



*ABE Hiroshi*

*2026 H.C.Andersen Award Nominee from Japan*





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## ABE Hiroshi

Born in 1948 in Asahikawa City, Hokkaido. From 1972, he worked as a zookeeper at Asahiyama Zoo in Asahikawa for 25 years. Gifted in drawing since childhood, he became known for his illustrations on the zoo's walls, signboards, and newsletters.

In 1981, he published his first book, *Asahiyama Zoo Diary*, and made his debut as a picture book author in 1989 with *Zoo on the Snow: The Mystery of Footprints*. In 1994 he received the Kodansha Publishing Culture Award for Picture Book and the Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award JR Prize for *One Stormy Night* written by Yuichi Kimura. This series gained widespread popularity and was adapted into an animated film, musical, and even a *Kabuki* performance. A new series will be published in 2025.

After retiring from the zoo in 1996 to focus on his creative work, he has traveled extensively to Africa, Australia, Russia, Alaska, Siberia, and Mongolia almost every year. Through these journeys, he absorbs the grandeur and mystique of nature and wildlife, continuing to create picture books featuring animals as protagonists.

In 2014, his book *To the New World*, which depicts young barnacle geese on their long migration journey, was selected for the IBBY Honour List and won the 4th JBBY Award. As one of Japan's leading illustrators, he has been nominated for the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB) seven times.

***Working at a zoo may seem like a detour to drawing pictures, but looking back, it was more of a short cut. More difficult than learning artistic technique is cultivating the mindset to decide what to draw. Animals and nature taught me that mindset.***



# STATEMENT

## Recommendation of Hiroshi Abe for the Hans Christian Andersen Award

Masuda, Yoshiaki children's book seller

Beginning in 1972, Hiroshi Abe worked as a zookeeper at the Asahiyama Zoo. He stayed there for twenty-five years. He was good at drawing, so he created delightful pictures of animals that were posted on zoo walls and signboards. From there, he did illustrations in journals for zoo professionals and local magazines and papers in his hometown of Asahikawa. His reputation eventually reached the desk of editors at the publisher, Fukuinkan, who asked him to create picturebooks.



*Fur Seals Verse (kodomo no tomo)*

One of his early works was illustration of *Fur Seals Verse*, written by Toshiko Kanzawa (known for *Little Bear Woof* and others). The humorous pictures of fur seals matched the rhythmical lines of text and delighted

young readers. The book was first published as an issue of the monthly children's series *Kodomo no tomo*, and was then released in hardback in 1995.

At about the same time, another monthly children's periodical, *Kagaku no tomo*, had a fold-in feature, *The Animal Times*. One of the most popular columns in it was "Questions for Mr. Seal." Children from around the country sent in questions, such as "Are goldfish in fish bowls happy?" and "They say that lions push their cubs off of cliffs and raise the ones who climb back up. How high are those cliffs?" Abe's job was to answer them in language young readers could understand and draw funny illustrations to go along with them. Readers were thrilled with these responses and the publisher was

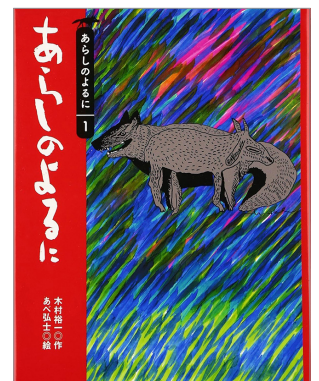


Monument of Amur leopard by Abe at the east gate of the Zoo

inundated with questions.

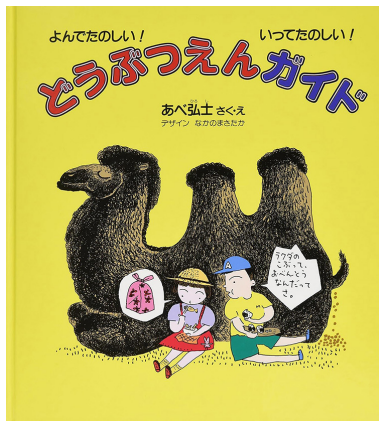
While this was going on, zookeepers at Asahiyama Zoo were talking among themselves about the dreams they had for the zoo. After their discussions, Abe would draw pictures of their ideas, and, gradually, the dreams began coming true. This was key to reviving the zoo, which had suffered from poor attendance. The story of the zoo's comeback was made into a movie and shown throughout the country.

Six years after Abe's first publication, in 1995, he received the Kodansha Publication Culture Award for Children's Picture Book and the Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award JR Prize for *One Stormy Night*, with text by Yuichi Kimura.



*One Stormy Night*





First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children

illustrations of new ways to enjoy animals in a zoo. On the camel page, next to a large picture of a camel, is a humorous explanation of what a camel's hump represents. Once a reader finds out that the hump is basically a camel's lunch brought from home, they go back and look at the cover. Sure enough, on it are two children leaning against a cool and composed camel while eating their own lunches. Using his experience as a zookeeper, Abe gives lots of interesting details of each of the animals described. This book was definitely created by an artist well-versed in the lifestyles and personalities of different animals.

On top of that he used different materials to draw the lines and add color to each. The elephant has skin drawn with a gray crayon over a colorful base. Scratches on the layer of crayon give it geometrical designs. The gorilla is three-dimensional, drawn with detailed pencil lines, giving the beast strength and authority. Animals drawn by Abe, who has their shapes and bone structure etched clearly in his mind, have nothing unnecessary or superfluous in them.

Nor does the artist forget to be humorous. If he is drawing ten monkeys, each of them will be different from the other, just like ten human children.



That same year, the three volumes of *First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children* published in *Kagaku no tomo* were published as a single hard cover picturebook, a favorite of staff at book stores. The book has

By 1996, Abe found it difficult to work as both a zookeeper and a picturebook creator, so he decided to retire from the zoo. After that, he traveled to the US, Europe and to Africa. He visited zoos, museums, art museums and children's art museums, and wherever he went, he made sketches. An enormous volume of sketches remains from his travels.

*A Long Day for the Lion* (2003) reads like a souvenir from Abe's trip to Africa. We see the endless horizon, lightning and rain, a huge rainbow, and the African landscape spreading out behind a family of lions. We can almost see the land itself living and breathing. The lines are spoken by the father of the growing lion family, an enchanting figure that charms its young readers. "Today was a good day, " he says. The Lion series has since expanded to four books.



A Long Day for the Lion

Abe's worked took a shift in 2015, when he published the picturebook *Inspired by the Poem "Asahikawa."* Of Kenji Miyazawa.

Motivated by the world of Asahikawa as described by the poet when he visited in 1923, Abe drew in what was a new style of expression for him. A long, straight road. Fallen leaves. Plantain and white clover. A black butterfly flying in the morning sky. Birds—Zubiak and Latham's snipe—

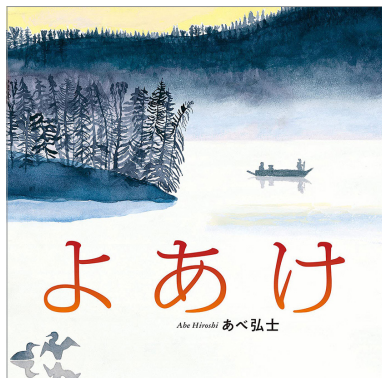


Inspired by the Poem "Asahikawa." Of Kenji Miyazawa





flying through the quiet sky over Asahikawa. To express the supreme enlightenment of Miyazawa, Abe included the Latham's snipe because tradition has it that the bird flies over Hokkaido as the envoy who returns to earth after hearing the voice of heaven. Twenty years lapsed from the time Abe learned that Miyazawa had been in Asahikawa until he finished this book. The product perfectly expresses his strong feelings about Miyazawa's visit as well as his own love for his hometown. Abe cleverly fills the white space on the pages with drawings of rows of weeping willow and larch (deciduous pine trees). Each page is a stand-alone work of art that readers can enjoy time and time



The Dawn

again.

