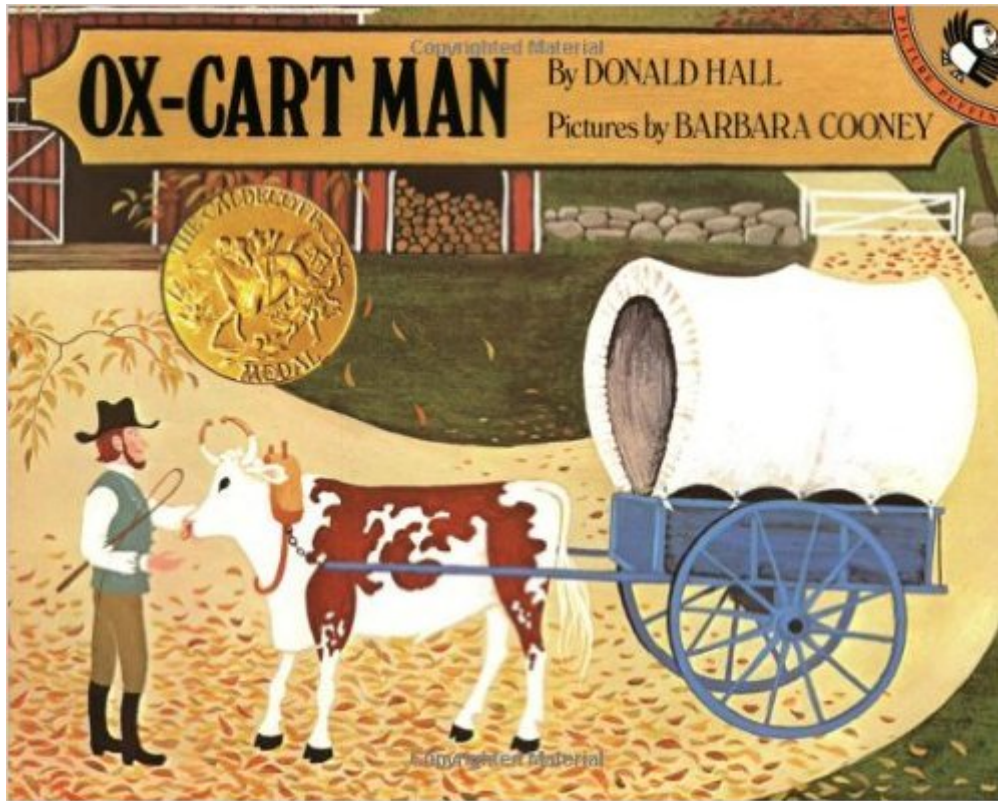


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# Ox-Cart Man



## Synopsis

Winner of the Caldecott Medal  
Thus begins a lyrical journey through the days and weeks, the months, and the changing seasons in the life of one New Englander and his family. The oxcart man packs his goods - the wool from his sheep, the shawl his wife made, the mittens his daughter knitted, and the linen they wove. He packs the birch brooms his son carved, and even a bag of goose feathers from the barnyard geese. He travels over hills, through valleys, by streams, past farms and villages. At Portsmouth Market he sells his goods, one by one - even his beloved ox. Then, with his pockets full of coins, he wanders through the market, buying provisions for his family, and returns to his home. And the cycle begins again. "Like a pastoral symphony translated into picture book format, the stunning combination of text and illustrations recreates the mood of 19-century rural New England." "The Horn Book"

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD1130L (What's this?)

Series: Picture Puffins

Paperback: 40 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; 1 edition (October 27, 1983)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140504419

ISBN-13: 978-0140504415

Product Dimensions: 10.2 x 0.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (100 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #10,352 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #251 in Books > Children's Books > Classics #3302 in Books > Reference

Age Range: 2 - 5 years

Grade Level: Preschool - Kindergarten

## Customer Reviews

Most books that focus on continuity and the circle of life/the seasons/etc. like to concentrate on that theme via animals munching on other animals. We sometimes forget that there are subtler ways to present this same theme. Consider the lovely "Ox-Cart Man" by Donald Hall. A 1980 Caldecott Award winner, the tale focuses on the yearly passage of one man selling his goods only to do it all over again the next year. Ultimately this is one of the most comforting books out there. The book

