Just Imagine Book Guide

Into the Forest
Written by Anthony Browne

Just Imagine...
About the Book

One night a boy is woken by a terrible, frightening sound. A storm is breaking, lightning flashing dramatically across the inky sky. In the morning, Dad has vanished and Mum doesn't seem to know when he'll be back. The next day Mum asks the boy to take a cake to his grandma, who is ill.

"Don't go into the forest," she warns. "Go the long way round."

But, against his Mother’s wishes, the boy chooses to take the path into a dark, mysterious forest, which is teeming with strange fairy tale characters. He must navigate this magical forest in order to reach his grandma.

This is an enchanting book that tackles feelings of loss, fear and insecurity. The boy must experience doubt and worry to reach his happy ending. The illustrations are sinister but magical and encourage the reader to delve below the surface – repeated exploration is definitely encouraged. Hidden in the black and white images are haunting fragments of fairy tales. This is certainly a delightful, intelligent and thought-provoking story, ideal for children in Year 3 and 4.

About the Author

Anthony Browne grew up in Yorkshire, and wanted to be a journalist, a cartoonist, or a boxer. He is now the award-winning author/illustrator of over 30 books, and was Children's Laureate for 2009-2011. In 2000 Browne was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, an international award given to an illustrator for their body of work. This prize is the highest honour a children's writer or illustrator can win and Browne was the first British illustrator to receive the award.
Before Reading

Mask the title of the book. Ask the children what they think the sign might say. Reveal the sign, which is also the title for the book.

Why might the illustrator/designer have chosen to present it this way?

Invite a discussion of first responses to the book jacket. Is there anything the children find strange or puzzling? Follow the children's interests.

Follow-up prompts might include

- Are there any clues that tell us what this story might be about?
- Why might Anthony Browne have chosen to use monochrome (black and white) for some parts of the picture and colour for others?
- Can you see anything unusual in the pictures (e.g. apple, the tower, the eye, the boy's shadow, the spiky, cage like branches, the frog). Offer some tentative thoughts…. I wonder why Anthony Browne might have put them in the picture. Do they remind you of anything?

The forest

Discuss with the class any experiences they have of visiting a forest. Did they visit at night or during the day? What feelings did it evoke?

Share pictures of the forest at different times of the day, and different times of the year. Briefly talk about the feelings that the images evoke. Invite the children to suggest words to describe the picture. Record their ideas.

Anthony Browne

The children may already be familiar with Anthony Browne's books. Invite them to share what they already know about the author and his books.

During Reading

First encounters

Allow time for the children to explore the book up to the page where the boy knocks on the cottage door. You can use paper clips to secure the pages so the children don't read past this page. If possible have them read their own copies, so they are able read at their own pace. Invite them to write down their responses, including any questions that arise during reading. Use the children's questions to initiate and structure a discussion. Some questions might be answered immediately, others might be written down and returned to later after further exploration of the the book.
Taking it further – returning to the text
At all stages invite the children to share their responses and avoid leading with too many questions. The prompts below are intended to be used as supplementary prompts. Select those that are appropriate for the group and will help them to look closer and think more deeply. You will find that they ask and answer many of questions themselves.

Page 1–2 The Storm
Invite children to share their responses to this spread.

Supplementary prompts might include:

• What might the terrible sound be? If the author had written, ‘I was woken by a loud sound.’ what difference would that make?
• What sound do you think wakes the boy?

Invite the children to share stories of being woken in the night be a storm. Or being woken in the night by unusual noises.

How do you think the boy is feeling? Use evidence from the picture, looking at his body language and facial expressions.

Is there anything unusual or strange in the picture? (You might direct attention to the pattern made by the head board or the cage like shadow cast on the bed sheets). The toy soldier has only one leg, how would that make life difficult if he had to face danger?

Page 3–4 Breakfast
This picture contrasts with the previous. All is quiet whereas the previous page was noisy. There are lots of empty spaces. The table looks empty, the chair is empty and casts another cage-like shadow. The light above the mother isn't on and her face is in partial shadow.

After the children have shared their initial responses, invite them to compare the picture with the one on the previous page. What differences do they notice? Are there any similarities?

• What sounds might there normally be around the kitchen table?
• Why do you think mum isn't eating? Do you think she has drunk whatever is in her mug?
• What do you think has happened to Dad?
• How would the text be different if it said, ‘I asked Mum when he was coming back but she didn't know’ and ‘I asked Mum when he was coming back but she didn't seem to know’

Page 5 Come home Dad
Why is the boy placing labels around the house?

There is just one short, simple sentence of text, ‘I missed Dad’. Share thoughts on what it means to ‘miss’ someone.

Make the point that sometimes the shortest sentences can be the most powerful.

Page 6 Don’t go into the forest
The boy’s Mum gives him a warning not to go into the forest. Discuss with the children any other familiar where characters are given warnings.
• Why do you think Mum gives him this warning? Do you think it is good advice? What would you do in this situation? Why?
• Mum doesn’t give the boy a reason for taking the long route. Is it important to be given reasons for doing things?

