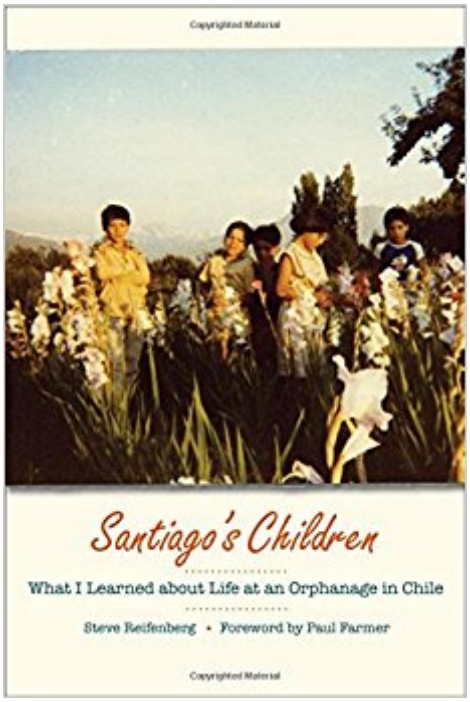
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Santiago's Children: What I Learned About Life At An Orphanage In Chile



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Synopsis

Runner-up, Bronze Medal, Independent Publishers Book Awards: Memoir/Autobiography Category, 2009Unclear about his future career path, Steve Reifenberg found himself in the early 1980s working at a small orphanage in a poor neighborhood in Santiago, Chile, where a determined single woman was trying to create a stable home for a dozen or so children who had been abandoned or abused. With little more than good intentions and very limited Spanish, the 23-year-old Reifenberg plunged into the life of the Hogar Domingo Savio, becoming a foster father to kids who stretched his capacities for compassion and understanding in ways he never could have imagined back in the United States.In this beautifully written memoir, Reifenberg recalls his two years at the Hogar Domingo Savio. His vivid descriptions create indelible portraits of a dozen remarkable kidsÃ¢â ¬â •mature-beyond-her-years VerÃƒÂ nica; sullen, unresponsive Marcelo; and irrepressible toddler AndrÃƒÂ©s, among them. As Reifenberg learns more about the children's circumstances, he begins to see the bigger picture of life in Chile at a crucial moment in its history.The early 1980s were a time of economic crisis and political uprising against the brutal military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Reifenberg skillfully interweaves the story of the orphanage with the broader national and international forces that dramatically impact the lives of the kids. By the end of Santiago's Children, Reifenberg has told an engrossing story not only of his own coming-of-age, but also of the courage and resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable residents of Latin America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This book is a gem and offers a wonderful roadmap for students of any age who are thinking about engaging in a complicated world. It should make its way to every university career counseling office across the country." (Abraham F. Lowenthal, Professor of International Relations, University of Southern California)"Urgent and moving . . . The narrative fairly leaps from the pages when the political struggle comes into view. . . . The tale is amazingly hopeful, in spite of, or because of, the struggles in question. . . . This is a story of Chile we will not forget." (MartÃƒÂ-n Espada, author of The Republic of Poetry and other award-winning volumes of poetry)

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It might be unfair to recommend this book to others with the expectation that they could love it as much as I did. Like the author, I spent a chunk of my early 20's volunteering in a Chilean orphanage. I am sure, though, that everyone of a certain age can relate to the doubt and struggle that those early 20's years present. And his is an engaging story that artfully brings us to love the Chilean children of the hogar, while hoping for the best for the author. An absolutely wonderful read I could not put down!

This is a great book for any recent college graduate, or for anyone older who is mulling over the meaning of life. Steve Reifenberg waited nearly 25 years to write a memoir of the two years he spent working in a small Chilean orphanage. The "hogar" was run by a remarkable young woman, who created a loving home for about a dozen young outcasts. As "Tio Esteve" works in the orphanage, he not only learns a lot about each of the loveable kids, and about raising children (even difficult ones), but also about what life is really all about. Reifenberg's beautiful, clear prose skillfully interweaves the story of the children, of Steve's coming of age, and the story of Chile under dictatorship. I found the book to be thoughtful, deep and affecting. This is not just a book for people who love latin america, or who may love children. There are stories and lessons in here that will appeal to a wide audience. When I finished reading, I wanted to start the book all over again.

Santiago’s Children is not only the story of the power of good, but it reminds us that one person can still make a difference.

I finished Santiago’s Children last night and am completely amazed by what the author accomplished. It is easily one of the most memorable books I have ever read. In fact, I was shocked to see that it was his first book. Not only is this true story impressive and engaging, but the writing is so well crafted. When a non-fiction - which characteristically are inherently missing the structured plot development - can keep me totally engrossed and continually looking forward to the next chapter, then something remarkable has been achieved. Of course, that remarkable thing is that Steve made me care about the children and about young Steve. The clear fact that he feels such affection for the kids, and expressed that so richly, made me love them also. I found myself wanting to follow them through the rest of their lives and not wanting the author to leave Santiago. When he said his final good-byes, tears were streaming down my face, along with all of them. I give this outstanding book the highest possible recommendation.

My daugter is serving as a volunteer in Santiago and has met the author, Steve Reifenberg. She was exuberant in her recommendation of his book. I must confess to living a sheltered life, and marvel at my daughter’s generation for their passion for world travel, service and adventure. For those of us who haven’t experienced the other half of the world, this is a wonderful window into the reality of it: its heartache of loving and struggling for the sake of children, as well as the cultural and political challenges. I believe that the hope of peace for our planet will be nurtured as we get to know our neighbors in this ever shrinking global community. Steve Reifenberg’s book puts a human face on our global neighborhood. This book will stir your heart.And it makes a doubly good gift, because Reifenberg donates the profits from this book to the children of Santiago, Chile: two gifts for the price of one.

Had to read this book for class. I actually enjoyed it.

This author is a man among men.To recognize the needy and be willing to physically do something about it , takes a truly caring individual. There are plenty of talkers but not many that will back up the talk!Talk is cheap!!

I read Santiago’s children coming from two places :First as an avid reader of autobiographies. This

one will remain a gem in my memories. It is seldom that one finds a life story so well written, funny, terribly moving, sad, authentic and yet so humble. Reifenberg takes you from the first chapter to the very last page through numerous simple - yet incredible - everyday life stories in Chile. This book combines epics from the childhood of Chilean orphans, their wonderful "mama", Chilean history and includes Reifenberg's own story in the background. I roared with laughter, was moved to tears, even sobbed and did not want this unforgettable book to finish. A must read for anyone !Secondly relating to the book as a career counselor. I wish that the choices my clients made could often take this path of self-reflection, as long, thorough and difficult as it may be. But where in the end one senses that the person has found his or her core values, the ones that will enable them a fulfilling career and life. Reifenberg seems to have set the ground for a lifelong self-understanding and calling during those two years in Chile.

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