takes place in what looks to be the mid 19th century. A man that is never named lives on a farm with his wife, daughter, and son. The book begins with the family packing his cart with the various goods they have to sell. There are mittens knit by his daughter, shawls spun and woven by his wife, and birch brooms carved by his son. The book catalogues the items packed away in an oddly riveting fashion. Next, the man travels on foot to a harbor town named Portsmouth. There, he sells the items including his beloved ox. There's a shot of the man kissing his ox good-bye on the nose, which (when you consider the slime factor) is simultaneously touching and gross. He next goes out and buys an iron kettle, an embroidery needle for his daughter, a knife for his son, and two pounds of wintergreen peppermint candies. The man walks home to his family waiting for him and as the seasons pass they build up their items to sell once more. One of my favorite lines is the last one. "And geese squawked in the barnyard, dropping feathers as soft as clouds". Those people who follow poetry will recognize the name Donald Hall and appreciate the simplicity of his writing in this book. I loved that it began without explaining or pausing, immediately launching into a description of the man loading up his cart. When adult writers or poets write for children, they usually haven't a clue how to go about it (paging Madonna...). Mr. Hall does not suffer from this dilemma. He knows exactly how to make a book that could have been dry and dull, fascinating. Therefore, he uses the repetition of lines to catch the ears of kids. There's an entire page in this book that contains ten lines all beginning with the words, "He sold". I'm both old and young enough to remember when "Ox-Cart Man" was read on Reading Rainbow (one of the very few Caldecott winners to appear on that show) and even as a kid I loved the words in this story. I assure you that this book, for whatever other flaws you may chose to find in it, is not boring in the least. I was especially taken with the illustrations in this book as well. Illustrator Barbara Cooney is no stranger to Caldecott medals. Having already illustrated the magnificent (and I highly recommend it) "Chanticleer and the Fox", her award count is higher than most. For this book, Cooney adopted a style that has a great many similarities to the kinds of outsider art created during the 19th century. The characters in this book have a kind of purposely flat presence on the page. At the same time, Cooney hasn't sacrificed perspective or the illusion of distance in these prints. Each page is both beautiful and simple, matching the text word for word with appropriate pictures. If the book says that there were turnips, cabbages, a wooden box of maple sugar, and potatoes then by gum you're going to see every single one of those objects on the opposing page. As a kid, I'd always be disturbed by picture books where the words failed to match the text. Here I have no such fears. Some picture books are filled with bright snazzy flash-in-the pan illustrations and narratives that will date themselves in ten years or less. Others are quiet simple offerings that display beauty as well as a kind of central integrity. "Ox-Cart Man" is in

the latter category. This is a book that will be loved for decades and that will only grow more precious in the eyes of children as the years go on. For a fun pairing, try reading it to your kiddies with "Swamp Angel", by Anne Isaacs. Books like this one should be treasured. Fortunately, I think this one already is.

The journey of a settler who packs up his cart with surplus that was grown, handmade, and raised on a farm in historical New England. The story takes the reader through what a family has to do to survive during this time period and what each part the family had in that survival. From a historical perspective an awesome book. With the love of history that I have on a personal note this story gives me clues to my own ancestors survival needs. I have two copies of this book one at home and one in my classroom. Very detailed illustrations, very accurate information on the settler's way of life and need for trading or selling off goods that the family helped make. The portrayal of the family with no electricity and providing their own means of survival. The story tells us that the farmer travelled ten days to reach the village of Portsmouth. I would've like to know which direction he came from, whether he had to travel from the south, the north or the west of the village. I would've also like to have know what he saw and who he might have met along the way. Classroom Activities I do with this book: Math - Seasons, Sequencing, Money, Trading/Selling, Time Art - Draw the seasons, quilts, weaving, looms, broom making, Science - Make candles, grow a pototo from a seed, make maple sugar, Social Studies - 13 Colonies, Mapping Skills, Clothing, Occupations, Cooking Reading - Write a sequel or pre-story to this book, illustrate one aspect of story or write about who he might have met along the way and which direction he came from.

I have read this book to my three children-ages 3-7-almost every day for about three years. They have learned about how life was in the past. They now want to "start from scratch" when making everything.

I used this book with my third grade class in talking about the skills that our ancestors needed in order to survive. The book is about a man who takes a cart load of goods to town and sells everything including the ox! My students loved the ending, but I won't give that away. This is a must have for the classroom.

As for the story, this review says it best: "This is the kind of picture book that you can return to again and again, for as pretty as it is it's better than pretty; it's true in a way that moves children and

grown-ups alike" -New York Times Book Review.I've bought so many copies of this book; I was a nanny for five years and any child who heard it fell in love with it, so of course I let each one keep it, finding a new copy each time. Then it went out of print just as I was having my first kid of my own. So I bought a used paper back copy. Then I needed yet another copy and the one that arrived that time had such peculiar, wash-out pictures, like a bad photocopy. This isn't a seller-feedback-posing-as-a-review: I'm only mentioning it because if you happen to get a copy and are underwhelmed by it, it may be that you got a bad printing. In a good printing, the colors are so rich you can practically smell the sun on the autumn leaves, the mist collecting in the hollows in the evening seem to swirl, the windows of the homes at night glow. I hadn't realized how much the pictures contribute to the whole story until I got a 'bad' copy.Hopefully, hopefully, The Ox-Cart Man comes back into print one day. I don't think I'll ever stop needing copies of this book.

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