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Based on a True Story: Nettie and Nellie Crook: Orphan Train Sisters

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Book Review

Title: Based on a True Story: Nettie and Nellie

Crook: Orphan Train Sisters

Author: E. F. Abbott (Susan Hill)

Illustrator: Clint Hansen

Reviewer: Ashley Roggow

Publisher: Feiwel and Friends

Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9781250068354

Number of Pages: 176

Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent



Review

Twin sisters Nettie and Nellie Crook, the main characters and narrators of this story, are taken away from their parents in 1910 when they are only five years old. They are not really sure why. Then they are placed in an orphanage around the age of six where they are put on an orphan train that carries children around the country to meet new prospective parents. While on the train, they see and meet other children and watch as others are picked from by potential parents, including a pair of siblings who are separated, which leaves them afraid for their future. They are moved from their home in New York City to Kansas, where they find a potential forever home but soon realize that they were not wanted as children but more like little servants to the household. When they are removed from that home, they are moved to South Dakota and placed in another home with another family. Finally, the girls have found their forever home.

The writing and dialogue in this book are rather simple, allowing the reader to see things through the eyes and mind of a child and share her experiences. Throughout the story, Nettie and Nellie face many hardships and experience hope and fear. They see other children on the train and watch as they are taken to new homes and split up. Nettie and Nellie's travel from state to state and their story of endurance and love is inspiring. The sisters have a very close relationship, and even have their own secret way of saying "I love you." Children with siblings will especially like the story and be able to relate to it. Nettie and Nellie Crook: Orphan Train Sisters contains illustrated drawings as well as real authentic photographs of the sisters, the Orphan Train, stations, a map of their route, and other photographs from the early 1900s. The photos are interesting to look at and children are eager to see what life was like back then. This is a very good book for older children as those younger than six or seven years may not understand many of the situations the Crook sisters face. A great selection for older elementary children to middle grade who want to know more about interesting events in American history during the early 1900s.