930's.
- Students will be able to describe the Kelly children's experiences and emotions throughout the book.

STANDARDS:

5.2.3 Recognize main ideas presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.

5.3.3 Name and locate states, regions, major cities and capitals, major rivers, and mountain ranges in the United States.

5.3.5 Describe the function and effect of common literacy devices, such as imagery metaphors, and symbolization.

5.4.6 Create simple documents using a computer and employing organizational features, such as passwords, entry and pull-down menus, word searches, thesauruses, and spell check.

5.7.7 Make precise calculations and check the validity of the results in the context of the problem.

UNIT PLAN

Pre-reading

Activity: Teacher reads *Orphan Train* by Vera Kay to students. (Listening) Introduce the idea of the Orphan Train. After reading the book, the teacher will talk about the time that the Orphan train took place in, focusing on how games that the children played are different than they are today. Students will then go outside and play the game "Kick the Can." (Physical Education) Grouping: whole group

Reading

Activity: Teacher will read first chapter aloud to the class, stopping periodically to check for comprehension. Then the students will be expected to read 2 chapters a night as homework, and complete a double-entry journal for each reading.

Responding

Activities:

- After each two chapters the students will be expected to complete and turn in a double-entry journal. In this they will list significant parts of the reading and explain why it is important.
Grouping: Individual
- Students will write a short book review. (written) Grouping: Individual

Exploring

Activities:

- Students will write letters to the editor of the local news paper asking for people that had ridden the orphan train in their youth to write them back. (Written) Grouping: individual.
- Review the book, discuss how treatments of illnesses differ from modern medicine today. (Science)
- Research, using the internet, about the Orphan Train.

Applying

Activities:

- Discuss how the children had never been out of the state of New York. What land features did they encounter on their trip out there?
- In small groups have students make 3D relief maps of the physical land features of the United States; include the states of New York and Missouri. (Social Studies)
- Using a map scale determine the distance the children traveled then check the accuracy via mapquest.com. (Math)
- While the children are working on their relief maps the teacher will play Louis Armstrong music in the background. (Music)
- Have students write then read a Haiku poem about the experiences that the children overcame. (Oral)

TIME SCHEDULE

<u>Day 1</u> Teacher will read related book.	<u>Day 2</u> Teacher will read the 1 st chapter of <i>A family Apart</i> aloud. Discuss games that kids played. Go outside and play kick the	<u>Day 3</u> Discuss chapters read for the day. Write letters to the editor of the paper. Listen to Louis Armstrong music while	<u>Day 4</u> Discuss chapters read for the day. Discuss landforms that the children would have encountered. Begin making	<u>Day 5</u> Discuss chapters read for the day. Continue to work on relief map. Discuss how many miles. Ask each group to try and
---	--	--	---	--

	can. Assign chapters 2-3, and a double-entry journal.	writing letters. Assign chapters 4-5, and a double-entry journal.	relief maps. Assign chapters 6-7, and a double-entry journal.	determine how many miles the Kelly children traveled. Then check accuracy via mapquest.com. Turn in calculation. Assign chapters 8-9, and a double-entry journal.
<u>Day 6</u> Discuss chapters read for the day. Begin to discuss how they treated illnesses in the early 1900's. How is it different from modern medicine? Write a paragraph about how treatment is different today from what it was. Assign chapters 10-11, and a double entry journal.	<u>Day 7</u> Discuss chapters read for the day. Turn in paragraphs. Finish relief maps. Assign chapters 12-13, and a double entry journal.	<u>Day 8</u> Discuss first the chapters read for the day, then how the students felt about the book. Have students write a Haiku poem about the Kelly children's experiences. Homework: have students finish poem and write a short review of the book.	<u>Day 9</u> Have students read Haiku poems. Turn in double-entry journals, poems, and their book review.	<u>Day 10</u> Turn in books. Read letters received back.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST:

- _____ A copy of their letter
- _____ Mile calculation
- _____ Relief map
- _____ Medicine Paragraph
- _____ Haiku poem
- _____ Book review
- _____ Double-entry journal