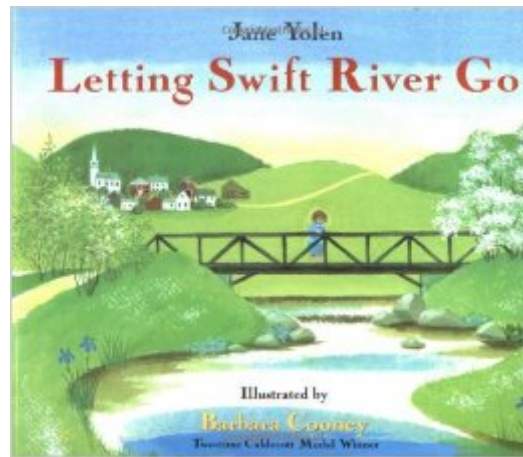


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# Letting Swift River Go



## Synopsis

Relates Sally Jane's experience of changing times in rural America, as she lives through the drowning of the Swift River towns in western Massachusetts to form the Quabbin Reservoir.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 860 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (September 1, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316968609

ISBN-13: 978-0316968607

Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.2 x 10 inches

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

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (17 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #70,519 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > Country Life](#) #121 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s](#) #162 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > United States](#)

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

This is one of the best children's books I've read in a long time. The story of the building of the Quabbin Reservoir in western MA is not a widely told story, but it should be. This book is clearly written so children can understand what was happening. The illustrations are also wonderful and will keep the children engaged. If you're the grown up reader, don't count on getting through this with a dry eye. It's definitely a book for ALL ages. ~Sarah Aziz Mount Holyoke College Sophomore (age 19)

Simply outstanding book which perfectly captures the unbearably devastating situation. The author writes with simplicity and heart, easy enough for children to comprehend but also with the intelligence for adults. My family settled in the Swift River Valley and were raising their young children when Boston's attitude about "those people" destroyed their way of life. I grew up hearing stories about the life lost and, in most cases, never regained. The friendliness of neighbors, picnics

and social events at the churches. Gram would know when it was time to start supper because she'd hear Grandpa's lumber truck shifting gears as it descended into the valley. Imagine being a child (as were my uncles) and, not only losing your home, but watching everything you knew being demolished. And attending the very last community get-together where people cried and hearts were broken. The residents that Boston politicians and establishment so cruelly cast aside were forced to find homes in usually rural areas, and never again regained sense of support and community. Readers of this important book should someday take it with them on a visit to the Quabbin, particularly when there is a dry spell and the water is low. From Route 202 walk the old dirt roads and see the foundations of homes long ago, and continue on down the road until it dips down into the water -- and look at more relics of the past through the clear Quabbin water. Better yet, take a ride in a boat.

The best thing about this book is its refusal to play games with your child's mind. Rejecting the shameless tear-jerking of so much media aimed at children, this book embraces the grand tradition of children's books that takes children seriously. This is a book about dealing with loss about about letting go, but also a book that makes the reader reflect on what is good about life. Warts and all, life is sweet. As a historian, I really appreciate that Yolen tries hard to show what her valley was like AND what it is like after the dam is built. Kids are frightened when they see orchards being ripped out for suburbs; this is a book about dealing with that kind of loss.

Jane Yolen tells the story of a community 'drowned' by waters filling a new reservoir. The poetry of her telling somehow lessens the ache. You doubtless know of such a story - - of vast lakes covering YEARS OF FAMILY HISTORIES, and pre-history. Barbara Cooney has created realistic scenes to accompany Yolen's words. Together, the story makes a lasting impression: children playing among gravestones, listening at night to the long mournful train whistles, and at sugaring-off time "tasting the thin sweetness" of the syrup, all described with simple authenticity. When Boston "decides" that a reservoir must be built to catch their water supply - - and after the many back-breaking steps are taken to denude the countryside - - the waters rise; "it took seven long years." Much later, no longer a child, Sally Jane is in a rowboat, and her father strokes the oars, pointing out where buildings stood and where she played with friends. As darkness falls she hears her mother's voice from the past, "You have to let them go" . . . and she does. Jane Yolen has shared the story of a past that continues on into the future with all its implications for protection of our water supply, and for preserving associations made even more precious by the intervening years. Reviewer mcHAIKU

hopes everyone can feel the warmth of Barbara Cooney's sunlit country roads and the slower pace of life she paints for us. I wonder who in future years will be writing children's books about the damming of the upper Yangtze?

A grandfather rows his boat and pauses to point out landmarks to his passenger, a granddaughter who is going to row at college. The landmarks are deep under the waters of Quabbin Reservoir in western Massachusetts, which drown the history of families - even pre-history? It is difficult for the young woman to get beyond sentimental feelings of her own childhood and friends with whom she played on those hills and dirt roads. They had lived happy lives until big city politics intervened to disrupt the landscape - and lives. "Houses were moved, and cemeteries; probably some marriages drowned, also. The grandfather gently guides young Sally Jane toward the personal need to 'let go' of the past, and then to consider a population's need for water - whether it be Quabbin Reservoir, Mass., or Lake Monroe Indiana, or Lake Mead in Arizona, Colorado & Nevada. Many lessons can be learned among generations. One can almost see the strengthening of character that results from such acceptance.

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