*The Dawn*, a long-awaited work, was finally released in 2021. Abe himself has said that *Dawn* by Uri Shulevitz (original Farrar Straus & Giroux (1974), Japanese

translation Fukuinkan (1977)) was his starting point when it came to picture books, and what he was working towards when he wrote his own book of the same title. Shulevitz's work was based on the motifs of verses by Chinese poet Liú Zōngyuán. Abe created a book that was about a legend he heard from Udege

(ethnic group from the North) hunters whom he met on a boat ride down the Bikin River in Siberia. With the book, Abe says, he wanted to describe the dawn he experienced at that time. The main characters are an elderly man and his grandchild traveling down a river that flows through primeval forest.

The greatest impact comes from the pictures of a tiger and a wild boar. The animals appear in the dark, and can only be seen in the light of the moon. Through these pictures drawn in fine lines as never before seen, the reader is pulled into a new world. Other realistically rendered creatures can be spotted here and there, blending into the scenery as the protagonists continue down the river. There are loons, a moose, wild ducks, eagle owls, and a Blakiston's fish owl. Above them all is the sky covered in stars.

From the dark of night, the scene moves towards dawn. The fog rolls in and sunlight appears. Turning a page, the reader sees the instant a mountain range shines golden. Abe used a thick layer of crayon on this mountain. At this magnificent moment, we can almost hear an orchestra swelling to a climax.



見あげると、

満天の星を矢の川が横ぎっていた。





The sparkling river and mountains of dawn are expressed in a way that is only possible in a picture book.

*Aleutian Magic* (2022) came out the following year. At the end of the northern spring, Abe went to the North Pole, the Kamchatka Peninsula, and the Aleutian Islands. This was the time of year when



*Aleutian Magic*

plankton is generated in abundance in the northern Pacific Ocean. Living creatures from all over the world instinctively come in search of this important source of nutrition. Abe wrote this story using a magician, called Polar Man, holding a magic show.

It is indeed a magic show, one put on by the Aleutian Islands, with snowcapped mountains and people, birds and animals appearing on the scene.

But where is this Polar Man? We have to find him. Look, I see him right here. There's even a bubble with his laughter written in tiny lettering: "E-hen o-hon!" It's almost like a comic book. "Shu-ru-reen pop!" Polar Man reaches out his hands to grab—what can that be?—a giant octopus, a whale, a huge school of fish. Birds come flying out of eggshells, until the scene is dizzyingly packed with waves and birds. Have you guessed what Abe is trying to do here? He himself is out in the wilderness, playing with the

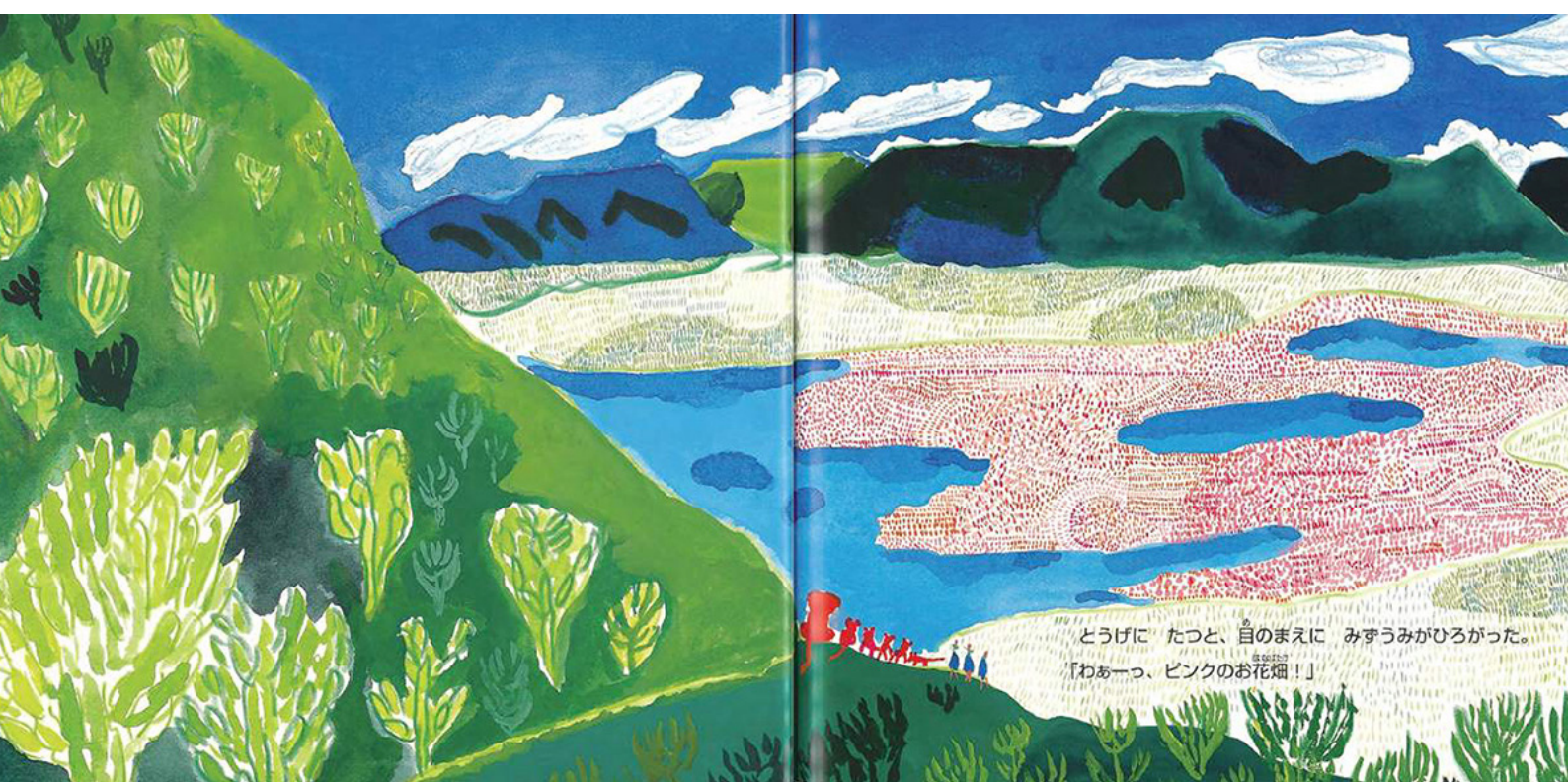
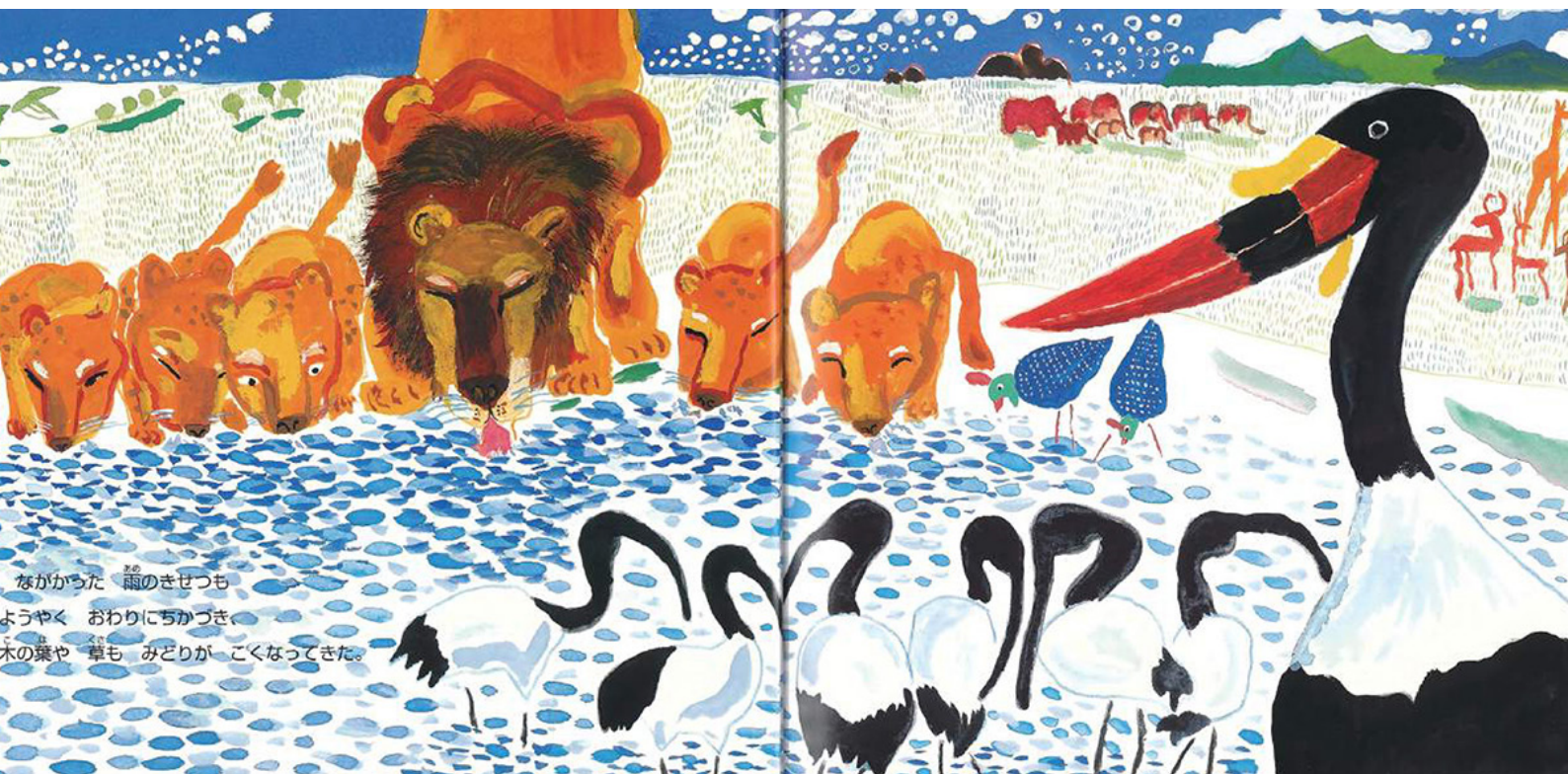
reader. It's all nonsense. The picturebook is the stage, and it's a musical show! At the end, two octopuses close the big striped curtains on the stage. We can hear a roar, and if we look closely, we can see the applauding audience perched on a block of ice. We also see otters, seals, polar bears, and a moose.

