

'The Last Apple Tree' Plants Seeds of Connection: Award-Winning Author Claudia Mills's Latest Now in Paperback

Emotional middle grade novel explores themes of memory, loss, environmental conservation, and the healing power of sharing stories across generations.

BOULDER, CO, UNITED STATES, September 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Children's Book Review announces the paperback release of "The Last Apple Tree," the critically acclaimed middle-grade novel by award-winning author [Claudia Mills](#), published by Margaret Ferguson Books, an imprint of Holiday House. This emotionally resonant story addresses two urgent preservation challenges of our time: capturing family stories before older generations pass away and protecting genetic diversity in our food sources.

A STORY THAT BRIDGES GENERATIONS

After her grandmother's death, twelve-year-old Sonnet moves across the country with her family to live with her grandfather at his former apple orchard. Where rows of heritage apple trees once flourished, a housing development now stands—except for one resilient heirloom apple tree that refuses to be forgotten.

When Sonnet and her neighbor Zeke choose Gramps for their school oral history project, their interviews unlock buried family secrets and begin healing old wounds. Told through alternating perspectives of Sonnet, Zeke, and the ancient apple tree itself—enhanced by interspersed poems—the novel demonstrates how understanding our past helps us navigate the present and preserve the future.

AUTHOR'S PERSONAL MISSION

"I believe passionately in the importance of coming to know others through sharing our stories,"



The Last Apple Tree, by Claudia Mills: Book Cover

said Mills, who has witnessed the passing of many loved ones throughout her life. "As someone who has experienced regret for not actively seeking out family stories while there was still time, I wrote this book to encourage others not to make the same mistake. There is so much about my family that I wish I knew, but now never can."

Mills, who has authored more than 60 books during her 40+ year career using her trademark hour-a-day writing system, brings both personal experience and extensive research to the environmental themes in her latest work.

ENVIRONMENTAL URGENCY MEETS FAMILY DRAMA

The novel highlights a little-known agricultural crisis: the critical importance of preserving heirloom apple varieties with distinctive genetic heritage. Unlike oak trees that grow true from acorns, apple trees replicate faithfully only through grafting, making each heritage variety irreplaceable once lost.

"The book connects the importance of preserving both family stories and natural resources," Mills explained. "Both require intentional action from younger generations before it's too late. In an era of climate change, genetic diversity in our food sources isn't just nice to have—it's essential for survival."

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Claudia Mills

CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND RECOGNITION

"The Last Apple Tree" has garnered exceptional reviews across the industry:

-Starred review from Kirkus Reviews

-Positive reviews from Publishers Weekly, Booklist, BookHorn, and Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

The book joins Mills's impressive catalog of honored works, building on her reputation as a master of middle-grade fiction that tackles complex themes with sensitivity and hope.

AUTHOR AVAILABILITY AND PROMOTION



Author Claudia Mills

To celebrate the paperback release, Mills is hosting [an online book tour](#) with opportunities for virtual author visits. Prize promotions include hour-long Zoom sessions with signed copies of "The Last Apple Tree" and books from her chapter book series.

Mills also offers inspirational presentations about her transformative hour-a-day writing system, which has helped countless aspiring writers develop sustainable creative practices.

ABOUT CLAUDIA MILLS

Claudia Mills is professor emerita of philosophy at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and author of over 60 books for young readers. Her works have received numerous honors and been translated into multiple languages. She serves as faculty in graduate programs in children's literature at Hollins University and has received two lifetime achievement awards: the Kerlan Award (2019) and the Anne Devereaux Jordan Award for Distinguished Service to Children's Literature (2025). Her edited volume "Ethics and Children's Literature" received a book award from the Children's Literature Association.

Mills writes daily using her famous hour-a-day system while drinking Swiss Miss hot chocolate. Learn more at www.claudiamillsauthor.com.

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Caitlin Rose

The Children's Book Review

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