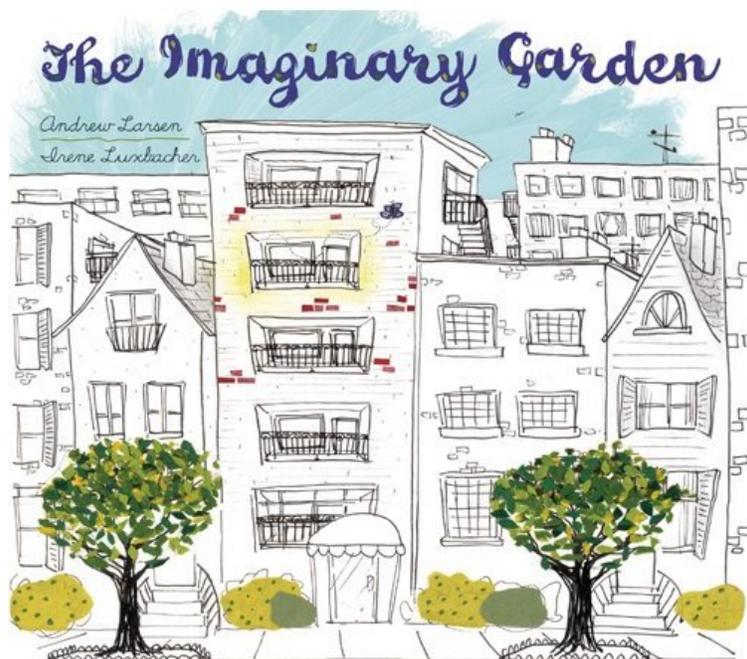


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## Picture Books



### **The Imaginary Garden**

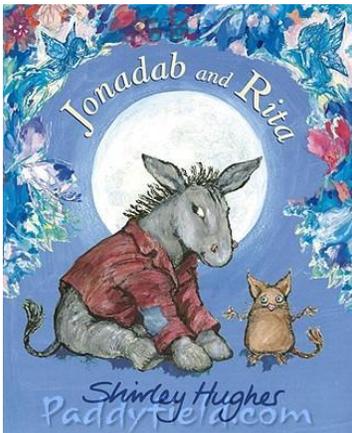
**By Andrew Larsen. Illustrated by Irene Luxbacher.**

Kids Can Press. 2009

Theodora loved visiting her grandfather's old garden, but time comes when house and garden are too much for Poppa and he moves into an apartment. The balcony is too windy for flowers and a garden of plastic flowers has no appeal. Then Theo suggests an imaginary garden and Poppa buys a huge blank canvas. Together they paint a wall for vines, a plot of earth and the sky. Gradually the garden grows and flowers, and, while Poppa is on holiday, Theo brings the tulips and daffodils into bloom.

Here the love of nature is fulfilled by the power of art, and, although the garden may lack perfume, Poppa and Theo make sure it is still visited by birds and butterflies.

As they watch Theo and her grandfather create their garden, children will learn some colour-mixing and techniques to use in their own creative artwork. But, above all, this is a delightful story of the pleasure of creating a lost garden in a shared experience. Poppa and Theo produce a joyful wall of colour and vitality.



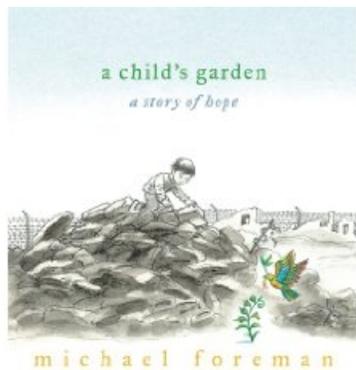
**Jonadab and Rita**

**By Shirley Hughes.**

Bodley Head/Random House. 2009

Jonadab, a toy donkey, and Rita, a rather battered stuffed mouse, are feeling a little neglected amongst the sophisticated new toys. Jonadab had belonged to Minnie's mother and her grandmother before that. He had been in the toy box so long Minnie no longer noticed him. Jonadab, however, had one gift. Jonadab could fly.