So, Hiroshi Abe himself is Polar Man. The author is constantly plotting and planning to surprise his young audience. Even when he was a zoo guide, when he joined children to make 3D animals out of cardboard, when he hiked snowy mountains or went down a river in a canoe. His mission has always been to astonish.





Hiroshi Abe still lives in his hometown of Asahikawa. His pictures are everywhere: in the plaza in front of the train station, on city buses, garbage trucks, and even on the maternity record book pregnant women are given at city hall. Plans are to open an Abe Hiroshi Museum at the Asahiyama Zoo. It's bound to be a favorite of children who come to the zoo to see the animals.





# AWARDS & other distinctions

## **One Stomy Night** (1994)

Kodansha Publishing Culture Award for Picture Book  
 Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award JR Prize  
 Selection of the School Library Association  
 Selection of the Japan Library Association  
 Living Newspaper Mrs. Choice Book Awards  
 Selected for *White Ravens* (Germany)  
 LEGA AMBIENTE "Environmental Alliance" Best Book Award (Italy)



One Stomy Night



Gorilla's Diary

## **First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children** (1995)

Selection of the Japan Library Association  
 Selection of the School Library Association  
 Ministry of Health Central Child Welfare Council Recommendation



First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children

## **Gorilla's Diary** (1998)

Shogakukan Children's Publication Culture Award

## **Hirochan series, 4 vols.** (1998)

Selection of the School Library Association

## **Purupuru the Hedgehog series 4 vols.** (1999)

Akai Tori Illustration Award



Purupuru the Hedgehog series

## **Animal Post** (2004)

Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award Nippon Broadcasting Prize

## **The Lion's Job** (2004)

Selection of Japan Association for the Study of Child Literature  
 Selection of the School Library Association



The Lion's Job

## **Are the Cranes Corrupt Landloads?** (2006)

Nominee for BIB  
 Selection of the Japan Library Association  
 Selection of the School Library Association

## **The Story of the Ezo Wolf** (2008)

Selection of the Japan Library Association  
 Selection of the School Library Association  
 Kenbuchi Picture Book Village, Viva-karasu award  
 Selected for *White Ravens* (Germany)



The Story of the Ezo Wolf

## **The Cat Doctor** (2008)

Nominee for BIB



## Awards & others

### ***The Cat of the Forest* (2011)**

Nominee for BIB

### ***To The New World* (2012)**

IBBY Honour List

JBBY Award

Nominee for BIB

Selection of the School Library Association

### ***Crocodile and Dolphin* (2013)**

Kenbuchi Picture Book Village Grand Prix

### ***Mr. Croquette's Crazy Adventure* (2014)**

Selection of the Japan Library Association

Selection of the School Library Association

JBBY Selection

### ***Inspired by the poem "Asahikawa." of Kenji Miyazawa* (2015)**

Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award Art Prize

Nominee for BIB

JBBY Selection

### ***The Kingfisher, the Lark, and the Nightjar* (2016)**

JBBY Selection

### ***A Couple of Owls Rearing Their Babies in a Pail* (2017)**

JBBY Selection

### ***The Bear and the Boy* (2018)**

Japan Children's PEN Award for Picture Books

Hokkaido Affiliated Picture Book Grand Prix

JBBY Selection

### ***The Day the Lions Saw the Wind* (2018)**

JBBY Selection

### ***Seabird Island* (2019)**

JBBY Selection

Nominee for BIB

### ***Tiny Dragon* (2019)**

JBBY Selection

Selected for *White Ravens* (Germany)

### ***Making Friends with an Elephant* (2020)**

JBBY Selection



The Story of the Ezo Wolf



The Cat of the Forest



Inspires from the poem  
"Asahikawa." by Kenji  
Miyazawa



A Couple of Owls Rearing  
Their Babies in Pail



The Kingfisher, the Lark,  
and the Nightjar



The Bear and the Boy



Seabird Island



The Day the Lions Saw the  
Wind



## Awards & others

**Question Box: The What and Why of Animals** (2021)

JBBY Selection

**The Dawn** (2021)

JBBY Selection

Nominee for BIB

**Aleutian Magic** (2022)

JBBY Selection

**The Earth Passport** (2023)

JBBY Selection



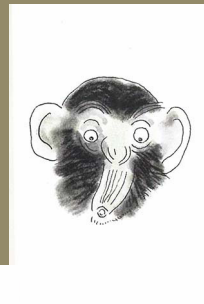
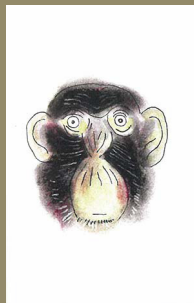
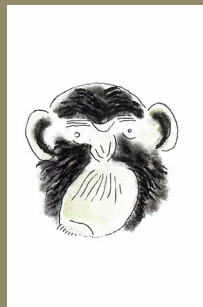
The Dawn



The Earth Passport



Aleutian Magic



from *First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children* (1995)



