



## Mercy Train

*Rae Meadows*

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A rich, luminous novel of three remarkable women connected across a century by a family secret and by the fierce brilliance of their love.

Samantha's mother has been dead almost a year when the box arrives on her doorstep. In it, she finds recipe cards, keepsakes, letters—relics of her mother Iris's past. But as Sam sifts through these family treasures, she uncovers evidence that her grandmother, Violet, had a much more difficult childhood than she could have ever imagined. And Sam, a struggling new mother herself, begins to see her own burdens in a completely different light.

Moving from the tempered calm of contemporary Madison, Wisconsin to the seedy underbelly of early twentieth century New York, we come face to face with a haunting piece of America's past: From 1854 to 1929 orphan trains from New York transported 150,000 to 200,000 destitute, orphaned or abandoned children across the country to find homes on farms in the Midwest.

Rae Meadows takes us on our own journey of discovery in *Mercy Train* (*originally published as Mothers & Daughters*), an affecting and wonderfully woven novel about three generations of motherhood, family, and the surprising sacrifices we make for the people we love.

## Mercy Train Details

Date : Published May 8th 2012 by St. Martins Press-3pl (first published 2011)

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Author : Rae Meadows

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## **From Reader Review Mercy Train for online ebook**

### **Lori says**

I can only give the book "Mercy Train" a three and barely at that. I wanted to read this book because it mentioned that one of the characters Violet rode the orphan train when she was 11 years old in 1900. The parts with Violet were good and interesting. I liked her plot line. Instead it goes between three characters' point of view. Violets, Iris, daughter of Violet, and Samantha daughter of Iris. I was disappointed that Samantha knew almost nothing of her grandmother. and neither Iris or Samantha knew about Violet and how she rode the orphan train. {Samantha found out only after Iris died and found a box of items from Violet} the readers know when they read Violet's story. I would have liked it if the ONLY CHARACTER that had most of the storyline would have been Violet. I could have cared less about Iris or Samantha. Both of these characters were boring and not fleshed out very much to be of interest. Very disappointed in this book. Even the cover of this book is confusing who the heck are the two kids on the cover? this could have been so much better if the author had stuck with the Violet plot line.

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### **Carla says**

Wonderful generational story of women. Because I've read several books on the orphan trains, I was glad it wasn't all about that again. I note that others perhaps who hadn't read books on the orphan trains, wanted more though!

This is a story more about the grandmother, mother and daughter and the secrets that are/were kept, and how they impacted all of them. Beautifully written book with wonderful character development.

I heard Rae Meadows speak at the Wisconsin Book Festival, and she was a gracious humble speaker who engaged quickly with her audience. I recently read her latest book first and truly enjoyed it as well. I look forward to anything she will write in the future!

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### **Diane S ? says**

Three generations of mothers and daughter are featured in this novel. Samantha, with a young daughter of her own, is dealing with her own personal crisis, when she is sent a mystery box that contains her grandmothers history. She can use this history and learn from it, gain strength and find a way through her own life. In 1854 through 1929, many children including Samantha's grandmother roamed the streets of New York, forging their own families with other children and trying to survive on their own. Mercy or orphan trains actually transported 150,000 to 200,000 children to the countryside of the Midwest. What I never knew was that they made it virtually impossible for these children's parents to ever find them again. Really heartbreaking for those who just had parents who could not temporarily take care of them but hoped to reclaim them one day. Poignant read.

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### **Debbie says**

Samantha finds herself on a precipice, her role as mother has been her end all but now it's time to return to her work, but her potter's wheel remains dust covered as she instead breaks open a seal to mementos discovered from her mother who died two years prior. As she goes through the items both foreign and familiar, she finds things from both her mother Iris and her grandmother Violet which opens a new path of discovery for Sam, a discovery of two women who she should have known deeper, a discovery that could lead to answers of how she copes with life, love and loss, a discovery of why her relationship with her mother was like it was, a discovery of how all of these things could have been molded even before she was born and a mystery she now finds she needs to solve.

Iris is dying of cancer and she's ready to go. Knowing her daughter is coming to see her off on her final journey is both troubling and comforting because there are things that she's never revealed, things that she knows she should have told Sam, but then the relationship between she and her own mother was always full of things left unsaid.

Violet finds herself a mostly motherless child on the wild streets of New York City at the turn of the 20th century. Her mother unable to cope with Violet or life itself sends Violet on a train that will change her life. From that ride on the Mercy Train Violet will discover things about herself and the world that both please and worry her, the ride will shape her life and her relationships with others even those who should be closest to her, that ride will shape not only her life but the lives of future generations.

Rae Meadows brought me a poignant look at how the past shapes the future, how nature as well as nurture have as much to do with how we live and look at life as anything does. She brings me a story of three women daughter, mother and grandmother who's lives reflect that beautifully, she shows how the cycle of secrets change lives and not always for the better and how that cycle can be altered by love and enlightening and looking inside one's own heart. How one woman can learn from the accomplishments as well as the failures of generations past to better not only her own future but the relationship that will evolve between she and her own daughter. She discloses things historically accurate about the Orphan Trains that traveled with unsuspecting yet hopeful children from NYC to our heartlands.

Mercy Train is a mix of historical and contemporary, literary and women's fiction with a narrative that took me right inside the pages to the scenes created by the imaginative mind of the author, she acquaints me intimately with her characters and kept me reading through chores and bedtime because I couldn't not know what happens next. However if you're looking for that read that answers your every question I'm afraid you won't get that here as Ms. Meadows leaves certain possibilities open to her audience which of Please check out the Q&A with the author <http://bookclubs.barnesandnoble.com/t...>

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### **Chelsie says**

Another great read by this author, told through the eyes of three generations of women in one family. Another look into orphan trains and the over run rampant children of New York.

