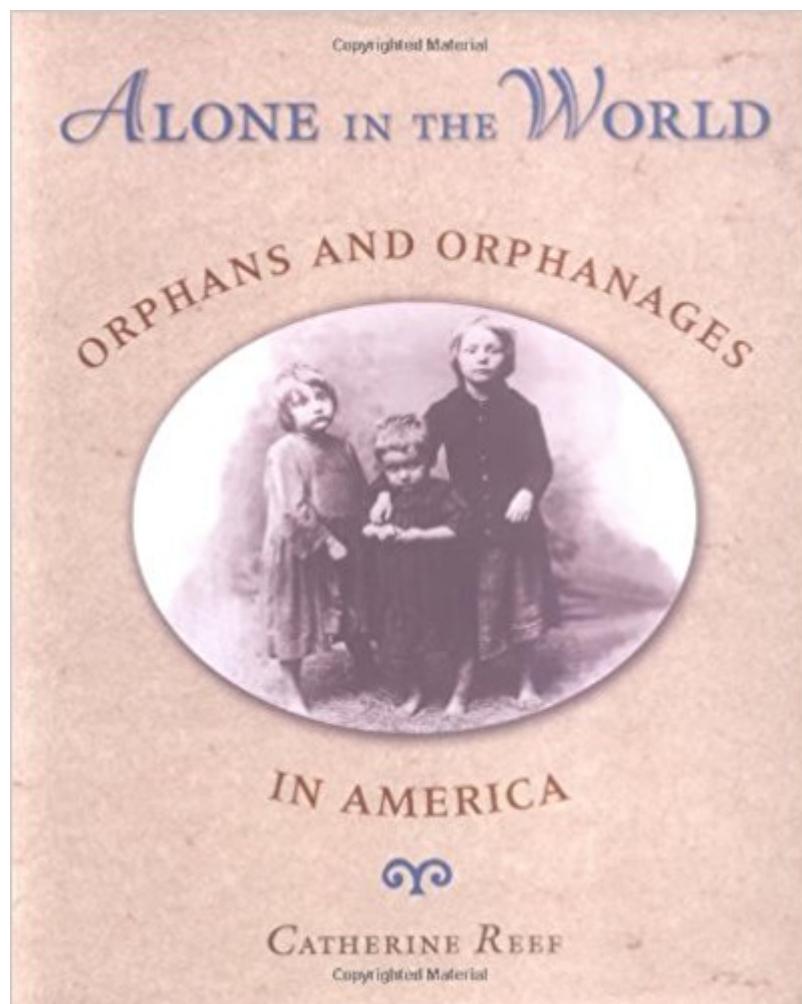


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# Alone In The World: Orphans And Orphanages In America



## Synopsis

Orphanages and other homes for children have long fueled the imaginations and fantasies of young people. In the first book of its kind, award-winning nonfiction author Catherine Reef uncovers the true history of orphanages, revealing what it was like to eat, sleep, study, and play in such institutions, why children were sent to live there in the first place (not always because their parents were dead), what happened to them after they left, and more. Carefully researched and vividly brought to life through accessible writing, first-hand accounts, and more than 70 compelling archival photographs and prints, this intriguing piece of our country's history should satisfy all curiosity seekers. Endnotes, bibliography, index.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5-8  
"Orphans and orphanages, although topics of interest in children's fiction, have been neglected in nonfiction except for accounts of the orphan trains of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This gap has now been filled by Reef's thoroughly researched history of children's homes in the U.S. beginning in 1729, when a place for girls was founded in New Orleans. The author relates how many orphaned or impoverished children were consigned to almshouses, where they often lived in filthy, crowded conditions with criminals and the mentally ill. In the 1820s and 1830s, the view that children should be given "asylum" from the horrors of the poorhouses became widely accepted. Reef also discusses the homes opened for orphaned soldiers' and sailors' children throughout the country following the Civil War and a 1909 White House conference that resulted in a national policy urging that children be kept in their own homes by

providing financial aid to their widowed or deserted mothers. She ends with a discussion of the challenges the U.S. faces today in caring for growing numbers of homeless, abused, or neglected children. Illustrated with archival photographs and reproductions, this book contains numerous endnotes and an extensive selected bibliography. An afterword detailing the later lives of some of the children included makes a satisfying conclusion to this fascinating account. An important historical resource for public and school libraries. —Ginny Gustin, Sonoma County Library System, Santa Rosa, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 8-11. What happened to kids in America's poorhouses, orphanages, and foster homes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries makes for intensely dramatic history, and a few readers might even imagine themselves caught in Oliver Twist scenarios, suffering hunger, racism, and abuse. Reef has certainly done her research, providing exhaustive detail, which is thoroughly documented in endnotes. The book's design is also inviting, with clear type and stirring photos and historic prints. The narrative, however, is distant and dull, a general chronological account that patches together case records and rules of various institutions, perhaps because, as Reef points out, few kids wrote the kind of personal memoirs that might have made the history more immediate. Even so, there's a lot to talk about here, especially the changing image of childhood and the role of government in caring for the needy. Hazel RochmanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

It came today and is in great condition for a used book. It is just what I need to supplement my genealogy quest as my adopted and my bio fathers were both grew up in orphanages in New York along with their siblings. This book gives me an idea of what it was like for orphans in the late 1800's and early 1900's. It also has information on poorhouses (almshouses), asylums, etc. It was a very difficult time for young orphaned children, juvenile delinquents, and the mentally ill. There are wonderful photos, too.

I received this book yesterday so it has been a couple of weeks since I ordered. The book is a nice and in very good shape. I wanted to know more about the orphanages in America during this time period. I feel that I found a treasure because this is exactly what I was trying to find.

Had no idea about the Orphan Train; so sad. Learned a lot about history from this book.

As a final project for my daughter's Oliver Twist book study, she needed to do research on orphans & write a paper & give a presentation. This book was very helpful for her.

helpful information for the book I am writing

What was it like to grow up in an orphanage? Where did kids sleep, and what was daily life like? Catherine Reef's *Alone In The World: Orphans And Orphanages In America* is the first book devoted solely to orphan history, culture, attitudes, and lifestyle. First-hand accounts blend with over seventy archival photos and prints to accompany a history of the institutions that grew to address the needs of orphans, from asylum children to solder's orphans. A unique social history recommended for grades 4-6.

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