One night he poses himself on the windowsill and takes off, ending up in the park where he encounters a crowd of fairies who carry him off to a party. Here in a witty and charming play on "A Midsummer Night's Dream", Jonadab the donkey, adorned with a wreath of flowers, sits by the fairy queen. However fairies are fickle, they ignore him the next day and the poor donkey finds himself lost and abandoned in the park. Meanwhile Minnie has suddenly remembered her dear old donkey and she and Rita set off to find him. The story will appeal to small children and Shirley Hughes' copious and colourful illustrations once again capture the essence of childhood while her magical creatures here picture another world with wit and engaging other-worldliness.



**A Child's Garden: A Story of Hope**

**By Michael Foreman.**

Candlewick Press/Random House. 2009

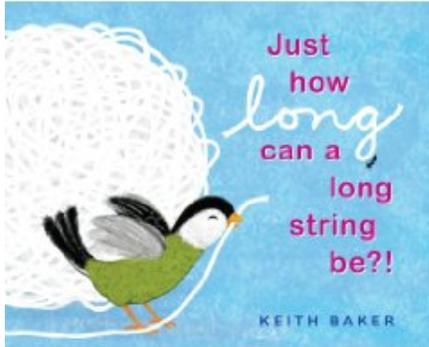
A little boy lives behind a wire fence, his village reduced to rubble. The cool hills and streams that he and his father had visited lie behind the fence and the landscape is bleak. One day he finds a tiny plant pushing up through the rubble. He cares for it, giving it water and shade. Week by week he tends it until its tendrils reach the fence and begin to climb. It is a grapevine.

Birds and butterflies find its shade bringing seeds and pollen with them, creating a garden for the children. Then soldiers come on the other side of the fence, tearing out the vine and throwing it in a ditch on the other side of the wire.

After a bleak winter the boy sees new shoots on the other side, but he cannot get to them to water them. A little girl appears and starts to come regularly with a bucket of water to water the shoots. Shoots begin to appear on the boy's side and the plants from both sides move together to the support of the fence. Now

children from both sides come to the new garden. "Let the soldiers return, thought the boy. Roots are deep and seeds spread."

In a gentle poignantly illustrated story Michael Foreman pays tribute to the humanity and spirit of healing that grips both children, and to the gentle persistence of nature.



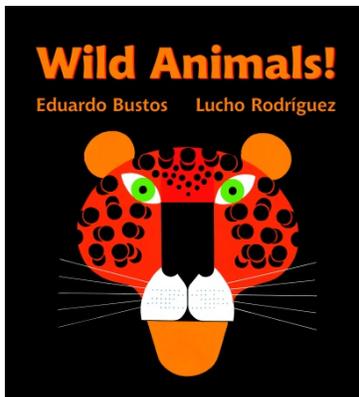
**Just How Long Can a String Be**

**By Keith Baker.**

Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic. 2009

Little ant is puzzled by a large ball of string and asks his friend, Bird, how long a string can be. Bird answers by breaking up the puzzle into how long pieces have to be. It depends, he says, on what you want to use it for. Broken into pieces the question is not so hard. It can be long enough to tug a balloon or wrap a parcel, long enough to tangle, or fly a kite, short enough to hang a picture or work a yo-yo. It all depends on what you want to use it for - so a problem can be broken down to its parts.

The clear soft-toned attractive illustrations add colour, and point, to the theme, engaging bird and his tiny ant friend in all the activities.

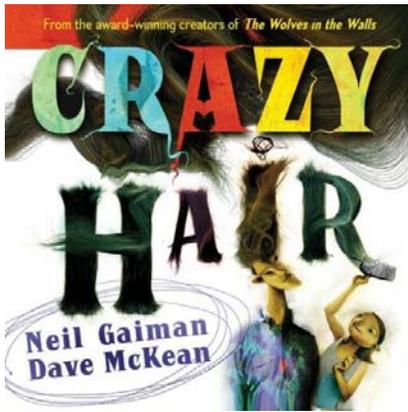


**Wild Animals**

**By Eduardo Bustos. Illustrated by Lucho Rodríguez.**

Tundra Books. 2009

Some of the most unusual animals in the world are pictured in this handsome colourful collection. A brief paragraph on each animal, accompanied by a full portrait, is faced by a formalist portrait of the animal's head. Displayed throughout the book on a black background, the illustrations stand out (especially the head portraits. These suddenly take on vivid drama and design). This is one of the loveliest and most striking depictions of animals I have seen. Here children experience both the creature and an example of design underlying each animal. This book is bound to make children even more aware of the world around them and the way an artist is able to formalize the natural world and look at the familiar in a new way.