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### **Lisa Forseen says**

Having coincidentally just finished The Chaperone, which happens to be about the same subject matter, I could not help but compare the two. I found this book a bit undeveloped...the characters and story lines for each one just seemed to be lacking. In fact, when I got to the last page, I was left with a sense of "that's it?". It was as if the author was given a word limit and hadn't thought the story out so had to wrap it up in 2 pages.

Lots of unanswered questions...

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### **Stefania says**

Un bel romanzo, non posso nascondere che mi abbia coinvolto e che sia scritto molto bene. Purtroppo però me lo aspettavo più profondo e mi immaginavo un libro che si fermasse ai primi del Novecento e che descrivesse più a fondo la povertà di famiglie costrette (o no) ad abbandonare dei figli su quei "Treni" con i conseguenti destini. Avrei apprezzato di più un romanzo sulle vite che ad essi erano collegate.

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### **Mycah says**

The idea for this book is fascinating. I was mislead by the summary, which portrays a story of a young mother sifting through her mother's belongings and discovering a family history no one but her Grandmother knew about. It takes more than 1/2 the book for her to open the box of her Mother's belongings, and the rest of the book too look through them. She finds clues, which are great, but at no point does she actually discover anything about her family. We, as readers, know the backstory, because Mrs. Meadows told us what really happened. There was also a lot of filler, such as Samantha following the prostitute, that doesn't add any significance to the story whatsoever. I do like the differing perspectives we get from Violet, Iris, and Samantha.

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### **Dianna Shimizu says**

I had high hopes for this story, but ended up disappointed.

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### **ELDEE says**

I had read The Orphan Train earlier and was glad that this one was a different approach. This highlighted a very poignant chapter in U.S. history. It is hard to imagine that happening in our culture today. We don't know poor! I enjoyed Rae's writing but found the activities of each member in their chapters somewhat hard to follow. Ex.: I couldn't always tell the stage of Iris's health and is Ella born at this stage of Samantha's life. It was cleared up eventually but caused unnecessary confusion.

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### **Karen Batshaw says**

I wanted to know more about the orphan trains . Also wanted to know more about violet when she left the

train. Found this book to be disappointing

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### **Andrea says**

This was a book club choice. I had no previous knowledge about the orphan trains of the past and would have liked to have read more about this topic. The original publishing title was *Mothers and Daughters* and I think that it makes a better title to go with the subject matter. Although we do get to read about some of Violet's experiences in the streets of NYC and why her mother could not keep her, it does not go into much detail about the background of the orphan trains and what happened to Violet once she found a place. I feel as though there should be a sequel so we can learn more about this feisty, willful child who just wanted to be loved. What I did find interesting was the relationship between the mothers and daughters. How much do we think we know our mothers when in reality they have lived and felt so many things that we can not fathom until we become mothers ourselves. Even their past experiences and upbringing color their personalities, likes and dislikes, and the way they approach life in ways we cannot understand. It was difficult to read about Iris and her illness because I have lost my mother recently and have experienced so many of the same situations and feelings. It was difficult to see this independent, proud woman wasting away and needing so much assistance from those around her. It was an honor to be with her as she drew her last breath and it was the last thing I could have done for her as a dutiful daughter. Sam just had one box of things to go through. We had a whole houseful of things that must have meant something to her but have little value to us. Things that have a story that we can no longer ask about. Photos of people we do not know but who were once special to her. It's somewhat sad as Sam pointed out that a life can be reduced to a box of clippings and photos. Many memories, stories and family history were lost with my mom's passing in the same way that Violet's and Iris' death sealed a chapter that her daughter and grandchildren will not know about.

"Motherhood has its own universe and its own nonlinear timeline, its own indefinable pain and reward."

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### **Beth says**

The book is the story of a woman who was put on a "mercy" or orphan train by her mother who could not care for her. These trains took poor children from the city and gave them to families in the Midwest. Sometimes this was a success, but not always. The plot deals with Violet, the child put on the train; her daughter Iris, who tries to understand her mother's idiosyncrasies; and Samantha, Iris's daughter. Obviously, a story of mothers and daughters and how they relate.

I was only briefly aware of the use of these "orphan trains" and found it an interesting subject. I also found the characters in the book likeable and believable. I enjoyed the book and would recommend it.

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### **Abc says**

Carino, ma non era quello che mi aspettavo. Credevo fosse totalmente incentrato sulle vicende di questi bambini sfortunati che venivano portati ad ovest per essere adottati. Invece qui si parla solo della storia di una di queste bambine e della sua discendenza.

I capitoli alternano la storia di Violet, Iris e Sam. A dire il vero mi è piaciuta solo la storia di Violet, mentre

le altre due mi sono sembrate incomplete perché in entrambi i casi mi sono mancati dei dettagli che avrei voluto conoscere.

Bella la ricostruzione dell'atmosfera che si respirava nei quartieri poveri della New York dei primi del Novecento. L'autrice ha descritto con effetto lo squallore di vite miserabili che vi si trascinavano arrangiandosi come potevano per sopravvivere.

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### **Debra says**

This book seemed incomplete to me...when I reached the end I felt I had only read one fourth of it...there was no tying up of loose ends at all...no closure of the characters...it was very poorly written...

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