Pages 7-8 The quick way
• The boy says it is the first time he has chosen ‘the quick way’. Why do you think he decided to ignore his Mum’s warning?
• What sort of expression do you think the boy has on his face?
• What do you imagine he is thinking and feeling?

Pages 9-10 Milky moo-cow
Invite the children’s reactions to this encounter in the forest. Is there anything familiar, puzzling or strange about the boy with the cow?

Supplementary prompts
• Why does the other boy describe the cow as ‘nice, milky moo-cow’ and not just ‘a cow’?
• How did he know it was ‘sweet fruity-cake’ in the basket?
• What do you notice about the way ‘I’m poorly’ is written? Why do you think it is written in this way?

Pages 11-12 The girl with golden hair
Invite the children to share their thoughts and discuss what interests them on this spread.

Supplementary prompts
• Compare the expression and body language of the girl with the boy on the previous page. What does her body language and facial expressions tell you about her?
• Why is ‘I’d’ in italics?
• What can you see in the distance?

Pages 13-14 Darker and colder
• Review the previous encounters in the forest. How does this meeting with the girl and boy compare to the other meetings?
• What do you think about the boy’s response to the children? Challenge the children’s responses to encourage deeper reflection.

Anthony Browne has previously illustrated Hansel and Gretel and the characters are drawn exactly as he has drawn them in his earlier book. You may want to share this with the children.
Pages 15-16 The coat
Invite responses. Encourage the children to think about the coat.

- What is special about the coat?
- How do you think it appeared? Where has it come from?
- Why do you think there is a white light around the coat?
- Reread ‘as soon as I put it on I began to feel scared. I felt that something was following me’. Why do you think the boy feels like this when he puts the coat on?

Look at the illustration, describe what you can see to a partner. How do these images add to the atmosphere that Anthony Browne is creating? (they might spot a tower, a pumpkin, a glass slipper, a key and a spinning wheel, prince on horseback, eye-like images).

Pages 17-18 At last!
How do you think the boy feels when he finds the cottage?

Consider how the sentence has been written, ‘At last – there it was!’ How does the punctuation help you read the sentence? Ask the children to read it in pairs with appropriate expression.

Re-read the text, ‘I was terrified. I slowly crept in. There in Grandma’s bed was…’ How does the punctuation at the end help us read this text. In pairs, invite the children to read it with appropriate expression. Introduce or reinforce the term, ellipsis.

Make explicit the point that writers use punctuation to help readers interpret and understand the text.

Encourage predictions about what will happen next

- Read aloud: ‘Come in, dear,” the strange voice called.’ What do you think the voice sounds like and why?
- What might happen? Should he have gone in?
- Would you have gone inside?
- Who do you think is inside?

Pages 19-22 Dad returns

- What do you notice has happened to the colours used in the illustrations?
- What does the word ‘sniffed’ tell you about Grandma? What type of word is it? Are there any other verbs that could have been used here?
- Do you notice anything different about the shadows around Grandma’s bed and the shadow around the boy’s bed at the start of the story?
- Where has Dad been?

Pages 23-24 Smiling mum

Look closely at the way Anthony Browne has painted this final page. Is it different to the other pictures. Encourage the children to look back through the book and then share their thoughts. (They might notice that the scale is much larger, open arm gesture crosses the entire spread, there is no frame around the image). Ask them to reflect on how these differences make the reader feel when they turn the page and see this picture.

What do you notice about Mum’s coat…?
After Reading

Persuasive language
Revisit the page with the boy with the cow.

- Imagine you are the other boy. Try and sell the boy your cow. What will you say?
- Why do you think the boy answers, “No.” and not “No thank you.”?
- Bake a delicious cake by measuring out ingredients carefully and following instructions. Use your powers of persuasion to convince a partner to give you their sweet, tasty cake

Compare the story with other versions of Red Riding Hood
- Read a range of fairytales by Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm brothers
- Compare Anthony Browne’s story to Bethan Woollvin’s Little Red
- Read and act out the poem ‘Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf’ by Roald Dahl

Soundscape and movement
- Ask the children to consider what sounds they might hear in the forest.
- Invite them to use a range of instruments to create a composition.
- How would you walk into the forest? Would you tiptoe nervously or march in confidently? Act out how you would enter the forest, thinking about your body language and facial expressions.

Mapping the forest
- Create a map of the forest, using co-ordinates and directional language

Woodland habitats
- Find out about a woodland habitat – which animals can you find in a woodland and how are they adapted to their environment?

Fears
Is it always negative or 'bad' to feel scared and afraid? How can fear help us?

Art
Introduce children to Grisaille art work (black white and shades of grey) Grisaille work is used for a variety of purposes. It was used in Italian Renaissance painting to imitate sculpture, but it is also used for engraving. Consider why Anthony Brown uses the technique in Into the Forest. Have the children create their own Grisaille pictures using pencils.
Writing
Write a short message to Dad, on your whiteboard, asking him to come back and explaining to him why he should return home.

If you liked this book, you might enjoy…

Anthony Browne *Hansel and Gretel*

Anthony Browne *Me and You*

Jon Scieszka *The Frog Prince Continued*