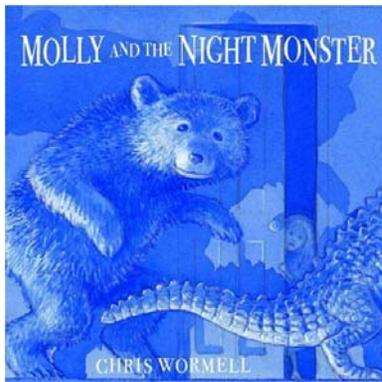
### **Crazy Hair**

**By Neil Gaiman. Illustrated by Dave McKean.**

HarperCollins. 2009

This is a wildly inventive book beginning with an impertinent comment by young Bonnie, "Mister, you've got crazy hair." Rising to the remark her companion bursts out with just how crazy his hair really is - cockatoos walk in it, tigers hide in it, explorers become lost in it. The images become ever more wild and creative. Bonnie decides it needs straightening, she will comb it for him, but a rumbling comes from the thatch and a huge arm pulls her into his hair so that she may join in the riot of activity going on there.

The text begs to be read out loud, allowing for a build-up and a comical release from pirate ships and tigers to cockatoos and great balloons that "Drift across my crazy hair." This combination of Neil Gaiman's text and Dave McKean's illustrations offers spiritedly creative entertainment.



### **Molly and the Night Monster**

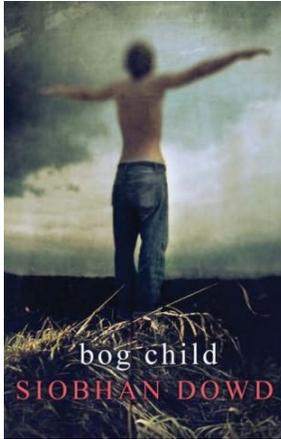
**By Chris Wormell.**

Jonathan Cape/ Random House. 2009

Chris Wormell's funny and gentle story takes on the bedtime monster with little Molly awakening suddenly at the sound of a step on the stair. Molly jumps out of bed in alarm, standing, listening for - a crocodile, or is it a bear, or is it a hippopotamus, or a giraffe, or an elephant opening her door, or a night monster. Grasping her quilt, Molly throws it over the beast who is Mummy coming for a bedtime hug.

The illustrations are in a medium to dark blue tone with a hint of moonlight slipping through a window. The room seems bare, all decoration hidden in the shadows, and so emphasizing the little figure standing apprehensively, her long fair hair lit by moonlight. Up the stairs the animals come, one by one, although the large bear gives a sense of being huggable, the giraffe benign, and the night monster apprehensive. We sense these creatures have a gentler side. When we turn back to the title page there they are, soft toys lined up and waiting for Molly. The build-up and the gentle conclusion are reminiscent of the build up in Ruth Brown's **Dark Dark Tale**. It is certainly very gently effective and bound to raise a relieved giggle.

## Fiction



### **Bog Child**

**By Siobhan Dowd.**

David Fickling. 2009

It is 1981. Fergus and his uncle have slipped over the border from Northern Ireland to dig a truckload of peat, a valuable item in the north. As they dig they uncover what they believe to be the body of a child. Fergus, horrified, at first believes the child is a victim of the IRA; but then police arrive and archaeologists prove the victim lived 2,000 years ago - and she is not a child.

Fergus is blackmailed into smuggling parcels across the border, parcels he believes contain semtex and therefore involve him in IRA murders. Meanwhile his brother Joe goes on a hunger strike, believing the strike will free Northern Ireland from its misery. Illusion follows on all fronts. Meantime Bog Child speaks in Fergus' mind, telling a 2,000 year old story of self-sacrifice - a sacrifice to bring together the parts of a broken people. At her end Bog Child finds love, and Fergus feels the first warmth and affection for the archaeologist's daughter.

Powerful emotions flow through the book, conflict and heroism, love and death, failure and tremulous humanity in the face of unknown danger and the tragedy brought by conflict. It is beautifully written-searching the soul, catching the breath, and celebrating many aspects of love.

Siobhan Dowd posthumously won the Carnegie Medal for **Bog Child**. Siobhan began writing the book in January 2007. She died that August at the age of 47 from cancer.



