

Al Stewart "Trains"

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In the sapling years
Of the post war world in
An English market town
I do believe we traveled
In schoolboy blue
The cap upon the crown
And books on knee
Our faces pressed against the
Dusty railway carriage panes
As all our lives went rolling
On the clicking wheels of trains

The school years passed
Like eternity and at last were left behind
And it seemed the city was calling
Me to see what I might find
Almost grown I stood before
Horizons made of dreams
I think I stole a kiss or two While
Rolling on the clicking wheels of trains

Trains all our lives were
A whistle stop affair
No ties or chains
Throwing words like fireworks in the air
Not much remains
A photograph in your memory
Through the colored lens of time
All our lives were just a smudge of
Smoke against the sky

The silver rails spread
Far and wide through
The nineteenth century
Some straight and true
Some serpentine from the cities to the sea
And out of sight of those who
Rode in style there worked the military mind
On through the night
To plot and chart
The twisting paths of trains
On the day they buried Jean Juarez

World War One broke free
Like an angry river overflowing
Its banks impatiently
While mile on mile
The soldiers filled the railway
Stations arteries and veins
I see them now go laughing on
The clicking wheels of trains

Trains rolling off to the front
Across the narrow Russian gauge
Weeks turn into months
And the enthusiasm wanes
Sacrifices in seas of mud
And still you don't know why
All their lives are just a puff of
Smoke against the sky
Then came surrender
Then came the peace
Then revolution out of the east
Then came the crash
Then came the tears
Then came the thirties
The nightmare years
Then came the same thing
Over again
Mad as the moon
That watches over the plain
Driven insane

But oh what kind of trains
Are these that I never saw before
Snatching up the refugees from
The ghettos of the war
To stand confused
With all their worldly goods
Beneath the watching guard's disdain
As young and old go rolling on
The clicking wheels of trains

And the driver only does this job
With vodka in his coat
And he turns around and
He makes a sign
With his hand across his throat
For days on end through sun and snow
The destination still remains the same
For those who ride with death
Above the clicking wheels of trains

Trains what became

Of the innocence they hand in childhood games
Painted red or blue
When I was young they all had names
Who'll remember the ones
Who only rode in them to die
All their lives are just a smudge of
Smoke against the sky

Now forty years have come and gone
And I'm far away from there
And I ride the Amtrak from
New York City to Philadelphia
Now there's a man
To bring you food and drink and
Sometimes passengers exchange
A smile or two while rolling on
The humming wheels
But I can't tell you if it's them or if it's only me
But I believe when they look outside
They don't see what I see
Over there beyond the trees
It seems that I can just make out
The stained fields of Poland
Calling out to all
The passing trains

Trains I suppose there's nothing
In this life remains the same
Everything is governed
By the losses and the gains
Still sometimes I get caught up
In the past I can't say why
All our lives are just a smudge of smoke
Or just a breath of wind
Against the sky

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