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1980s ▶



**Asahiyama Zoo Diary** | 旭山動物園日誌 (Asahiyama dobutsuen nisshi) | Tokyo: Shuppan Kobo Miru | 1981



**Arashiyama Guidebook: Birds** | 嵐山ガイドブック：野鳥編 (Arashiyama gaido bukku: yachohen) | text by Minami, Naotaka et al. | Hokkaido: Asahikawa Shizenshi Konwakai | 1988



**Zoo on the Snow: The Mystery of Footprints** | 雪の上のどうぶつえん-なぞのあしあとのまき (Yuki no ue no dobutsuen: nazo no ashiato no maki) | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1989



**Dancing Otter** | おっとせいおんど (Ottosei ondo) | text by Kanzawa, Toshiko | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1989



**The Zoo in the Snow** | 動物園は雪のなか (Dobutsuen wa yuki no naka) | text by Kosuge et al. | Tokyo: Nosangyoson Bunka Kyokai | 1989

1990s ▶



**Zoo Guide 1: Fun to Read! Fun to Go!** | どうぶつえんガイド① (Dobutsuen gaido 1) | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1991



**Zoo Guide 2: The Owl's Night is Very Busy** | フクロウのよるはおおいそがし (Fukuro no yoru wa ooisogashi) | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1992



**Gorillas are Gorillas** | ゴリラはゴリラ (Gorira wa gorira) | text by Kudo, Naoko | Tokyo: Dowaya | 1992



**Zoo Guide 3: The Turtle Carries Its Home** | カメはおうちをしょっている (Kame wa ouchi o shotte iru) | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1993



**The Time of Elephant and the Time of Mouse** | ゾウの時間とネズミの時間 (Zo no jikan to nezumi no jikan) | text by Motokawa, Tatsuo | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1994



**Zoo Story** | どうぶつえん物語 (Dobutsuen monogatari) | Tokyo: Ehonkan | 1994



**What Happened to Mr. Praying Mantis?** | カマキリさんどうしたの (Kamakiri san dou shitano) | text by Sawaguchi, Tamami | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1994



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**Talk with Panda, Play with Cat** | パンダと話そう・ネコと遊ぼう (Panda to hanaso. Neko to asobo) | text by Nakagawa, Shiro | Tokyo: Data House | 1994



**One Stormy Night** | あらしのよるに (Arashi no yoru ni) | text by Kimura, Yuichi | Tokyo: Kodansha | 1994



**Lullaby of the Wind** | かぜのこもりうた (Kaze no komori uta) | text by Kudo, Naoko | Tokyo: Dowaya | 1994



**Owl's Glasses** | ふくろうめがね (Fukuro megane) | text by Kudo, Naoko | Tokyo: Dowaya | 1994



**I Love Bugs after all!** | 何てったって、虫が好き! (Nan tettatte, mushi ga suki!) | Tokyo: Dainippon Tosho | 1995



**First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children (Complete Edition)** | どうぶつえんガイド (Dobutsuen gaido) | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1995



**Frostbitten Bear** | しもやけぐま (Shimoyake guma) | text by Imae, Yoshitomo | Tokyo: Sodobunka | 1995



**Put a Banana on Your Head** | バナナをかぶって (Banana o kabutte) | by Nakagawa, Hirotaka | Tokyo: Crayon House | 1996



**One Sunny Day** | あるはれたひに (Aru hareta hi ni) | text by Kimura, Yuichi | Tokyo: Kodansha | 1996



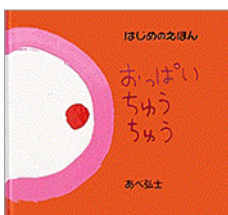
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**The Red Bird** | あかいとり (Akai tori) | Tokyo: Doshinsha | 1997



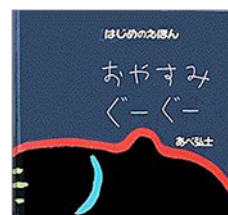
**The Complete Guide on Insects** | 虫の生きかたガイド (Mushi no ikikata gaido) | text by Sawaguchi, Tamami | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1997



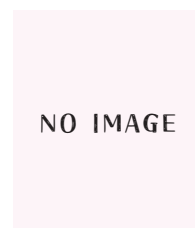
**Mama's Milk, Choo-Choo** | おっぱいちゅうちゅう (Oppai chu chu) | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 1997



**Come Here, Come Here** | おいでおいで (Oide oide) | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 1997



**Good Night, Guu-Guu** | おやすみぐーぐー (Oyasumi gu gu) | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 1997



**The Homeland of Drift Ice** | 流氷のふるさと (Ryuhyo no furusato) | text by Kanzawa, Toshiko | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1997



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**Greetings: The Lion's Story** | あいさつライオンの物語 (Aisatsu: Raion no monogatari) | text by Hani, Susumu et al. | Tokyo: Mitsumura kyoiku tosho | 1997



**Bravery: The Wildebeest's Story** | 勇気: ヌーの物語 (Yuki: Nu no monogatari) | text by Hani, Susumu et al. | Tokyo: Mitsumura kyoiku tosho | 1997



**Someone was Looking at the Stars** | だれかがほしをみていた (Dareka ga hoshi o mite ita) | text by Shinzawa, Toshihiko | Tokyo: Ask Music | 1997



**The Mystery of Footprints on Snow** | 雪の上のなぞのあしあと (Yuki no ue no nazo no ashiato) | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1997



**The Northern Zoo: The Wonderful Friends of Asahikawa** | きたの動物園 (Kita no dobutsuen) | text by Sugano, Hiroshi | Hokkaido: Asahikawa Sosho | 1997



**Shin-chan's Fireworks** | しんちゃんのはなび (Shin-chan no hanabi) | text by Shinzawa, Toshihiko | Tokyo: Doshinsha | 1998



**Hello** | こんにちは (Konnichiwa) | text by Nakagawa, Hiroataka | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 1998



**Thank You** | ありがとう (Arigato) | text by Nakagawa, Hiroataka | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 1998



**Congratulations** | おめでとう (Omedeto) | text by Nakagawa, Hiroataka | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 1998



**Can I have...?** | くださいな (Kudasaina) | text by Nakagawa, Hiroataka | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 1998



**Frog's Bento Shop** | カエルのべんとうや (Kaeru no bento ya) | text by Yasue, Rie | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1998

NO IMAGE

**The Swallow's Journey** | ツバメの旅 (Tsubame no tabi) | text by Takamatsu, Yo | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1998

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**Gender: The Story of the Crowned Crane** | 性-カンムリヅルの物語 (Sei: Kanmuri zuru no monogatari) | text by Hani, Susumu et al. | Tokyo: Mitsumura kyoiku tosho | 1998

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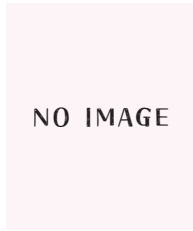
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**Stories for 1st Grade, vol.2** | 1年の読み物特集(下)「あんなうんこ こんなうんこ」(Ichinen no yomimono tokushu 2) | Tokyo: Gakken | 1998



**Gorilla's Diary** | ゴリラにっき (Gorira nikki) | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 1998



**Cherry Picking Contest in Forest** | 森のサクランボつみ大会 (Mori no sakuranbo tsumi taikai) | text by Ninomiya, Yukiko | Tokyo: Bunkeido | 1999



**Under the Fig Tree** | イチジクの木の下で (Ichijiku no ki no shita de) | text by Ninomiya, Yukiko | Tokyo: Bunkeido | 1999



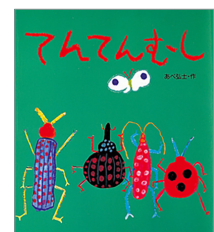
**Going to Look for the Fragrant Olive** | キンモクセイをさがしに (Kinmokusei o sagashi ni) | text by Ninomiya, Yukiko | Tokyo: Bunkeido | 1999



