



The Big Book of Picture-Book Authors & Illustrators

by James Preller

S C H O L A S T I C
PROFESSIONAL**B**OOKS

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Introduction

Welcome to *The Big Book of Picture-Book Authors and Illustrators*! This all-in-one resource is a great way to introduce children to 75 of their favorite authors and illustrators, including Alike, Eric Carle, Tomie dePaola, Kevin Henkes, Leo Lionni, Jerry Pinkney, Patricia Polacco, Dr. Seuss, and many more. The interview-based profiles in this collection provide insight into the lives, work, inspiration, and creative process of these talented writers and artists. Share these fascinating mini-biographies with students to enhance author studies and help your students read with greater enthusiasm and understanding.

Great effort went into selecting the authors and illustrators included in this book. We spoke with a number of teachers and school librarians to find out which authors and illustrators students would most like to read about. James Preller spent many illuminating hours conducting the interviews and gathering information before writing the profiles that appear on these pages.

Each of these creative people offers his or her distinct voice and vision. Some make us chuckle, others make us cry, some rely on facts to tell of dramatic events that shaped our history, others spin yarns in irresistible verse. These authors and illustrators bring a rich diversity of experience to their work. They come from near and far: big cities and small towns all over the United States, as well as Puerto Rico, Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, China, England, Germany, Holland, Japan, and Northern Ireland.

And they all have great stories to tell. Faith Ringgold reflects on a wonderful childhood in Harlem; Shonto Begay explains what it's like growing up in a hogan on a Navajo reservation; Cynthia Rylant describes the influence of her Appalachian upbringing on her work; and Mem Fox shares the thrill of publishing her first book—after rewriting it 23 times!

Each profile is accompanied by a “Do It Yourself” activity—in most cases, suggested by the authors and illustrators themselves—to spark students’ creativity to tell their own stories. We suggest that you adapt these activities to meet the needs of your students. For example, younger children might draw pictures and dictate stories while older children might work through the writing process to create polished stories for their portfolios.

We designed this book with your students in mind. By learning about their favorite authors and illustrators, children gain valuable insight into the stories they are reading. This encourages children to read and provides them with models of strong writing, ultimately helping them develop into more fluent, capable, and motivated readers and writers.

Our hope is that this collection of interviews will help you and your students feel even more connected to these wonderfully creative authors and illustrators. And who knows . . . it may just inspire your students to publish their own books someday.

—The Editors

Mitsumasa Anno

Born: March 20, 1926, in Tsuwano, Japan

Home: Tokyo, Japan

SELECTED TITLES

Topsy-Turvies: Pictures to Stretch the Imagination
1970

Anno's Alphabet: An Adventure in Imagination
1974

Anno's Journey
1977

The King's Flower
1979

Anno's Medieval World
1980

Anno's U.S.A.
1983

All in a Day
1986

Anno's Math Games
(first in a series)
1987

*Anno's Aesop:
A Book of Fables
by Aesop and Mr. Fox*
1989

Anno's Magic Seeds
1995

Mitsumasa Anno was born and raised in Tsuwano, a small mountain village in Japan. Though it was a very beautiful village surrounded by mountains, Anno yearned to learn more about the world beyond it. Anno remembers, “As a child, I always wondered what was on the other side of the mountains.”

Anno’s boundless curiosity pertained not only to distant lands; he was also fascinated by mathematics, logic, entomology (the study of insects), and art. He possessed a lively imagination: “I liked to observe real people and make up stories about them. If a man walked by, I would think that he must be a carpenter or a doctor on his way to see a child in the hospital or whatever.”

In 1961 Anno first saw the drawings of M.C. Escher. These strange, improbable drawings excited Anno. It seemed to him that Escher’s drawings were almost like puzzles, riddles from another world—the world of the imagination. Newly inspired, Anno decided to create his own, Escher-like illustrations. In the book *Topsy-Turvies: Pictures to Stretch the Imagination*, he created impossible pictures of ceilings



that double as floors, stairways that lead up to a lower level, and water faucets that turn into rivers.

Anno wanted the book to challenge readers to see new things and think new thoughts. In a postscript to the book he explained, “I have purposely added no words to these topsy-turvy pictures of mine so you can make them mean whatever you want them to mean.”

Anno soon contrived another “book without rules”—*Upside-Downers: More Pictures to Stretch the Imagination*. He said, “My pictures are like maps, which perhaps only I can understand. Therefore, in following my maps there are some travelers who get

lost.” But for Anno, getting lost is just one more opportunity for the reader to find something new.

“It seems that although languages and customs are different in various parts of the world, there are no differences at all in our hearts.”

Anno’s Journeys

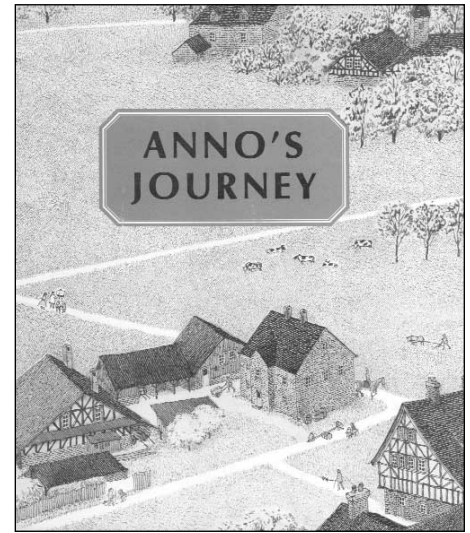
Anno’s first visit to Europe inspired him to write *Anno’s Journey*. Anno said of his journey, “My purpose for traveling was not merely to see more of the world but to get lost in it. I did often get lost and faced many difficulties, but under such circumstances there were always unexpected discoveries and interesting experiences waiting for me.”

Anno’s Journey was the first of four remarkable books based on Anno’s travels; it was followed by *Anno’s Italy*, *Anno’s Britain*, and *Anno’s U.S.A.* Perhaps the most surprising thing that Anno discovered in his travels was how similar people are to one another. He says, “Among living creatures, more things are shared than are different. Seeing a sunset in Europe, I was impressed by the natural truth that we have only one sun—that no matter where we are, we all see the same sun.” Differences such as language, dress, and skin color are only on

the surface. As Anno said, “The essence of being human is the same everywhere.”

Over time, many authors become associated with a particular character they created. For example, Dr. Seuss will forever be known as the man behind the *Cat in the Hat*, Norman Bridwell is beloved for *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, and H.A. Rey is famous for creating the mischievous *Curious George*. But Anno’s books rarely center on a main character. Instead, they seem to be about the world itself. Still, there is one recurring character—the lone horseman who travels through the pages of the *Journey* series. This character best represents the spirit of Anno’s work—the spirit of exploration and discovery.

The *Journey* books also provide readers with a treasure hunt of sorts. Hidden in the drawings are pictures of famous paintings or picture-book characters such as *Goldilocks* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. By hiding these treasures, Anno whispers a secret into the reader’s ear: The more you seek, the more you shall find.



DO IT YOURSELF!

When he finished *Anno’s Italy*, Anno said, “The book has no words, yet I feel sure that anyone who looks at it can understand what the people in the pictures are doing and what they are thinking and feeling.” Do you think that’s true? Try to imagine what some of the people in Anno’s illustrations are thinking and feeling. Write down a conversation they might be having.