

Additional Discussion Questions about *Orphan Train*

- 1) Explain how foreshadowing in the prologue either detracts from the novel's suspense, or how it furnishes a helpful outline for Kline's audience to refer back to while reading.

- 2) Why does Kline not add any more details about Vivian's marriage to Jim Daly for more than 50 years?

- 3) How do the repeated references to *Anne of Green Gables* and *Jane Eyre* make *The Orphan Train* an example of the self-aware, post-modern literary device known as metafiction and the figure of the speech known as *mise-en-abyme*?

- 4) Is portage an appropriate metaphor that encompasses both Vivian and Molly's experiences; or alternatively, is it a cumbersome reach made appropriate only by Molly's Native American heritage? In other words, does attributing too many shared parallel circumstances to both women come off as a contrived literary device? Cite several examples to explain your viewpoint.

- 5) Social historians have criticized the Children's Aid Society's practice of placing Roman Catholic children with Protestant families while 19th-and early 20th-century social reformers saw these placements as an important part of integrating immigrant children into the American melting pot. How does Kline-Baker work this criticism into the novel? Is Kline's depiction of this a little forced given the Powers family's nominal Roman Catholicism?

- 6) Why or why not does the happy ending of *The Orphan Train* ring true?

- 7) Make a list of the stereotypes *Orphan Train* mentions; for example, when Vivian marries Dutchy, the characters frequently comment that musicians, and presumably other creative, artistic types are disorganized and not very good at math while making Molly and Vivian's dads alcoholics perpetuates Irish and Native American stereotypes.

- 8) How do external changes in makeup and dress symbolize the internal changes Molly and Vivian go through as they adapt to what others expect of them?

- 9) How does today's foster system and adoption policies improve upon the treatment of orphans during this social experiment? How could they improve?