**Veiled in a Fog** | きりのなかで (Kiri no naka de) | text by Kimura, Yuichi | Tokyo: Kodansha | 1999



**Come together, Black Wings!** | ブラック・ウィングス、集合せよ (Burakku uingusu, shugo seyo) | text by Hashimoto, Kaori | Osaka: Kaiho Shuppansha | 1999

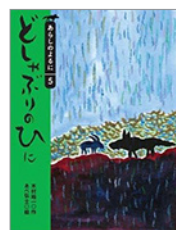


**Insects with Dots** | てんてんむし (Tenten mushi) | Tokyo: Doshinsha | 1999

## 2000s ▶



**Let's Try To Be Animals** | どうぶつになてみよう (Dobutsu ni natte miyo) | text by Nakano, Masataka | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 2000



**One Rainy Day** | どしゃぶりのひに (Doshaburi no hi ni) | text by Kimura, Yuichi | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2000



**Message from the Forest 1** | 森からのてがみ① (Mori kara no tegami 1) | original text by N. Sladkov | trans. Matsuya, Sayaka | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 2000



**Animal News Time 1** | どうぶつニュースの時間① (Dobutsu nyusu no jikan) | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2000



**Legends** | でんせつ (Densetsu) | text by Kudo, Naoko | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2000



**Let's Play with Stickers! The Zoo** | シールであそぼう! どうぶつえん (Shiru de asobo: Dobutsuen) | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 2001



**Swanee the Crocodile 1** | わにのスワニー① (Wani no Suwani 1) | text by Nakagawa, Hirofumi | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2001



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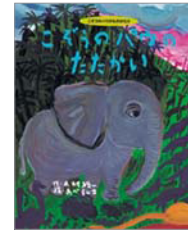
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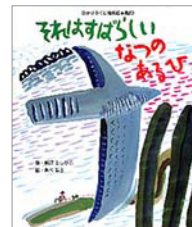
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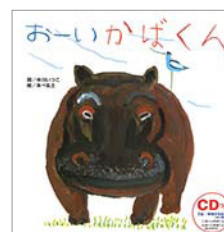
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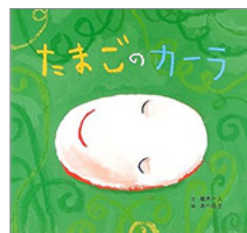
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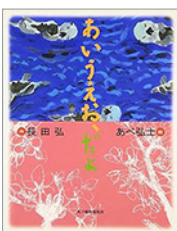
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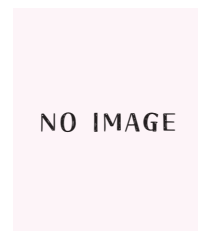
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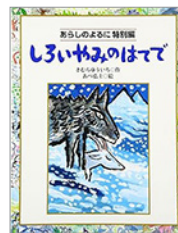
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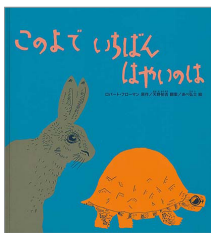
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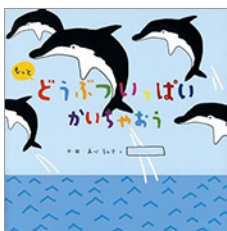
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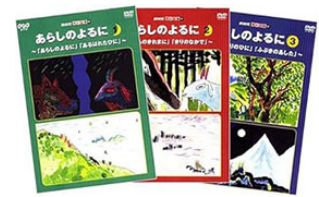
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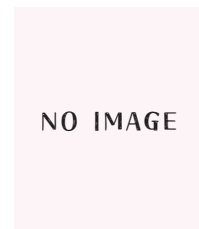
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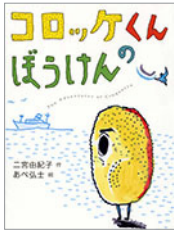


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**A Couple of Owls Rearing Their Babies in a Pail** | 手おけのふくろう (Teoke no fukuro) | text by Hirano, Nobuaki | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 2017



**Three Otter Siblings: The Tiger's Story** | かろうそ3きょうだい とらのまき (Kawauso san kyodai: tora no maki) | Tokyo: Komine Shoten | 2017



**Surprised by Myself** | 自分におどろく (Jibun ni odoroku) | text by Tanaka, Kazuo | Tokyo: Dowaya | 2017



**Daizo the Old Man and the Goose** | 大造じいさんとガン (Daizo jiisan to gan) | text by Muku, Hatoju | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2017



**Animal Quiz Class** | どうぶつクイズ教室 (Dobutsu kuizu kyoshitsu) | Tokyo: Crayon House | 2018



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| チンパンジーのおんがくかい  
(Chimpanji no ongaku kai) |  
Tokyo: Doshinsha | 2018



**The Bear and the Boy** | ク  
マと少年 (Kuma to shonen) |  
Tokyo: Bronze Shinsha | 2018



**The Day the Lions Saw the Wind** | ライオンの風をみた  
いちにち (Raion no kaze o  
mita ichinichi) | Tokyo: Kose  
Shuppansha | 2018



**Kabuki: One Stormy Night** |  
歌舞伎あらしによりに (Kabuki  
arashi no yoru ni) | Tokyo:  
Kodansha | 2018



**After 100 Years** | 100年たった  
ら (Hyakunen tattara) | Tokyo:  
Alice-kan | 2018



**Animal Family: Cheetah the Little Hunter** | チーター、ちい  
さなハンター (Chiita, chiisana  
hanta) | text by Sato, Madoka |  
Tokyo: Kodansha | 2018



**Seabird Island** | うみどりの  
島 (Umidori no shima) | text  
by Terasawa, Takaki | Tokyo:  
Kaiseisha | 2019



**Encyclopedia on Animal Friendships: pocket edition**  
| どうぶつ友情辞典: 文庫版  
(Dobutsu yujo jiten) | Tokyo:  
KADOKAWA | 2019



**The Frostbitten Bear: new edition** | しもやけぐま  
新装版 (Shimoyake guma  
shinsoban) | text by Imae,  
Yoshitomo | Tokyo: Bunken  
Shuppan | 2019



**Tiny Dragon** | ちび竜 (Chibi  
ryu) | text by Kudo, Naoko |  
Tokyo: Doshinsha | 2019



**Picture Book of Riddle Poems** | えほんなぞなぞうた  
(Ehon nazonazo uta) | text  
by Tanikawa, Shuntaro | Tokyo:  
Dowaya | 2020



**Seton's Wild Animals retold by Abe 1: Lobo, the King of Currumpaw** | オオカミ王ロボ (Okami-o Robo) | Tokyo: Gakken | 2020



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**The Turtle and the Black Jaguar** | カメとクロジャガー (Kame to Kuro jaga) | text by Hoshino, Yumi | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 2021



**Osamu** | オサム (Osamu) | text by Tanikawa, Shuntaro | Tokyo: Dowaya | 2021



**Question Box: The What and Why of Animals** | 動物なぜなに質問箱 (Dobutsu naze nani shitsumon bako) | text by Kogure, Masao | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2021



**The Dawn** | よあけ (Yoake) | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2021



**Seton's Wild Animals retold by Abe 3: Wab the Grizzly** | 灰色グマのワブ (Haiiro guma no Wapu) | Tokyo: Gakken | 2021



**Seton's Wild Animals retold by Abe 4: Bannertail the Graysquirrel** | リスのバンナテイル (Risu no Banateiru) | Tokyo: Gakken | 2021



**Seton's Wild Animals retold by Abe 5: Domino the Silver-Fox** | 銀ギツネのドミノ (Gin gitsune no Domino) | Tokyo: Gakken | 2022