### **The Uninvited**

**By Tim Wynne-Jones.**

Candlewick Press. 2009

The prologue to **The Uninvited** introduces us to Cramer and his highly emotional mother, Mavis. When Mavis injures herself Cramer takes her to the hospital to be treated by a Dr. Page. As the doctor cleans the site, Cramer sees his mother's eyes smoldering "with something more than pain". We have the first clue to a complex mystery about to develop.

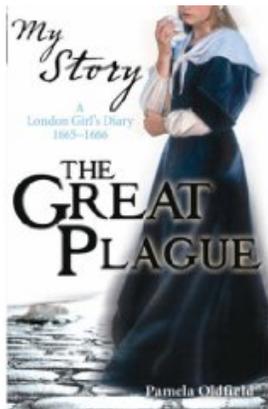
Mimi Shapiro must get away from New York and a professor whose interest in her has turned to stalking. She asks for the help of her father Marc, long divorced from her mother, and he offers the use of his cottage in a far off part of Canada. Mimi drives north to the Ottawa Valley to a little cottage which turns out to be already inhabited by a young musician, Jay, a half-brother her father had forgotten to mention.

Jay first accuses Mimi of being responsible for the strange things that have been happening in the cottage, but they gradually realize they are both being stalked, but by whom, and why? **The Uninvited** can be taken as a straightforward mystery, and enjoyed as such, but there is more to observe.

There are three children, one father - a self-centred artist dedicated only to his art. There are three mothers whose influence must and does affect their children. Jay, his mother and her partner have a relationship which Jay sums up when he is describing reading music, "No one is flat; no one plays too loud. Perfect balance, perfect harmony." For Mimi, she has made her brittle way without harmony. There is no deep relationship with her mother. There is disharmony for the third child, Cramer, as well. All this adds depth to the characters of Marc's three offspring. How did these mothers each deal with their abandonment by Marc?

These young people have grown up as only children. The author explores the effect of them finding each other. With Mimi and Jay in particular we can watch the growth of that relationship, the ease with which Mimi is accepted into his family and how Jay develops a "big brother" relationship with her, the only one to show a real concern for Mimi.

The novel deserves to be read several times - firstly as an engaging mystery, and then for the pleasure of watching how the author explores cause and effect in human lives. Jay and his family are the balancing spot between Mimi's "she can cope" relationship from career-seeking mother and father, and Cramer's protectiveness for his erratic mother - finding money for her paint, reading her mood by colour, getting for her what she desires, yet, himself, torn between being protective of her, and very fearful for them both.



**The Great Plague: A London Girl's Diary 1665-1666**

**My Story Series.**

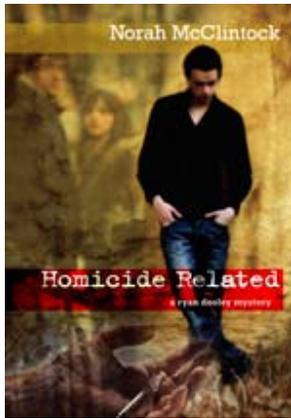
**By Pamela Oldfield.**

Scholastic Books. 2009

This is one of a new series designed to introduce young readers to historical events - in this case the Great Plague of 1665. Alice's diary begins with the day to day accounts of her life, building a portrait of life in Seventeenth century London. Word of the new plague spreads slowly mixed with rumour, superstition, and the normal gossip of the day. Then special prayers are being said, and we can read in her diary how the rumours and superstition become stronger still mingled with the everyday news. The tension begins to grow for the reader who knows what is afoot.

The descriptions of the growing panic, the horror of the disease, and the fear that drives people from London only to find neighbouring towns shut them out, is all imaginatively presented and the author never lets go of the personality of young Alice and her growing maturity dealing with how the plague affects those she loves.

## Fiction - Young Adult



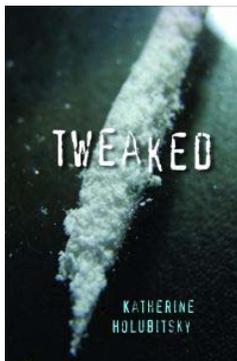
### **Homicide Related**

**By Norah McClintock.**

Red Deer Press. 2009

Dooley first came to our attention in **Dooley Takes the Fall**. As **Homicide Related** begins Dooley is with his uncle after a time behind bars, struggling to turn his back on his past life of drugs and alcohol. Now that he is legally in his uncle's care he lives under the strict but fair discipline that the ex-policeman imposes, and tries to put his life back together. He is making progress with the help of his girlfriend Beth when, once again the old life breaks in. Jeffie, a companion from his past, turns up needing help. First Dooley's mother is found dead, and then Jeffie. Dooley's uncle comes under suspicion and Dooley's struggle for a new life becomes endangered. Now he fights back, trying to find out who or what is behind everything that is happening, trying to help the uncle who had taken a risk with him.

