

Directions: Read the following short story, and then answer the reflection questions using complete sentences.

Can I bend your ear for a bit?

Imagine yourself living in a great big mansion, except it isn't a mansion. Imagine living in a place surrounded by lots of other children that aren't your relatives. Now, imagine toys being really scarce. Everybody surrounding you wants what little there is. That's how I describe my life in the orphanage. I've been here since I was three, at least that's how old I think was. It's okay, though. The people that run the home are good enough. I have food to eat and clothes to wear. I even have shoes that were handed down only twice.

I'll tell you a secret, but only if you promise to keep it. I hide whatever toys I find. Don't look at me like I'm crazy. I have to. I hide them in the walls, under the stairs, or wherever I am when I get a hold of them. It sounds strange, but it's the best way to make sure things don't get taken by the older kids. I found some marbles last week, and I added them to my stash in the hallway by the front door. Now, don't go getting any ideas about finding them. They're mine.

You want to know another secret? We have a hideout in the orphanage. I'm actually surprised that we haven't gotten caught yet. We have a sign up and a doorbell. We're pretty official. The sign says KEEP OUT, but really, it won't work on the adults. It's really only to keep the little kids away. They are always following us to the hideout. When we get caught, it's going to be because one of them ratted us out. Oh, and I'm not telling you where the hideout is, so don't ask.

I forgot to tell you my name. It's Timmy. Yeah, I don't really have a last name. Some mister found me after the big storm hit in September of 1900. I was too young to remember much, and nobody came to get me. So, here I am. Oh, I'm ten now. I guess you'd say we grow up fast here. Everybody my age has chores and work to do. We've all had to pitch in since the storm caused so much trouble. It's okay though. There's always someone to play with. I guess there's no shortage of kids to argue with either, because there's always some kid that thinks he knows everything. Then he finds out he's wrong. Yeah, I argue a lot, but I'm right most of the time.

Well, like I said before, it's not bad. It's a better life than I've seen others have. Just the other day, we went for a stroll... that's what Mrs. Schroeder calls it. It's really just walking as slowly as she does until we get to the park and are allowed to run around. Well, on the way, I saw a family that was really rough off. They didn't have shoes. I have shoes, and so do the other orphans. It made me feel bad for them, but I said howdy to them anyway. I'm sure glad I have a home to live in, even if it is with a bunch of other kids.

What was that? I don't think I heard you right. You came here to get me? Me? Why

didn't you say so before I went on and on. I'm kind of known as a talker. Well, I never thought this would happen to me, to tell you the truth. I've seen other kids get picked, but never me. You're ready to go now? I've got to say bye to everyone first. What was that? No, I don't need to take my toys. I'll leave 'em for some lucky kid. He'll have a heyday when he finds my treasure stash. Wait here, and I'll be right back. Man! It's my lucky day!

1. Why do you think the young man in the story hides whatever toys he finds? Please explain why you think so.
2. Have you ever imagined what it would have been like to live in an orphanage? What were some of your thoughts, either as you read the story or had imagined it before?
3. Why do you think that children at that time were responsible for doing so many chores, especially those in the orphanage? Explain why you think so.
4. When visiting The Bryan Museum, be sure to check out the hideout that was found during renovations of the building. There is also a display of the toys and other treasures that were found within the walls, in the dirt, and in the attic. How is it meaningful that the museum has chosen to create an exhibit especially for displaying these very special treasures?
5. What if you lived your childhood years in the orphanage and then came back to the building as an adult to visit The Bryan Museum. How do you think you'd feel to see a toy on display that you might have played with as a child?
6. How might it be considered kindness that the young man in the story left his toys for other children to find? How might he have been even more kind? If you had the choice, would you have taken the toys with you or left them behind?
7. **Challenge question:** Before the storm in 1900, there were two fully functioning orphanages for a city of only 37,000. Many historians believe that there were two

because Galveston was one of the final stops on America's 'orphan trains.' Use the web, or other resources, to decide what you think the best reason is that would explain why a city of that size would have such a need for orphanages. Just to give you a size comparison, New York City's population in 1900 was 3,437,200. They had more than 30,000 homeless youths on their streets in 1853; that's what inspired the beginning of the orphan trains. Record your answers on a separate sheet of paper or on a digital device.

8. Another challenge question: The Galveston Orphan Home was in operation from 1894-1984. It served more than 6,000 children during that time. Explain the many ways that such a number is significant. Also, how many of those children do you think came to Galveston on an 'orphan train' from 1894-1929? Again, record your findings on a separate piece of paper or in digital form.