**Aleutian Magic** | アリューシャン・マジック (Aryushan magikku) | Tokyo: Nora Shoten | 2022



**Summer** | 夏 (Natsu) | Tokyo: Holp Shuppan | 2023



**Animal Encyclopedia: Who is it?** | あてっこ どうぶつずかんだれ (Ateko dobutsu zukan dare) | Tokyo: KADOKAWA | 2023



**Spinning Around Palindrome News** | くるくるまわる 回文ニュース (Kurukuru mawaru kaibun nyusu) | text by Seto, Chitose | Tokyo: Sogasha | 2023



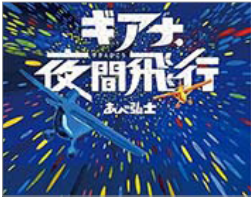
**Spring Comes After Winter** | ふゆのあとにははるがきます (Fuyu no ato ni wa haru ga kimasu) | text by Ishii, Mutsumi | Tokyo: Alice-kan | 2023



**The Earth Passport** | ちきゅうパスポート (Chikyu pasupoto) | by 24 picture book authors | Hyogo: BL Shuppan | 2023



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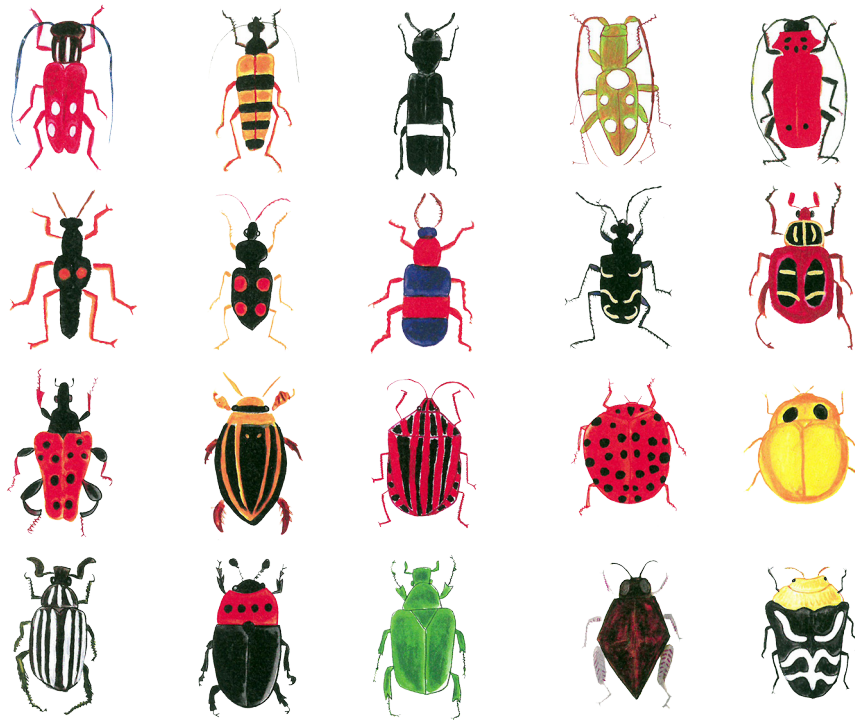
**Guyane, Night Flight** | ギアナ、夜間飛行 (Giana, Yakan hiko) | Tokyo: Nora Shoten | 2024



**Wild Rose** | 野ばら (Nobara) | text by Ogawa, Mimei | Tokyo: Kinnohoshisha | 2024



**Picture Book of the poem Noharauta** | のはらうた絵本 (Nohara uta ehon) | text by Kudo, Naoko | Tokyo: Dowaya | 2024



from *Insects with Dots* (1999)

# Translated editions

Title	Publisher	Chinese Complex	Chinese Simplified	Korean	Vietnamese	Italian	Portuguese
絵とき ゾウの時間とネズミの時間 The Time of Elephant and the Time of Mouse	Fukuinkan Shoten	•	•				
あらしのよるに① あらしのよるに One Stormy Night	Kodansha	•	•	•			•
あらしのよるに② あるはれたひに One Sunny Day	Kodansha	•	•	•			
あらしのよるに③ くものきれまに A Rift in the Clouds	Kodansha	•	•	•			
あらしのよるに④ きりのなかで Veiled in a Fog	Kodansha	•	•	•			
あらしのよるに⑤ どしゃぶりのひに On Rainy Day	Kodansha	•	•	•			
あらしのよるに⑥ ふぶきのあした Another Snowstormy Day	Kodansha	•	•	•			
あらしのよるに⑦ まんげつのよるに One Full-Moon Night	Kodansha	•	•	•			
完全版 あらしのよるに One Stormy Night: Complete Edition	Kodansha	•				•	
どうぶつえんガイド First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children	Fukuinkan Shoten	•	•	•			
虫の生きかたガイド The Complete Guide on Insects	Fukuinkan Shoten			•			
どうぶつになってみよう Let's Try to Be Animals	Fukuinkan Shoten			•			
森からのてがみ Messages From The Forest	Fukuinkan Shoten	•					
トラのナガシッポ Tiger with a Long, Long Tail	Fukuinkan Shoten			•			
わにのswaniー①②③ Swani, the Crocodil 3 vols.	Kodansha	•					
からだのなかでドゥンドゥンドゥン That Thump Thump Thumping Inside	Fukuinkan Shoten			•			
ライオンのしごと The Lion's Job	Kaiseisha			•			
タンチョウは悪代官か？ Is the Crane a Evil Magistrate?	Kaiseisha	•					
くじらのあかちゃんおおきなあれ Grow Up, A Little Baby Whale	Fukuinkan Shoten	•		•	•		



Title	Publisher	Chinese Complex	Chinese Simplified	Korean	Vietnamese	Italian	Portuguese
このよでいちばんはやいのは What Is The Fastest In The World	Fukuinkan Shoten			●			
ゴリラとあそんだよ I Played With Gorillas In The Schoolyard	Fukuinkan Shoten	●					
ぞうとかぼちゃ The Sweet Pumpkins Born From Elephant's Poops	Fukuinkan Shoten			●			
ねこのおいしゃさん The Cat Doctor	Soensha	●					
新世界へ To The New World	Kaiseisha		●				
ふたごのしろくま：くるくるぱっちんのまき The Twin Polar Bears: Twirling and Snapping	Kodansha		●				
ふたごのしろくま：とりさん、なんば？のまき The Twin Polar Bears: How Many Birds Are There?	Kodansha		●				
ふたごのしろくま：ねえ、おんぶのまき The Twin Polar Bears: Mum, Give Me a Piggyback Ride	Kodansha		●				
こんちき号北極探検記：ホッキョクグマを求めて 3000 キロ The Kon-Tiki Expedition to the Arctic: 3,000 Kilometers in Search of the Polar Bear	Kodansha	●		●			
よあけ The Dawn	Kaiseisha		●				



