



# OX-CART MAN

AUTHOR: DONALD HALL

ILLUSTRATOR: BARBARA COONEY

See a video of the book read aloud here: [Ox-Cart Man](#)

**\*\* REMEMBER: HAVE FUN AND THE KIDS WILL TOO! \*\***

## OVERVIEW

### ABOUT THE BOOK

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 ox-cart 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* ([Amazon.com](#))

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donald Hall is considered one of the major American poets of his generation. His poetry explores the longing for a more bucolic past and reflects the poet's abiding reverence for nature. Often compared favorably with such writers as James Dickey, Robert Bly, and James Wright, Hall uses simple, direct language to evoke surrealistic imagery. Born in 1928, Hall grew up in Hamden, Connecticut. The Hall household was marked by a volatile father and a mother who was "steadier, maybe with more access to depths because there was less continual surface," as Hall explained in an essay for Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series (CAAS). "To her I owe my fires, to my father my tears. I owe them both for their reading." By age twelve, Hall had discovered the poet and short story writer Edgar Allan Poe: "I read Poe and my life changed," he remarked in CAAS. Another strong influence in Hall's early years was his maternal great-grandfather's farm in New Hampshire, where he spent many summers. Decades later, he bought the same farm and settled there as a full-time writer and poet. ([Poetryfoundation.org](#))

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Barbara Cooney (born Aug. 6, 1917, [New York, N.Y.](#)—died March 10, 2000, [Portland, Maine](#)) was an American children's author and illustrator who was a literary star in the world of children's Publishing. She wrote or illustrated 110 books in a career that spanned six decades. Born into a family of artists, she received formal training at the [Art Students League](#) in [New York City](#) before publishing her first book, *King of Wrecked Island* (1941). In 1959 Cooney was awarded the [Caldecott Medal](#) for children's book illustration for *The Chanticleer and the Fox*, her [adaptation](#) of a story from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. She received a second Caldecott Medal in 1980 for her illustrations for poet [Donald Hall's](#) *Ox-Cart Man*. Cooney's 1982 work, *Miss Rumphius*, won the National Book Award for children's picture books. *Basket Moon*, her last book, appeared in 1999. ([Britannica.com](#))

## OX-CART MAN

### TOPICS & THEMES:

- Early 19<sup>th</sup> century life
- Compare now and then
- Resources

### *Tips for every book!*

### POWER PHRASES:

*I WONDER...*

*I NOTICE...*

*TELL ME MORE...*

### DIGGING DEEPER:

*"Tell me more, why do you think that?"*

*"How do you know that?"*

*"Why do you think they feel like that?"*

*"Interesting, did you notice anything else?"*

### BEFORE READING

*Use these before reading the story to help students activate background knowledge and make predictions:*

- I'm wondering when this book takes place. Now or in the past? What do you think?
- What makes you think that?
- Show the Caldecott medal on the cover. Does anyone know what this means?
- Explain the award is for Cooney's illustrations.

### DURING THE STORY

*Use these while reading the story to help students interpret the action and content:*

- P. 1 Where do you think the ox-cart man is taking all the goods in his cart? Why do you think that?
- P. 6. Why do you think the ox-cart man had to count out potatoes to save?
- P. 11. How is the market illustrated on this page the same or different than the market where you shop?
- P. 15. Why does the ox-cart man sell everything? Were you surprised about this? Why or why not?
- P. 27. What resources does this family have? (Explain what a resource is.) What needs are met by these resources?

### AFTER READING

*Use these after reading the story to help students understand what they just read:*

- Do you think book is fiction or non fiction? What evidence from the book supports your opinion?
- What do you think will happen next at the end of the book?

### BRINGING THE BOOK TO LIFE!

- P. 31 In this book, the children work all year round. Is this the same or different from your role in your family? Talk to a neighbor about any job you might have in your family.

### COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- P. 17. Turn and talk to a friend about what gift you would have liked to get from the ox-cart man. Why would it have been your choice? Share your partner's choice with the whole group.

## SMALL-GROUP IDEAS

### • DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

- Do a picture walk, having the students retell the story in their own words.
- What special job does each person in this family have? What work does the family do together?
- What needs does the family meet by using things they grow or raise? (food, shelter, clothing)
- What things does the family need that must be bought?
- Why does the father make the long trip to town each autumn? Could he go in another season? Why?
- Why do you think the family's work changes with each season?
- Discuss why wintergreen peppermint candies are a treat for the family, and ask students to tell how that treat differs from ones *they* expect. Discuss why the ox-cart man's family could not afford more expensive gifts.
- Ask students how they feel when the father sells the ox, and how the father seems to feel and why he makes this sale. Invite students to point out illustrations that show that an ox will be available for the next autumn's trip to town (evidence in the illustrations).

### **Suggested Optional Activity:**

- Brainstorm kinds of goods that are sold by the ox-cart man. What are some items that you buy at the store? Draw a Venn diagram to compare the lists. You can draw your own Venn diagram on the board or on a large piece of paper. Do the activity as a group.

### WRITING ACTIVITY

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- Create a poster to advertise one or more of the items that the ox-cart man sells. It should include a picture of item, description, price, and what it is used for. (Reader: you could provide some advertisements from magazines as examples of what to include.)

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

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- Draw a picture of a job you do at home that helps your family.

## COMMON CORE LINKS

**CCSS! ELA, Literacy, RI 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7**