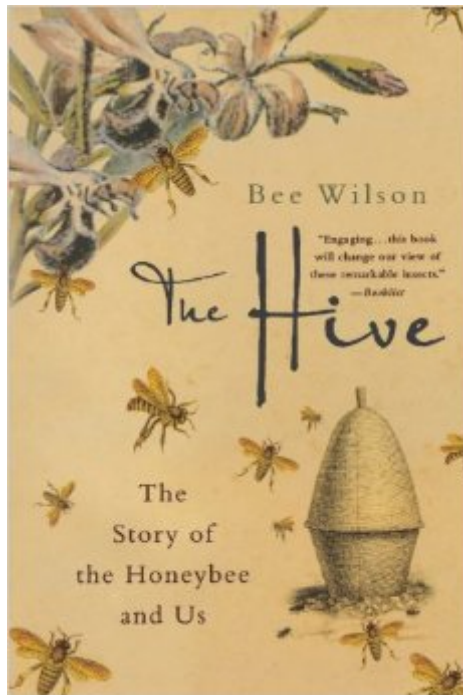


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# The Hive: The Story Of The Honeybee And Us



## Synopsis

Ever since men first hunted for honeycomb in rocks and daubed pictures of it on cave walls, the honeybee has been seen as one of the wonders of nature: social, industrious, beautiful, terrifying. No other creature has inspired in humans an identification so passionate, persistent, or fantastical. *The Hive* recounts the astonishing tale of all the weird and wonderful things that humans believed about bees and their "society" over the ages. It ranges from the honey delta of ancient Egypt to the Tupelo forests of modern Florida, taking in a cast of characters including Alexander the Great and Napoleon, Sherlock Holmes and Muhammed Ali. The history of humans and honeybees is also a history of ideas, taking us through the evolution of science, religion, and politics, and a social history that explores the bee's impact on food and human ritual. In this beautifully illustrated book, Bee Wilson shows how humans will always view the hive as a miniature universe with order and purpose, and look to it to make sense of their own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The book is great so far as far as the content goes...the only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is because the book appeared to have been perhaps used and returned. Oh well - at least the book is interesting and is what I was looking for!

I loved her book *Consider the Fork*, so I looked for other books and found this. It's her first book, and while the writing is excellent, she has improved since. This book is not so much about bees and honey as bees and honey as aspects of human social history (which includes both use of honey

and the beehive as an element in human ideas). The book is also slightly dated in the sense that the deadly threats to bees now existing were not really present as she wrote; there's a real question of whether bees will survive, but that is a more recent issue than her book. Much, perhaps half or more of the book examines the idea of bees and the hive in literature (folk tales, moral tales, language; think of "busy as a bee"). This changes over time, but the hive has been seen as a pure democracy with all working for a common good; obedience to the king (it took a surprisingly long time for the queen bee to be identified as such) and all happy in their position in society; of pure commitment to goals and more. The drones also provided moral lessons of a different kind. I had not realized that for a very long time, it was thought that bees were generated from a dead ox. This may sound bizarre, but it's part of the old idea of spontaneous generation. Nor had I thought much about honey as a preservative, but there are legends of famed people being preserved in honey--such as Alexander the Great. The book also examines different kinds of honey. and some can be harmful, even poisonous, depending on the origin of the nectar--some kinds of mountain laurel apparently can lead to dangerous honey. Wilson also writes about some of the people who have studied bees and worked with bees. There's a wonderful account of Karl von Frisch. There is one section that has some recipes, which I think weaker than other sections. Overall this is a good read, but some readers (I'm guessing that this means American readers in particular) may find it rambling. It also has a good deal of what some readers may see as authorial intrusion and other readers as journalistic in style.

THE HIVE: THE STORY OF THE HONEYBEE AND US joins others which have appeared earlier this year covering the bee - but goes further than most, drawing connections between the hive mentality of the bee and human affairs. Bees appear as symbols of many things and their honey product is widely used in cooking: their story blends myth with science and mankind has long been enamored of the bee. THE HIVE traces mankind's different beliefs about the bee over the decades, gathering history from around the world from science, religion, politics and beyond. Lovely black and white drawings throughout enhance a fun story. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

I picked this book up completely randomly but have loved every moment of it. I am a huge fan of honey, cooking and the convoluted histories of the foods we love. Always a big fan of honey (and bees!) it wasn't until I read this book that I realize how pervasive and longlasting our human fascination (obsession?) with bees has been. It's an easy read - very detailed with lots of great honey and bee trivia throughout the ages. The writer is a Brit and mentions the history of bees and

honey in the U.S. only in passing, so people looking for something specific to North America might have to go elsewhere. This is definitely more of a Western European view.

No one tells a story better than Bee. Anything Bee Wilson writes I will eagerly read. She tells the story and does so well. And I always learn something new. More I will listen 2, 3 or 10 times and still enjoy the joy of the story telling. What a marvelous gift she gives to us.

This book is not just about bees and the history of beekeeping. This also deals with how bees have been linked to sex, death, food and drink. The book deals with mead, the Church and bees, the Romans and bees, the Renaissance and bees. How bees, and their hives, shaped our ideas of nature, science, government and God. They became the symbols of power, of Kings and Popes, of socialism and order. There are also lists of recipes for food made from honey and potions made with honey. This is a must for any fan of bees or any beekeeper. Bee Wilson is a big fan of bees and the honey they produce, going so far as to visit an apiary and, yes, she has been stung. You can feel her wonder and joy at writing her first book on the subject. And it is a joy to read. But one warning. Mormons are not shown in a good light as the other reviews show.

This book was engagingly written and maintained my interest throughout, and covered pretty much everything you'd want to know about bees. My only criticism and it doesn't necessarily mean much is that I had a feeling the genesis of the book wasn't a passion about bees or honey. Maybe that's OK the scholarship seemed solid and it was self-disciplined in a way that may have been difficult to otherwise maintain. There are some comments about Mormons here that I wanted to address. Bees were formerly unknown to me incredibly important in both practice and symbol to Mormons and thus the topic didn't fly out of left field. At one point, Brigham Young was referred to as a despot and his wives were described as looking miserable in their portraits. Those were the only derogatory comments I remembered; that's the full content of the brouhaha. And let's be serious: once you've married 55 women, don't you think the door is opened for negative comments? The absolute kindest and most hospitable people I've met in my life have been Mormon. I don't hold them responsible for Brigham Young. I only hold one person responsible for Brigham Young and that's Brigham Young. I didn't read the comments in the book as a slight against Mormons at all, but against one historical figure whose lifestyle choices have not aged gracefully.

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