# 10 important titles



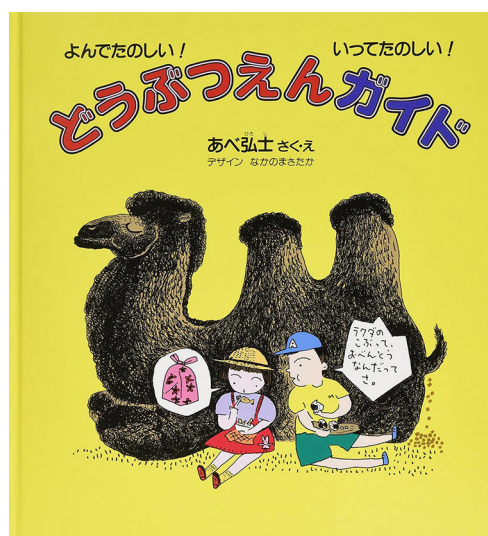
★ = books sent to jurors

- ***First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children* ★**  
designed by Nakano, Masataka | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 1995
- ***A Long Day for the Lion (Lion series #03)* ★**  
Tokyo: Kose Shuppansha | 2004
- ***Inspired by the poem "Asahikawa." of Kenji Miyazawa* ★**  
Hyogo: BL Shuppan | 2015
- ***The Dawn* ★**  
Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2021
- ***Aleutian Magic* ★**  
Tokyo: Nora Shoten | 2022
- ***One Stormy Night (series #01-07)***  
text by Kimura, Yuichi | Tokyo: Kodansha | 1994
- ***The Story of the Ezo Wolf***  
Tokyo: Kodansha | 2008
- ***The Bear and the Boy***  
Tokyo: Bronze Shinsha | 2018
- ***Osamu***  
text by Tanikawa, Shuntaro | Tokyo: Dowaya | 2021
- ***Summer***  
Tokyo: Holp Shuppan | 2023



## ★ Book Sent to the Jurors

### First Book of Zoo Guide for Small Children



original title	どうぶつえんガイド
romanisation	Dobutsuen gaigo
text & illus.	Abe, Hiroshi
design	Nakano, Masataka
publisher	Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten
publication year	1995
awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selection of the Japan Library Association</li><li>• Selection of the Japan School Library Association</li><li>• Ministry of Health Central Child Welfare Council Recommendation</li></ul>
translations	Chinese Complex   Chinese Simplified   Korean

## REVIEW

### ■ Hekacchi

June 2016, The Japanese Society of Children's Literature  
Hokkaido Branch

### On Zoo Guide

Kubota, Chieko (researcher)

This work is a single-volume book based on three titles previously published as part of the *Kagaku no Tomo* series: *Zoo Guide: Fun to Read! Fun to Go!* (Issue 265, April 1991), *The Owl's Night is Very Busy* (Issue 278, April 1991), and *The Turtle Carries Its Home* (Issue 296, April 1993), with the addition of content about iguanas and red pandas. The picture book introduces a total of 41 animal species, including humans, with each species illustrated and described across two-page spreads. Despite the inclusion of the word “guide” in its title, this book is not a mere catalog-style guidebook summarizing animal features and habits. Using materials like paints, pens, and crayons, Abe employs a variety of techniques to vividly depict animals in vibrant colors. Each illustration

is remarkably unique and brimming with the charm of living animals.

For example, in the giraffe section, bold color combinations such as ochre and brown, yellow and blue, brown and red, and red and yellow are used. The illustration of four giraffes with gracefully curved long necks is irresistibly captivating. The depiction of an elephant is also innovative: its tusks are painted yellow, its eyes orange and red, and its body decorated with circles and zigzag patterns that highlight the wrinkles of its skin. Abe specializes in such bold lines and use of colors that transcend realism—a style he says he learned from children who “happily draw elephants in bright red.” With a childlike, uninhibited imagination and vibrant, flowing lines, Abe’s illustrations stimulate viewers’ senses and encourage a rediscovery of the allure of animals.

The highlight is the depiction of the “monkey mountain” scene. While the main illustration shows a group of monkeys playing on the mountain, the most striking element is the 45 monkey portraits drawn around the margins of the page. Each monkey, like a human, has a distinct face and name, and their unique personalities

shine through in their expressions. This composition reflects the deep bond Abe formed with individual animals during his years as a zookeeper, as well as the meticulous observations he made through those relationships. Abe himself states:

"I have confidence in drawing animals. It's thanks to the 25 years I spent working as a zookeeper, during which I was constantly surrounded by animals who interacted with me warmly yet firmly. That's why I can draw the underside of an elephant's belly or the view of a giraffe from above. After all, the giraffe's feed box was always on the second floor, so its face was right in front of mine every day. I've seen and touched the fur of grizzly bears and gorillas, observing how it grows. I always saw them in their 'living' state while taking care of them. When an animal died, I often helped the vet with dissections, which allowed me to study their skeletal structures and muscle formations. By seeing and touching animals up close like that, I gained confidence in my ability to draw them." (From *Are Animal Deaths Sad? A Former Zookeeper Shares Stories of Life*, p.10, Kawade Shobo Shinsha, August 2010)

Even though Abe's animals may appear to be drawn with rough lines, they are compellingly lifelike because they are grounded in realism based on years of precise observation. While the giraffe and elephant illustrations mentioned earlier are visually striking due to their bold use of colors and lines, the outlines faithfully capture the "skeletal and muscular structure" of the animals. Based on such realism, Abe's unique lines and colors emerge from his sensibilities when he strives to capture the individuality and charm of each animal. These are illustrations that only someone with an intimate and profound understanding of animals, honed through earnest interaction, could create. Furthermore, the accompanying text, which explains the habits and features of the animals, is not overly explanatory but filled with humor and engaging elements. This picture book is a remarkable showcase of Abe's skills as a zookeeper-artist.

## ■ Cooyon Monthly

February 2000, Crayon House

### **The animals seem to see me as just one kind of animal of the species called "hominidae."**

"In Asahikawa, there is a lot of snow. From October to the end of April, for six months, the zoo becomes a world shared only by the animals and the keepers. There are about 160 species, roughly 600 animals in total, and only around ten keepers to take care of them. Snow has a way of absorbing sound, so the zoo turns into a secluded and quiet space shared solely by the animals, the keepers, and the snow.

Living in such an environment, you start to use human language less and less. After the morning meeting, when we go to attend to the animals, there's no need to speak a single word of human language until midday. Then, after lunch, it's the same until evening—no talking. We become quiet.

Spending each year like that, one day I found myself thinking, 'This is interesting.' For example, I feel that the chimpanzees, the lions, and all the other animals see me not so much as a "human" but rather as a "hominid"—just one kind of animal. I feel like I represent the species of hominids. And gradually, I started to see myself not as a 'human' but as just one of the many animal species called 'hominid.'"

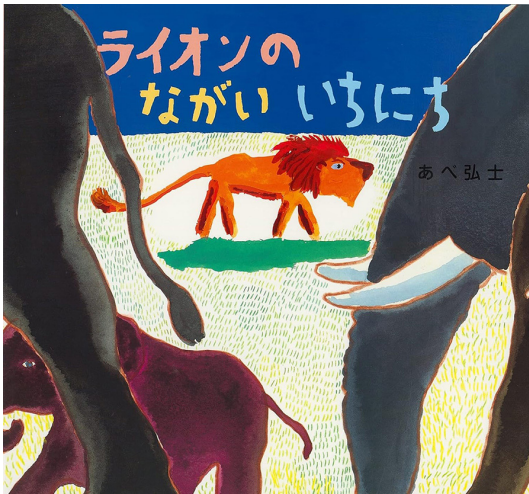
"At the zoo, incidents happen all the time. Sometimes animals escape, or during the winter, something unexpected occurs on the snow..."

As Abe continues to recount various episodes from the zoo, each one is unique to the experience of being a zookeeper, full of fascination and insight. His stories, however, are not merely about humans observing animals. Instead, they reflect the perspective of a fellow "hominid" observing his companions. It feels as though he's proudly talking about his friends and comrades, leaving you with a warm and heartfelt impression.



## ★ Book Sent to the Jurors

### ***A Long Day for the Lion (Lion series #03)***



original title	ライオンのながいいちにち
romanisation	Raion no nagai ichinichi
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Tokyo: Kosei Shuppansha
publication year	2004

## REVIEW

### ■ Hekacchi

June 2016, The Japanese Society of Children's Literature  
Hokkaido Branch

### **On Lion Series by Abe, Hiroshi**

Kubota, Chieko (researcher)

First, let me summarize the key points about *A Good Day for the Lion*. This picture book vividly depicts the diverse and colorful landscapes of the vast savanna and the lives of animals living in harmony with nature. Abe employs vibrant techniques, blending richly colored illustrations with rhythmical text enhanced by haiku. At its core lies Abe's generous affirmation of the natural world. Children reading this book will find themselves joining the father lion and his cubs on their walk, marveling at the ever-changing scenery of the savanna and enjoying encounters with a variety of unique animals. At the same time, they will likely come to deeply sense the essence of a natural world where life and death exist side by side.