This is a skillfully developed and gripping story about very real people whom we come to care about. Norah McClintock, five times winner of the Crime Writers of Canada Arthur Ellis award, once again gives teens a thoughtful but energetic account of a young man finding his own redemption in helping others.



### **Tweaked**

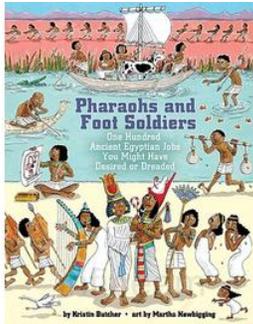
**By Katherine Holubitsky.**

Orca Book Publishers. 2009

**Tweaked** brings up an image of fine-tuning - pulling an inset until it fits perfectly. Unfortunately "tweaked" here means the state Gordie's older brother is in when he is becoming desperate for another dose of crystal meth. Sixteen-year-old Gordie takes us into the carnage that Chase has brought to the family, the \$2,000 Gordie raises by selling his guitar and emptying his bank account, only for Chase to take off with it instead of paying off his debts. Stresses rise in the family as each one tries to deal with the situation in their own way. We watch the family almost fall apart, savings gone, anything Chase can steal - stolen, and we realise Gordie's frustration and helplessness, his anger at the carnage Chase is inflicting on a family that still cares for him and wants to save him.

**Tweaked** is a powerful novel, a realistic one, and a deeply concerned study of the carnage that drug addiction like Chase's visits on a decent ordinary family.

## Non-Fiction



### **Pharaohs and Foot Soldiers: One Hundred Ancient Egyptian Jobs You Might Have Desired or Dreaded**

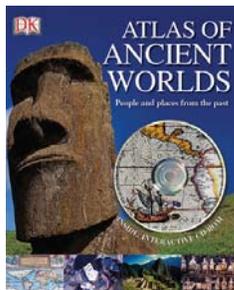
**By Kristin Butcher. Illustrated by Martha Newbigging.**

Annick Press. 2009

Subtitled **One Hundred Ancient Egyptian Jobs You Might Have Desired or Dreaded**, this is another in that witty and informative series that offered children the choice of jobs in the Middle Ages, Ancient Maya or Aztec realms, the settlers' days of the nineteenth century, Cowboys and Coffin Makers.

Like the others, this is a disarming and inventive way to learn a little ancient history. There were pharaohs and priests, yes, but we also have boat builders or reed cutters who worked naked in the hot sun, tormented by mosquitoes and sand flies. There are farmers and herders, miners and quarry men (a back-breaking job), members of the royal household and noblemen, magistrates and overseers of the Royal Treasury (a position of immense importance) and naturally doctors and dentists both of whom required a good knowledge of magic spells.

All of these, and more, build up a real sense of the times, giving, in both text and illustration, a vigorous and witty introduction to the society of Ancient Egypt.



### **Atlas of Ancient Worlds**

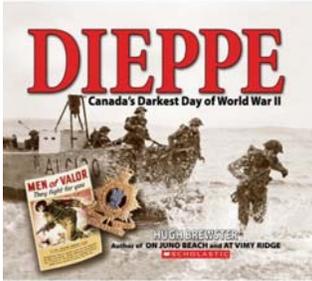
**By Peter Chrisp.**

Dorling Kindersley. 2009

This survey begins with a brief explanation of the meaning of civilization. Once people stop being nomadic hunter-gatherers and begin to farm, living in settlements together, the basic forms of government - a king and his court, account-keeping, writing and numbers, religion - gods to protect the people, and warfare - usually challenges for land and resources, set the pattern that makes a people with their own way of doing things, a civilization.

