

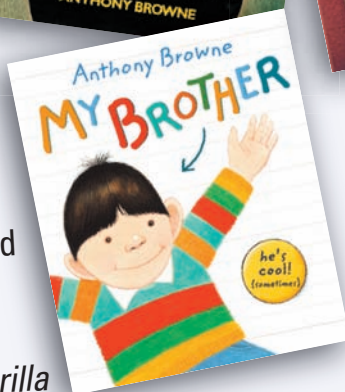
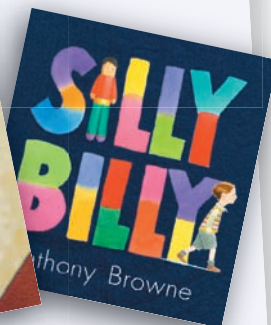
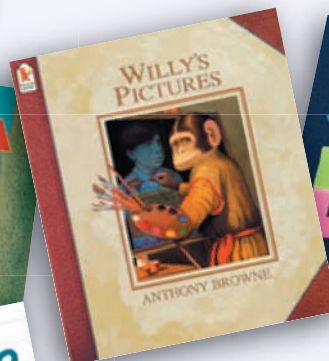
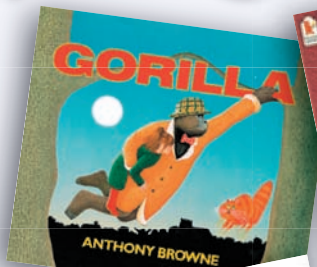
Anthony Browne

If you told someone that every time you

heard or saw their name an image of a gorilla came to mind, they would probably think you very rude and insulting. But there is one children's book author and illustrator who would not mind you saying this at all. His name is Anthony Browne, creator of such wonderful picture books as *Gorilla* (Julia McRae/Walker, winner of the 1983 Kate Greenaway Medal), *King Kong* (Picture Corgi) and *Zoo* (Red Fox 1992 Kate Greenaway Medal winner).

Anthony's fascination by gorillas stems, he claims, from the fact that he saw a similar contrast – between the gorilla's huge strength and gentleness – reflected in his father, a professional boxer, whom he adored: "He was an unusual man – outwardly strong and confident, but also shy and sensitive." Tragically, his father died suddenly when Anthony was just 17, but the author's memories of him permeate through many of his books, including the touching *My Dad* (Doubleday) which features the lines:

"He's all right, my dad. He's as strong as a gorilla and as happy as a hippopotamus. He's a great dancer, a brilliant singer, he's fantastic at football and he makes me laugh. A lot. But that's not all that's great about my dad..."



Gorillas are not the only animals to feature prominently in the nearly 40 children's books Anthony has produced. Much loved also is Willy the chimpanzee, a character who, the author

says, is based on his own childhood and who stars in *Willy's Pictures* (Walker), *Willy and Hugh* (Red Fox) and *Willy the Wizard* (Corgi).

All of Anthony's books demonstrate the same attention to detail, often featuring curiously surreal scenes which draw you back to them again and again. On each visit you spot new things in the artwork which you feel sure were not there before. It is no surprise that his work – usually illustrated in either watercolour or guache – has won him so much acclaim, including the highest international award for services to children's literature – the Hans Christain Andersen Award (2000). Today Anthony's paintings are exhibited all over the world.

Anthony has been telling stories since he was a young boy. Born in the Yorkshire village of Hipperholme in 1946, he grew up in a pub near Halifax, where he was

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frequently seen standing on a table, telling tales about a character he called Big Dum Tackle. He enjoyed sport, encouraged by his father, and played rugby as scrum-half for 18 years.

But one of Anthony's greatest loves, from an early age, was art and drawing and when he later went to Leeds College of Art he chose to study graphic design.

Anthony's first job after leaving college was a gruesome yet fascinating one – he became a Medical Artist at Manchester Royal Infirmary and spent his time drawing parts of human bodies and their internal organs, and often taking his lunch-breaks eating sandwiches in the mortuary!

But the similarity of the medical subject matter soon became a frustration, and next Anthony went into a very different line of work – designing greetings cards. For 15 years he worked for one of the country's biggest card manufacturers, Gordon Fraser. One of the many birthday cards Anthony created featured a scary, yet familiar-looking gorilla, holding a teddy bear – perhaps the inspiration for his next career move in 1975, into picture book illustration.

The first of Anthony's works to make it onto the bookshelves, in 1976, was *Through the Magic Mirror* (Walker). The story featured a boy called Toby who was fed up with all his toys and books, but who couldn't believe his eyes when he walked through a magic mirror and saw how different things could be. A whole new world was opening up for the author

too, as he embarked on what was to be a truly glittering career in publishing.

Did you know?
Anthony Browne was once bitten on the leg by a gorilla while presenting a television programme on children's books from the inside of a gorilla's cage.

Between June 2001 and March 2002, Anthony Browne was Writer and Artist in Residence at Tate Britain in London. His work formed part of a project called Visual Paths, which involved teaching literacy to children from inner-city schools using the resources from the art gallery. Inspired by his work with the Tate, Anthony produced *The Shape Game* (Picture Corgi), in which a typical family makes its first ever visit to an art gallery. The book features original gallery paintings alongside Anthony's own, and the children's, interpretations of them. Original artwork from this inspirational book is featured on Poster 1 in the May 2007 issue of *Literacy Time for Years 1 and 2, No 30 (Pictures and patterns)*. The same issue features two paintings from Anthony's book *Willy's Pictures* (Walker) and an original story specially written for *Literacy Time* by Anthony Browne himself.

