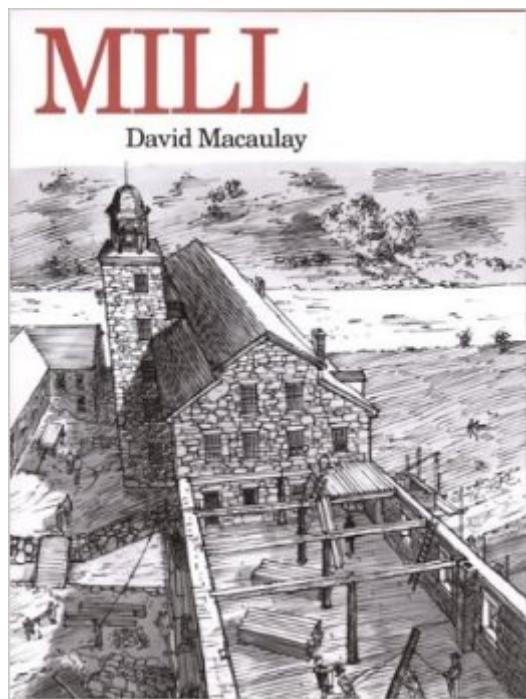


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# Mill



## Synopsis

The mills at Wicksbridge are imaginary, but their planning, construction, and operation are quite typical of mills developed in New England throughout the nineteenth century.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; First Edition edition (September 26, 1983)

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## Customer Reviews

Mill is, simply put, remarkably well crafted. In it, David Macaulay gives us a brief history of the beginnings of the textile industry in America, walks us through the planning and construction of four successively more complex mills, lavishly illustrates the buildings, the machines and their power sources and, at the same time, manages to thoroughly convince us that we would never want to work in one. This last trick is subtle and, to my knowledge, doesn't appear in any of the other books in this series. From Cathedral, City and, to a lesser extent, Castle, you get the distinct feeling that these were great and noble projects that you would have loved to have been a part of. You get this sense too from Mill, but the heady rush that comes with the idea of building something from the ground up is tempered by small, fictional diary entries that betray the harshness of life for those who worked in the mills after their completion. Mill is a strong contender for a place in your personal and permanent library. It is beautifully illustrated, historically grounded, thoroughly researched, accented with social commentary and, most importantly, it is an enjoyable, absorbing read.

This is an important book. Written for children, it can be used just as effectively by adults to comprehend the beginnings of the industrial revolution in the United States. Learn and see how men

tamed our rivers and how men, women and children were swallowed up in these great monuments to progress. The illustrations are remarkable. David Macaulay deftly describes and illustrates how the technology that made America a world industrial power came to the young new country and how American ingenuity improved it and made the nation into a world class economic juggernaut. The author is a superb story teller, and anyone who would like to visualize the nature of mills and to understand the profound impact of this technology on our country should read it. I highly recommend this great children's book to everyone.

A wonderful story that takes the reader through the life and times of an infant small village mill into the mature years of a 20th century factory-mill. Excellent illustrations, and fun storyline that allows the reader to become involved with the life of the mill. I loved it.

Macaulay is an illustrator, architect, engineer, historian, economist, anthropologist and story-teller. He puts all of this knowledge and skill into *Mill*. It is a totally one-of-a-kind book that does not easily fall under any traditional category. It is often labeled as a "kids' book" because it has pictures and is relatively short. But very little of the educational content would be considered common knowledge for adults. It reads like a history text-book, a technical manual, and a novel all in one. It is an epic, multi-generational story of a fictional New England town that is born out of the textile boom of the Industrial Revolution. You follow the cotton-milling and cloth-weaving operations of this town and its mills as they grow and expand, incorporate new technology, and endure the tides of fortune. Along the way, you get to learn all the details of the planning, the machinery, the construction, read excerpts from the characters' journals and watch the town slowly grow and change over time. In the end, this short book feels like a monumental journey and it will leave you not only satisfied but smarter too. I've read most of Macaulay's books and this is probably the best.

While the fictional story creates the thread by which the development of the mill can be followed, it's the detailed drawings and descriptions that bring a lost industry that once was critical in our early world to life. Macaulay's renderings provide a rich insight into an 18th century mill-- from site planning to the development of the dam and the initial mill works. The growth of the mill is then seen over the decades as it expands and finally falls into disuse as economic conditions contribute to its demise. Anyone who is familiar with the writing and illustrative stories of artist/author Eric Sloane will enjoy this work as well.

Although it's not one of David Macaulay's more visually spectacular books, as a resident of what used to be one of Connecticut's most thriving mill towns, I found "Mill" surprisingly fascinating. I frequently hike past the ruins of two abandoned mills in Manchester, Connecticut, and walk over the remains of a cofferdam. It wasn't until I read this book that I truly understood the importance of these mills in the context of early American history. In this book, Macaulay takes a look at the fictional Rhode Island town of Wicksbridge, describing the building and operation of four textile mills on the Swift River between 1810 and 1870. He explains how the water-powered "power train" of each mill operated, the excavation of the headrace and tailrace, the building of the mills, and how fabric was created. This is set against a story of a partnership of mill owners and their families, and the gradual expansion of Wicksburg, complete with journal entries. It's largely secondary to the artwork, but it doesn't sugarcoat the terrible conditions under which 19th century mill workers lived. Although the book's target age range might find it boring, I enjoyed this book. I bought a copy for an aunt, and she loved it. David Macaulay is one of those illustrators whose work is really a lot more sophisticated than it appears at first glance. His somewhat primitive, elaborately crosshatched style really works when depicting early to mid-19th century America. It took me a long time to really appreciate his work, but I'm glad I'm finally starting to.

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