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The Boxcar Children Beginning: The Aldens Of Fair Meadow Farm



Synopsis

Before they were the Boxcar Children, Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden lived with their parents at Fair Meadow Farm. Newbery-Award winning author Patricia MacLachlan pays loving tribute to the classic novel by Gertrude Chandler Warner in this story of the Alden children's origins and the challenges they faced before their boxcar adventures.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 420 (What's this?)

Series: Boxcar Children Beginning

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Albert Whitman & Company; Dgs edition (September 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807566179

ISBN-13: 978-0807566176

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 5.2 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (58 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #47,356 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #80 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s #91 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > Farm Life #258 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Parents

Age Range: 7 - 9 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

Customer Reviews

Reason for Reading: I am reading and collecting the first 19 original books by Gertrude Chandler Warner. I usually don't read modern prequels or continuations such as this (I didn't go anywhere near the Anne of Green Gables prequel!) but MacLachlan is a widely respected, award winning author whom I've read before so after a little consideration I thought I would give this a go. MacLachlan is a good writer who especially does the historical very well. The year is never given, but going from the first BC book, this must be set in the early 40s. These are "hard times" and the Aldens live a simple life and the book tells the daily life of a simple family. There is slight drama to the plot but mostly it is a series of events that lead up to what the reader knows will be coming, the death of their parents and the turning of the children into orphans. This is all dealt with very

gently and "not a big deal". No one should come into this book not having read their share of Boxcar Children Mysteries; this story is not to make one sad as one already knows the grand future of these children. MacLachlan has managed to keep Warner's simple style of writing while maintaining a quality work something she is well known for in her original work. Overall, I didn't really find this story adding anything that needed to be told. It is a simple book, not the beginning of a new series and does not add to the Alden Family canon. I'm sure it will sell well initially, but has nothing to sustain its longevity. A slow, gentle story, without much happening, no mystery and simply a preface to the opening chapter of the original Boxcar Children written in 1942.

What a coincidence! Just recently, my kids and I found a well-read copy of Boxcar Children #2: Surprise Island. They read it again. My daughters are grown, but one said that she always wanted to know what Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny did before the first book. Who were their friends? What were their parents like? I always wondered why the Alden kids were so sure that their grandpa wouldn't help them. Then two weeks later, this prequel came to our home. Since she loved the series so much (especially the first book), my daughter still isn't sure, after reading, whether Gertrude Chandler Warner would have agreed with MacLachlan's picture of the Alden's early lives. Since I read the book for the first time, as a mom, I don't have the attachment to the original that my kids do. I think that MacLachlan captured the resourcefulness, the sharing, and fun of the original series. This story presents how their personalities and talents started on Fair Meadow Farm: Jessie's responsible planning, Benny's love of new friends and dogs, Violet's knack with thread and paint, and Henry's love of adventure and leadership.*This book was received for review, this in no way affects my opinion*

The Boxcar Children had always been a large part of my life. From reading one of the first editions at my Grandmother's house to starting my own collection, the Aldens had grown up with me, like they were a part of my family. One of the questions that had always nagged at me was what happened to their parents, their old home? I've read two versions of the first book and neither of them mention what happened to the parents or why they're scared of/despise this Grandfather that they never met. This book satisfies that curiosity. The only problem I have with it is that the writing style is so different from Gertrude Chandler Warner's own style that it's hard to ignore. I'm not saying that its bad, but being a writer myself I can recognize different writing styles and it takes away from the otherwise excellent story. Boxcar Children fans will certainly enjoy learning about how four children came to stand in front of a bakery and learn about what happened on Fair

Meadow Farm and the secret origin of The Boxcar Children.

The original Boxcar Children (book #1) is one of the most beautiful books in all of children's literature. You've got to love Patricia MacLachlan for caring enough about these wonderful characters to go to the trouble and effort to research and write a prequel. One negative: most of the book is about the Alden's relationship with a family who never appears again in their lives (I presume: I've only read Boxcar Children #1.) Although the relationship says a lot about the character of their parents, and is a beautiful story in and of itself, it's a bit of a disconnection from the events which matter to the rest of the series (i.e., that the children become orphaned and end up living self-sufficiently in a boxcar in order to keep the family together, out of an orphanage). But MacLachlan stayed true to Gertrude Warner Chandler's voice and vision, and for that she deserves praise. A few reviewers have not liked the fact that the book has a sad ending -- but there is no way around that when the book's primary purpose is to explain how the children came to be orphans. I mean, duh! There is no way to write a prequel which does not end with the death of the parents! What is important is that MacLachlan's overall emphasis is not on death but on the type of family life which molded these four children into such wonderful, responsible, loving human beings. Anyway. Only read this book if you loved Boxcar Children #1 and are curious about how one author imagines the backstory. One review complains that this book is not the way to begin the series, and I agree: don't begin your reading of the Boxcar Children with THIS book! If you don't already love and respect these children, you likely will not find this book interesting enough.

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