Maps delineate the areas of these civilizations, and illustrations, many with an overlay, depict the construction of well-recognized buildings and art works. A very brief history of the peoples offers an outline from Sumer, Babylon and Egypt to the development of Europe - the Minoans, Greeks and Romans. The Celtic peoples have their place - a notable addition, and then to the Indus Valley, China, Korea, South-East Asia with an interesting overlay of Angkor Wat, the peoples of the Americas, the Aborigines of Australia and the travelers of Melanesia who left their mark on the Pacific - the Maori of New Zealand.

This is not a detailed account, but a very good introduction that will make the names and the early cultures familiar to young readers. It is a stepping-off point, an intriguing invitation to explore further.



**Dieppe: Canada's Darkest Day of World War II**  
**By Hugh Brewster.**

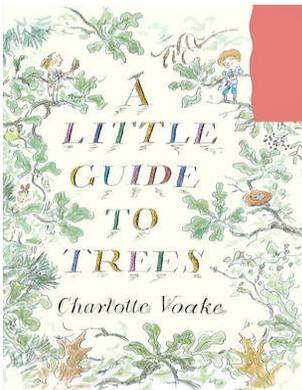
Scholastic Books. 2009

Canadian troops had been in England for two years, backing up defenses, helping with the harvest, but seeing no action. Canadian generals, afraid that the situation was bad for morale, lobbied Prime Minister Mackenzie King to give permission for them to see some action. At last he agreed they would be used on "minor" raids.

Dieppe, only 107 kilometers across the Channel, was chosen for such a raid. The beaches would take landings and it seemed lightly defended. On the evening of August 18th 1942 they set off. The group heading for Yellow Beach promptly ran into a German convoy entering Dieppe harbour.

Hugh Brewster gives a clear and balanced account of what happened from there, detailing the struggle that ended in surrender. Of the 6,000 men who took part, 4,384 were killed, wounded or missing. Of the 1,027 who were killed, 907 were Canadians. Those who surrendered were sent to prisoner-of-war camps where the Dieppe Canadians were shackled, by Hitler's express order, for "one year, 44 days and 45 minutes" (Colonel Labatt: Royal Hamilton Light Infantry).

As in his earlier books, **On Juno Beach** and **At Vimy Ridge**, Hugh Brewster gives a clear, thoughtful and moving account of this tragic time in Canadian Military History.



**A Little Guide to Trees**

**By Kate Petty and Jo Elworthy. Illustrated by Charlotte Voake.**

Eden Project. Random House. 2009

This is a companion to Charlotte Voake's earlier guides, like her **Little Guide to Wildflowers**, projects of the Eden Project which encourages recognition and respect for the natural world.

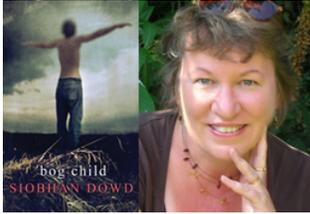
The text by Kate Petty and Jo Elworthy briefly describes each tree, its origin, growth and uses, and emphasizes the importance of trees to the balance of the natural world. Here you can discover which tree made Robin Hood's bow, or which makes cricket bats, which were used to build boats, and which was used to make the doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Finally there is a tree scrapbook at the end, encouraging children to keep a record of the trees they have found.

The text is copiously illustrated by Charlotte Voake's delightful detailed watercolour drawings depicting scenes from the mature tree to its fruits and nuts and the people working with the wood. It is a charming and engaging introduction to tree-spotting for younger children.

## Awards

**CILIP Carnegie Medal** <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/2009awards/>

**Bog Child** by Siobhan Dowd. Published by David Fickling



**Kate Greenaway Award**

**Harris Finds His Feet** by Catherine Rayner. Published by Little Tiger Press



## Featured Websites this Issue

**Article: Carnegie medal posthumously awarded to Siobhan Dowd**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/jun/25/siobhan-down-carnegie-medal-childrens-literature>



**New Children's Laureate: Anthony Browne,**



Author and illustrator Anthony Browne is the new Children's Laureate, taking over the post from poet Michael Rosen. < [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/2/hi/entertainment/arts\\_and\\_culture/8091081.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/2/hi/entertainment/arts_and_culture/8091081.stm) >



At once ordinary and mysterious...A picture from Anthony Browne's 1999 book Voices in the Park. Photograph: AET Browne

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/jonathanjonesblog/2009/jun/10/anthony-browne-childrens-laureate>