



At the height of the Great Depression, two hundred and fifty thousand teenage hoboes were “Riding the Rails” and roaming America. Some left home because they felt they were a burden to their families; some fled homes shattered by the shame of unemployment and poverty. Some left because it seemed a great adventure. With the blessing of parents or as runaways, they hit the road and went in search of a better life. Hospitals treated these teens only if they were seriously ill. They suffered diseases due to exposure, lack of cleanliness, pests or infection. Without proper clothes and starving, sometimes days would go by without food. “I was hungry all the time. Dreadfully hungry,” remembered John Fawcett. “I’d never been hungry before. I would go two or three days without anything to eat. In a short time on the road, I lost 15 to 20 pounds. Your hunger hurts physically.”

1. What dangers do you see in the photo?
2. How many teenagers were “Riding the Rails” at the height of the Great Depression?
3. What are two reasons teens were leaving home?
4. What are at least 3 health effects of “Riding the Rails”?
5. What impact did “Riding the Rails” have on John Fawcett?