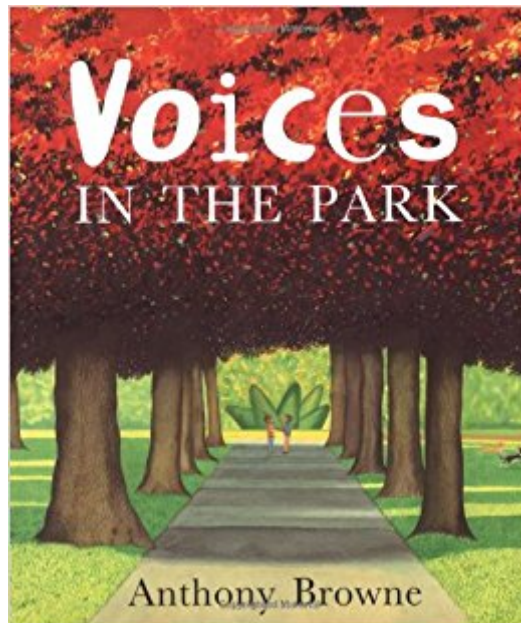


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# Voices In The Park



## Synopsis

Different characters tell the same story from their own perspectives in this timeless children's story book, which explores the themes of alienation, friendship, and the bizarre amid the mundane. I called his name . . . I settled on a bench . . . I was amazed . . . I felt really, really happy . . . Four people enter a park, and through their eyes we see four different visions. There's the bossy woman, the sad man, the lonely boy, and the young girl whose warmth touches those she meets. As the story moves from one voice to another, their perspectives are reflected in the shifting landscape and seasons. This is an intriguing, multi-layered, enormously entertaining book that demands to be read again and again. A Family Life Critic's Choice Award winner, *Voices in the Park* uses radically different perspectives to give fascinating depth to an otherwise simple story.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 560 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: DK Children; 1 edition (August 1, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 078948191X

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Product Dimensions: 9.9 x 0.2 x 11.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 96 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #11,309 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #76 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature #94 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > New Experiences #201 in Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works

Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Browne again proves himself an artist of inventive voice and vision as he creates perhaps his most psychologically complex work to date via a commonplace experience—a brief sojourn to a city park. The author of *King Kong* and the *Willy* stories again features anthropomorphic chimps, who provide four unique perspectives: an uppity, overbearing mother and her glum son, Charles; and an

unemployed fellow and his cheerful daughter, Smudge. What transpires factually is simple: the two children play together, their dogs do the same, the adults keep to themselves. Yet Browne reinvents and overlays the scene as each parent and child in turn describes their version of the events, altering light, colors and words. Browne sets up the tension by starting off with Charles's stylishly dressed mother, who lets her "pedigree Labrador," Victoria, off the leash and then scoffs at "some scruffy mongrel"(Smudge's dog). The matriarch similarly describes Charles's newfound friend as "a very rough-looking child." Through Charles's eyes, readers watch the tops of lampposts, gray clouds and a leafless tree take on the shape of his mother's large chapeau, as her hat-dominated figure casts a shadow over the boy. In the succeeding page, Browne cleverly frames a shift in Charles's mood with an illustration divided by a lamppost: threatening clouds and bare trees give way to blue skies and blossoming branches when a smiling, pigtailed (anything but rough-looking) Smudge on the sunny side of the park bench invites Charles to play on the slide. Browne offers readers much to pore over. His images reflect the human psyche; some are eerie (Edvard Munch's "The Scream" appears in the want ads; a burning tree provides the backdrop for mother and son's silent exit from the park), others uplifting. For example, the subjects of two portraits leaning on the park wall, a gloomy Rembrandt self-portrait and a weeping Mona Lisa, transform into a dancing couple under a street lamp fashioned from a flower, as the jobless man departs the park, cheered by his daughter. Although some discomfiting tones appear in the vignettes, Browne also celebrates the redeeming power of connecting with another human being. His creativity invites youngsters to tap into their own, as they look for clues between the trees and add their own spins to Browne's four interconnected tales. Ages 7-11. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kindergarten-Grade 5-A mother takes her son and their dog to the park, where she thinks about dinner and turns up her nose at the "frightful types." Meanwhile, an unemployed father sits on the same bench and searches the want ads while admiring his daughter's chatter and their dog's energy. The two kids, of course, find one another. In four short first-person narratives, each of the characters recounts the same outing from a different perspective and at a different emotional level. The mother is annoyed. The father is melancholy. The boy is bored and lonely, then hopeful. The girl is independent and outgoing, yet observant. The real "voices," however, are not found in the quiet, straightforward text, but in Browne's vibrant, super-realistic paintings in which trees are oddly shaped, footsteps turn to flower petals, Santa Claus begs for change, and people happen to be primates. Some of the illustrations appear in smaller squares while others are full bleeds so that

