

THINKING WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Video: Thievin' Theo

Plot

(cliffhanger pattern of action and person-against-self conflict)

Jackson likes to learn about events that happened to children long ago. After visiting the Historical Society Museum, he wanted to learn more about the Orphan Trains that traveled through his town during the early 1900s. He went to the library and checked out the book, *Aboard the Orphan Train* to read about Eli and his adventure.

Now it's **Your Turn!** Read ***Aboard the Orphan Train***. Create your own *Think Aloud*.

Then compare your thinking with **Jackson's Think Aloud**.



Before You Read:

Think about what you may already know about adoption of children who have no parents. Think about what you've learned about plot. Share your thoughts with your family and friends.

While You Read:

Ask your parent, brother, sister, or friend to read this passage with you. Look for words that can help you determine the action and conflict in the plot. You may want to highlight the action in orange and the conflict in green. (You may use any color available to you – just remember your color scheme!)

After You Read:

- Think about how determining the pattern of action and type of conflict in this story help you to better understand its plot.
- Discuss your ideas with your family or friends.
- Together, create a collaborative Think Aloud about how you used the pattern of action and type of conflict to determine the plot of *Aboard the Orphan Train*. Share your *thinking* with each other.

Aboard the Orphan Train

It was 1917. Eli Porter gripped his small satchel and followed the other children onto what he'd heard called the "Orphan Train."

He'd been told that the ride would be long. The train would leave New York City filled with orphans, looking for a new home. At stops along the way, men and women from the towns would gather. Some would be eager welcome a child into their family. Others sought a child who could help on the farm or with housework.

When Eli's own parents had died, he'd been sent to Saint John's Orphanage. Heartbroken, he'd run away more than once. Each time, he was found and sent back.

"That boy's a runner, isn't he?" the gardener said to Sister Maria.

"Eli misses his parents. He needs time to adjust to life without them," Sister Maria said.

A few months later, Sister Maria told the children about the Orphan Train. The children were excited about the opportunity to meet new parents. Eli however, was wary.

"What if they're cruel? What if all they want me for is work?" he worried.

As the train rolled through the countryside, Eli fidgeted, his stomach in knots. "I'm not taking chances," he decided. "When this train stops, I'm running away."

A few days later, the Orphan Train slowed to a halt. Eli saw a crowd waiting at the station. He grabbed the satchel from under his seat, and waited for the train doors to open. "With this crowd, it'll be easy to escape," he thought to himself.

Just then, Eli glanced out the train window and noticed a man and woman looking at him. The man tipped his hat and the woman waved. Both smiled at him, and their eyes were kind. Eli swallowed, shuffling his worn boots.

The train door opened, and the youngest children were ushered out. Eli hung back, last in line. He scanned the fields and woods where he could hide out, but then he saw the man and woman walking toward him. With his heart racing, Eli made his move.





Compare Your Think Aloud With Jackson's Think Aloud:

Jackson's Think Aloud: When I read that the story began in 1917 and that Eli is boarding the Orphan Train, I know the setting is unfamiliar to me. I want to read more to find out why Eli is going on the train and what happens on the trip. I know the plot will help me to figure this out.

To try to figure out the pattern of action, I'm thinking about the series of events in the story, or the rising action. The first event happened when Eli's parents died and he was sent to live in an orphanage. I know Eli must be very sad when I read that he was "heartbroken." I'm also thinking that he didn't like it there when I read, "he'd run away more than once."

The next event happened when Sister Maria told the children about the Orphan Train. I'm thinking that Eli wasn't as excited to meet new parents as the other children when I read, "Eli, however, was wary." When I read his questions, I knew he is worried about what new parents might be like. I continued reading and then I understand just how worried Eli is when I read that he "fidgeted" and that his stomach was "in knots."

The third event happened when the Orphan Train pulled into the station. I'm thinking that the crowd had gathered to adopt the children. When I read that Eli plans to escape, I know that he has a plan to get away from all the people so he doesn't get new parents. As Eli looked out the window, I'm happy to read that a "man tipped his hat" and "the woman waved." These are both friendly gestures. Maybe Eli will find a happy home! Eli has worn boots. Perhaps he is really poor, but the man and woman may be able to help him. I'm thinking that this is a person-against-self conflict because Eli is trying to decide what to do. When I read the word "shuffling," I know that he's not sure.

In the last paragraph, I'm thinking the high point must be when the man and woman are walking toward Eli despite the fact that he is the last one to leave the train. They must want to adopt him because they were willing to wait for him to finally leave the train. Since the author states that Eli's heart is racing as he makes his move, I am left wondering if he will run or accept the friendly gestures of the man and woman. This is definitely a cliffhanger pattern of action because there is no resolution! If Eli chooses to stay with the man and woman, I hope they are as kind as they seem in the story.

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Questions to Think About:

- How does Jackson use the events of the story to determine the pattern of action?
- How did the high point of the story reveal the type of conflict found in this plot?
- Why might this process help you to understand plot?
- When might this process be useful?