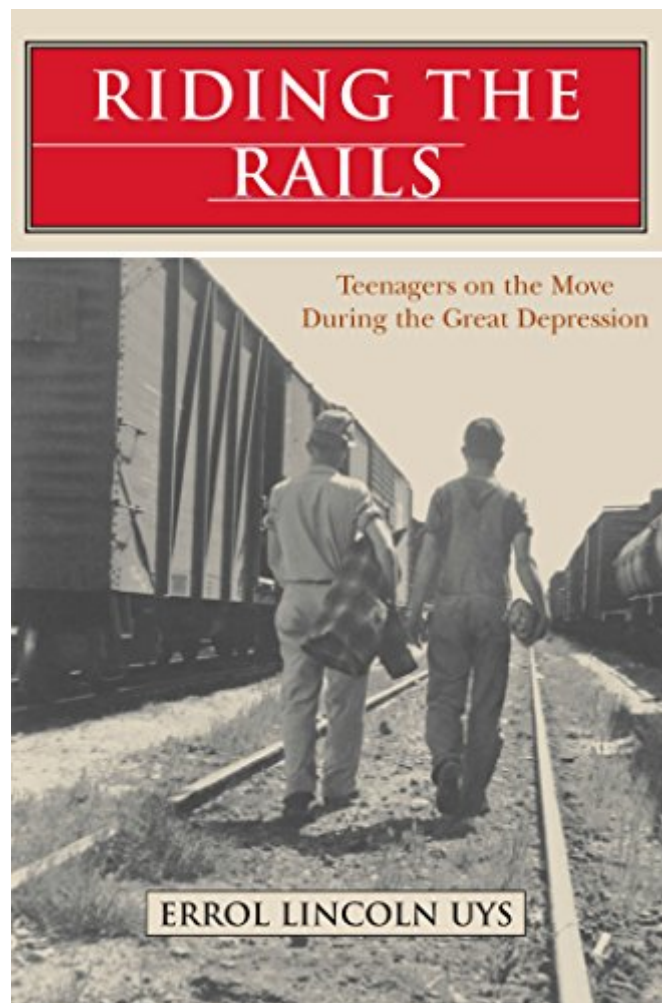




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Riding The Rails: Teenagers On The Move During The Great Depression



Synopsis

During the Great Depression, more than 250,000 children left their homes and hopped freight trains crisscrossing the United States. They were looking for work and adventure; some wanted to leave their homes, and some had to. They grew up in speeding boxcars, living in hobo jungles, begging on the streets, and running from the police and club-wielding railroad guards. The restless youth of these boxcar boys and girls, many who went from 'middle-class gentility to dirt poor' overnight, is recaptured in *Riding the Rails: Teenagers on the Move During the Great Depression*. This unforgettable narrative dispels the myths of a hobo existence and reveals the hard stories of a daring generation of American teenagers - forgotten heroes - who survived some of the hardest times in our nation's history. Drawn from 3,000 oral histories and illustrated with over fifty black and white photos from the National Archives and Library of Congress.

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Customer Reviews

I am halfway through this book and don't want it to end. It is the story of a dark passage in our history, the Great Depression. It was a time when money and food were so scarce that families

asked boys as young as twelve or fourteen to head out to fend for themselves. Others left voluntarily to ease the burden on their parents, and still others left for a chance to see the country. Girls, often dressed as boys, joined their ranks. Uys has done a masterful job of putting this book together so it flows. While narrating, he combines memories of the youths who took to the rails as children growing up all too fast. Interspersed are memoirs of many, now elderly, who put pen to paper to tell their stories. The author paints a clear picture of the reality that was the Great Depression, the hobo jungles that sprang up, the life of the migrant workers, all reminiscent of Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath." Only here it is more searing. These are no fictional characters, these are real life stories depicting great suffering as well as fond memories created. The stories of those to whom the rails still call. Don't miss this memorable book. There is also a documentary film based on the book which is available from .

After seeing the documentary "Riding the Rails" as an episode of The American Experience series on PBS, I read this companion book authored by the father / father-in-law of the couple who made the film. Using statistics, vignettes, first person narrative accounts, and 54 black and white photos, the book creates a vivid impression of the lives of hundreds of thousands of American teenagers who, looking for work, or seeking adventure, or in an effort to ease the burden on their families, left their homes during the Depression and hopped trains to travel the country, living as hobos in the 1930s. Surprisingly, the tale contains many lessons that remain relevant today. This is the story of a generation of Americans for whom growing up meant preparing themselves for the road rather than having the road prepared for them. It's a reminder of how important everything can be in one's youth, when everything is still recent enough to seem important and matter. There are some heartbreakingly sad accounts of people who blamed themselves personally for the struggles and financial hardships which resulted from the collapse of an economic structure that they had no control over, that was beyond understanding, and which had failed them in so many ways. Those who succeeded were those who managed to cling to hope, or who encountered someone who took an interest at a critical time, or maybe were just lucky that at least a president like Roosevelt was in charge. After seeing the film, I found this volume to be quite intense and well worth the read. (Note: I read the 1999 hardcover edition published by TV Books which only had about half a dozen typos -- on pages 58, 60, 189, 199, 232, 243...)

This is an excellent study of an overlooked bit of US history. Well researched, engagingly written, and well illustrated. For instance it has one of the better descriptions of the CCC program during the

Great Depression; and haunting views of what could have gone wrong among American youth. A must read - cogent for our current national situation.

Gave you an excellent account of the depression and hardships of being young and away from home either through choice or desperation

Uys' compilation of interviews is an eye opening read for anyone interested in how history reflects the present. As our country experiences dire economic hardship at this time, *Riding the Rails* reflects the best and the worst of the people and the societal atmosphere during The Great Depression. With its focus on teens, we learn of the desperate poverty that forced droves of young people to leave home during the 30's in hope of finding job opportunities and a better life somewhere down the tracks. Likewise, we read accounts from teens who, looking for the adventure and romance found in travel novels of the time, took to the rails only to learn some sobering realities. Regardless of thier reasons for leaving, each of Uys' interviewees carry with them lifelong lessons and impressions of humanity that influence the course of thier lives into adulthood. As an English graduate student, I depend on for all of my text purchases. I have never been disappointed in any product I have received.

My father, as a young man, rode the rails from Massachusetts to California. He didn't talk much about it. Reading this book helped me realize the hard times he faced during the Great Depression and the possible people and places he encountered moving West.

Incredible stories of teens (now senior citizens) who traveled the US on the railroads-and lived to tell about it. Some tales are breathtaking, but there's a hopeful undercurrent of "if I can make it through today, tomorrow will be better."The book was also made into an excellent, Peabody Award winning documentary available from Netflix,etc.

I applaud the author for providing very interesting content on a subject that doesn't get much attention. However, it began to feel like the same story over and over again as we learned about various individuals. And the flow was choppy. Still worth a read, though, as it certainly taught me something that I didn't already know.

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