even the margins become part of the narrative. Browne's fans should find this even more satisfying than *Willy the Dreamer* (Candlewick, 1998). Because readers will want to compare pages (did that building turn into a castle?) and tarry over every detail, this book is best suited to independent reading. Even prereaders will be intrigued by the way a simple visit to the park can literally be "seen" in so many different ways. Nina Lindsay, Oakland Public Library, CA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wow, what a great story is "Voices in the Park!" What a delight to find such a clever presentation of point of view and how the companion attitude changes setting and dynamics of character. Wow again! When I first opened the book, I thought, oh no, *Planet of the Apes* revisited. The anthropomorphic characters are gorillas; their offspring look like chimpanzees. But once in the story, the reader forgets the "color of their skin" to see into their hearts. That's where truth lies, as Martin L. King, Jr. so accurately told us long ago. The literature teacher in our small Catholic school asked, not long ago, for a book on point of view. I gave her *Goldilocks and the Three Bears: Bears Should Share! (Another Point of View)* and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff/Just a Friendly Old Troll (Another Point of View)*, both written with another perspective, *Goldilocks and the Troll*. However, "Voices in the Park" is much better! Anthony Browne utilizes color, objects and setting to demonstrate point of view. The first voice is that of staid, uptight gorilla mom, well-to-do, with a pedigree dog and well-groomed little boy. She is none too happy to share a park bench with a seemingly down-and-out gorilla man. His is the second voice, one of despair, but he takes his son and dog to the park anyway. Then the two children have voices, the boy gradually cracking open his shell, the "rough" girl alive with energy and gaiety. Here's an example of Browne's use of artistry to display emotion: Gorilla mom looks at her son at the moment when he hands something to the girl (the scene on the book cover). All she sees is her son. During the girl's voice, that same scene is aglow with warmth and light because of the touching gesture. "Voices in the Park" will well serve our literature teacher, but more so bright children who will see and understand point of view and attitude and friendship and dogs running free in the park! Oh yes, this book is a keeper!

This book is so odd. And I love that about it, but get your white-out ready if you don't want your kid reading that one of the characters thinks another character is a "twit" and maybe one other place with startling language like that. I read it to my 7 year old stepdaughter (with the weird parts whited out) and she loves it. I don't regret buying it in the least. It offers what few other books do--change in character perspective and uniqueness in general. We laughed so hard at how a few of the primates

have "human" arms while most don't.

I bought this book a few years ago to use as a mentor text while I was teaching writing to elementary students. Although you can find multiple teaching points using this book (vocabulary, punctuation usage, point of view, etc) I didn't find myself using it as much as some of the other books I have purchased. As its been awhile since I have used this book, the story line does not stick out in my mind so I might try to revisit it again to re-evaluate my rating. I am giving it 3 stars for an average rating because it isn't a book that sticks out as a favorite but I remember it lending to multiple teaching points (although I believe you can find teaching points in almost any book). Once I revisit the book I will update my review.

Such a great book for teaching point of view! My students really enjoyed how goofy the illustrations were and it really peaked their interest.

As described -- fast shipping -- thank you!!

Great book for teaching perspective to middle schoolers - believe it or not. Beautiful illustrations.

OK

This book is a day in the park as seen by four separate voices. Reading it feels a bit like being part of a musical quartet--each voice adds something different to the overall story line. As always with a book illustrated by Anthony Browne, you will be rewarded as you study the pictures on each page. Magical and whimsical images are everywhere. If you read this book to a child, have fun varying your voice as you read each of the four characters--it makes it even more fun! The story line in the book is appealing to a child and also speaks to adults. This book is a special and beautiful creation!

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