

Gorilla by Anthony Browne

The story revolves around a young girl named Hannah, who loves gorillas and desperately wishes to see one in real life. However, her father is too busy to take notice of her wishes or spend time with her. On the eve of her birthday, Hannah receives a toy gorilla as a gift. Miraculously, the toy comes to life at midnight and transforms into a real gorilla. The gorilla takes Hannah on a magical and adventurous night out, fulfilling her dream of seeing a gorilla but also giving her the companionship and attention she craves from her father. The adventure ends as a dream (or does it?), and the story concludes with a hopeful note as Hannah's father seems to realise the importance of spending quality time with his daughter.

Genre: fantasy, family, adventure, animals

Themes: loneliness, friendship, imagination, empathy

Age: 5+

Activities:

1. Exploring Emotions and Relationships: Have students discuss the relationship between Hannah and her father, focusing on their feelings and how these evolve throughout the book. Students can draw or write about a time they felt neglected or misunderstood and how they overcame these feelings, promoting empathy and self-expression.
2. Art Analysis - Anthony Browne's Illustrations: Encourage students to closely examine Browne's use of visual motifs and surreal elements in his illustrations (such as the repeated use of gorillas in various forms). Ask them to choose one illustration and interpret its meaning, considering how it contributes to the story's themes. This activity fosters critical thinking and appreciation for visual storytelling.
3. Creative Writing - A Night at the Zoo: Inspired by Hannah's magical night, ask students to write a story about a night spent in a zoo or a museum where the exhibits come to life. They can choose an animal or artifact that becomes their guide, exploring themes of friendship, adventure, and discovery.
4. Drama - Role Play: Divide the class into small groups and assign them scenes from the book to act out, focusing on conveying the characters' emotions and the story's mood through their performances. This can help students explore character development and expressiveness in storytelling.
5. Research and Presentation - Gorillas in the Wild: Assign students to research real gorillas—their habitat, behaviour, and status as an endangered species. Each student or group can then present their findings, connecting the factual aspects of gorilla life to the symbolic representation of the gorilla in Browne's book. This activity encourages research skills and raises awareness about conservation issues.

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