



Windows into Illustration: Anthony Browne

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[Anthony Browne](#) [1]

[118](#) [2]

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Anthony Browne explains the techniques and thinking behind his recent picture book, **Voices in the Park**.

Anthony Browne is a writer/illustrator whose words and images are inextricably linked and whose surreal style offers visual comments on his characters' inner worlds. He has won the Kate Greenaway Medal twice and the Kurt Maschler award three times. In this article he explains the techniques and thinking behind his recent picture book, **Voices in the Park**.

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Voices in the Park is a reworking of the book I wrote and illustrated in 1977, **A Walk in the Park**. I'd been wanting for a long time to tell a story from the points of view of the different protagonists and this text seemed the perfect vehicle. It's a simple story of a mother and son taking their pedigree dog to the park, and a father and daughter taking their mongrel to the same park. The dogs immediately interact, the adults ignore each other and the children slowly and tentatively begin to play together. A friendship starts to develop but they are abruptly separated by their parents and taken home.

I decided to tell each character's version of the day through his or her voice, and tried to reflect this voice in the style of painting in each section. This illustration is from the woman's voice and shows her taking home her dog and son after catching him talking to a 'very rough-looking child'. Each character's version of events takes place at a different time of year and her season is Autumn. The park she sees is very ordered and tidy (the only litter we see is trapped in the cage-like litter-bin), the trees have been trimmed into comfortably plump shapes, and everywhere we see reassuring, rich autumnal colours. She's annoyed at her son's behaviour so I tried to show her smouldering resentment and burning anger in the tree that seems to have caught fire. As they walk home out of the evening light of the park into dark shadow her son is obscured and insignificant, and they leave a trail of dead leaves.

The above picture is from the boy's version and we see the park from his point of view. Instead of my usual water-colour I've used line and wash here with tiny cross-hatching lines drawn with a pen, in an attempt to reflect something of the boy's repressed personality. The season is late Winter/early Spring and I chose a neat, spindly typeface which I hope also tells us something about the boy. He stands literally in his mother's shadow, and the dominating image of her hat is repeated throughout the scene. The colours are pale and cold with splashes of brightness that are other people and dogs enjoying their freedom and having fun. The blue sky seen reflected in the lamp-posts is possibly a suggestion of hope for the future. (Certainly the sky does become blue later in his story when he meets the girl.) Originally all these characters were painted as people, but at some stage I felt dissatisfied and found myself painting over the face of one of them in an attempt to make it more real, more human and less like a caricature. In front of my eyes as I painted it turned into a gorilla. And it worked. I don't know why?

[image:Anthony Browne.JPG:left]

Anthony Browne's books include **Willie the Dreamer** , **Gorilla** and **Zoo** . **Voices in the Park** is published by Corgi (0 552 54564 3) at £4.99. There is an excellent interview with Anthony Browne in which he expands further on the creative process and the nature of the problems he encounters in **What's the Picture?** edited by Janet Evans (Paul Chapman Publishing).



[Voices in the Park.jpg](#) [3]



[Anthony Browne.JPG](#) [4]

Page Number:

9

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[2] <http://feeds.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/118>

[3] <http://feeds.booksforkeeps.co.uk/sites/default/files/Voices in the Park.jpg>

[4] <http://feeds.booksforkeeps.co.uk/sites/default/files/Anthony Browne.JPG>