As sequels to *A Good Day for the Lion*, Abe created *A Strange Day for the Lion* in 2002 and *A Long Day for the Lion* in 2004, both published by Kosei Publishing.

The former is set during the rainy season, while the latter takes place during the lush, green period after the rains have ended. Across these three picture books, Abe employs a variety of techniques to depict the savanna during different seasons, times, and perspectives. He presents the diverse and vibrant savanna alongside the life and death of its unique inhabitants. The innovative inclusion of haiku adds even more charm to the picture book's world. However, in terms of narrative structure, the stories lack sufficient breadth, leaving a sense of wanting more. That said, can there be any other picture book that so beautifully and entertainingly portrays the savanna and its animals, leaving such an unforgettable impression on its readers?



A Good Day for the Lion



A Strange Day for the Lion



The Day the Lions Saw the Wind

## ★ Book Sent to the Jurors

**Inspired by the poem “Asahikawa.” of Kenji Miyazawa**



original title	宮沢賢治「旭川。」より
romanisation	Miyazawa Kenji Asahikawa yori
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Hyogo: BL Shuppan
publication year	2015
awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award Art Prize</li><li>• JBBY Selection</li><li>• Nominee for BIB</li></ul>

## INTERVIEW

### ■It's Time for Hiroshi Abe

September 2024, Saitama Literature Museum  
by **Masuda, Yoshiaki** (bookseller)

**Masuda:** You know, I've been seeing the poem “Asahikawa.” for about 20 years without realizing it. Every time I went to Asahikawa, it would pop up, like in the restroom at Fukido bookstore. When I mentioned it to Abe-san, he said, “I'd like to turn it into a picture book someday.” So, it's been about 20 years of effort from conception to publication.

**Abe:** Yeah, it took about 20 years.

**M:** Although the intention was always there, simply illustrating Kenji Miyazawa's text wouldn't have been interesting. So, I think various creative touches were applied to bring out Kenji as envisioned by Abe Hiroshi. The most captivating parts of the book are the depictions of nature—bugs, plants, and so on. I'd like to hear your thoughts on that, but first, why did you

want to turn this into a book in the first place?

**A:** Initially, I didn't even know Kenji Miyazawa had visited Asahikawa. As I researched, I discovered he had come—whether for graduate placement activities, studying agriculture in cold climates, or on his way to Sakhalin to do research. Asahikawa was just a stopover, but learning that Kenji had been there was a revelation. And he described it as a “mental sketch,” not exactly poetry. Plus, there's that period in its title, like Asahikawa.—what could that signify? It's a very mysterious poem as a whole. And since Asahikawa is my hometown, I could instantly visualize the places he mentioned, like turning right





on Rokujo Street.

**M:** He even mentions “Rokujo 13-chome,” doesn’t he?

**A:** Exactly. As a local, I could easily picture it in my mind, and that familiarity resonated deeply. I thought, “This is fascinating—can I turn it into a picture book?” So, I took down the poem from Fukido, stuck it up in my studio, and...

**M:** ...stared it down, right?

**A:** Yeah, exactly. About 15 years ago, I did a rough sketch based on the poem as it was. I even showed it to an editor, thinking it might work, but it just didn’t feel right. So I shelved the idea. But once you attempt something, it plants an antenna in your mind. Then, in various places, Kenji’s works would occasionally catch on that antenna.

**M:** Totally get that.

**A:** Then, as I did more research—like looking at old photos of Asahikawa Station, the auditorium, train schedules—it became increasingly compelling. What really stumped me, though, was the Buddhist term “Mujō Bodai (supreme enlightenment)”. Figuring out how to handle that was another roadblock.

**M:** Haha, I see.

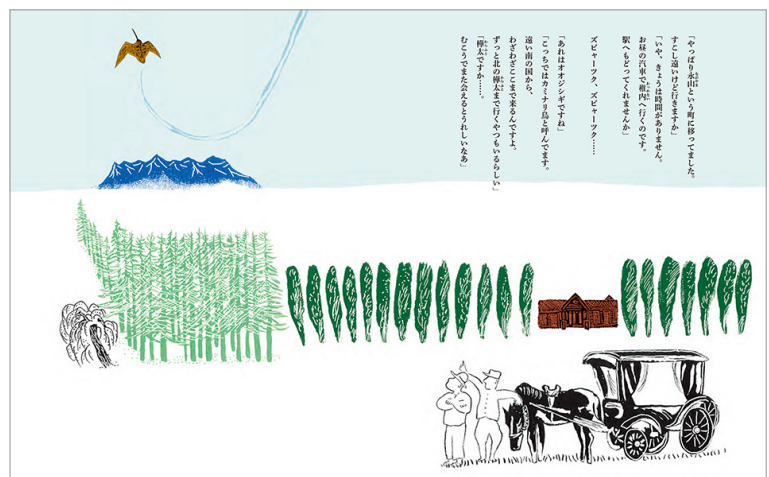
**A:** Turning it into a picture book was incredibly challenging. But it’s the central keyword of the poem—it couldn’t be skipped. I think this was a journey of mourning for his sister, Toshi, who had passed away the previous year.

**M:** Makes sense. How did you decide on the depiction of Mujō Bodai?

**A:** I thought it was a message directed toward the heavens, a tribute to departed souls. When you think of the heavens, you think of birds, right? And when you think of Kenji, you think of *Yodaka no Hoshi* (The Nighthawk Star).

**M:** Oh!

**A:** But nighthawks don’t fly upward; they glide horizontally—they don’t ascend to the heavens. So I moved away from the nighthawk and settled on skylarks. But even skylarks stop in mid-flight after ascending—they don’t go beyond that. Then, I remembered my fondness for Latham’s snipes (oojishigi). They migrate to Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and



Kenji’s Tohoku region to breed, traveling all the way from Australia across the equator.

**M:** Incredible.

**A:** Their display behavior is equally remarkable—they soar almost to the point of exhaustion before diving sharply, creating thunderous sounds with their tail feathers. That’s when I decided to entrust “Mujō Bodai” to a Latham’s snipe.

**M:** Got it.

**A:** With that, the major hurdle was cleared, and the rest of the book progressed relatively smoothly.

**M:** In the book, there’s the sound “Zubyatsk, Zubyatsk...” Is the call really that impressive?

**A:** Yes. While calling, it soars upward, climbing higher and higher until it’s out of breath. Then, it suddenly flips and spreads its tail feathers, cutting through the wind as it dives sharply. The sound of its wings at that moment is incredible—like “Jat. Jat. Jat. Jat...” It’s not a call but the sound of its tail feathers slicing the air.

**M:** The sound of its wings!

**A:** Yeah, the sound of cutting through the air. It repeats that over and over. I really love it. Every spring, I always listen for it. That’s when I entrusted mujō bodai (supreme enlightenment) and the act of carrying thoughts to the heavens and returning with them to the Latham’s snipe. I think that was the hardest part to resolve.

**M:** That’s why you draw the Latham’s snipe when signing copies of this book, isn’t it?

**A:** Exactly.

**M:** I see. Speaking of the book as a whole, one of the groundbreaking aspects is how you’ve used design to convey a narrative. Essentially, this is Kenji

Miyazawa, but at the same time, it isn't—it's your interpretation of Kenji Miyazawa.

A: That's right.

M: For example, you depicted old streets of Asahikawa, included butterflies flying around. What moved me most were the white clover and plantain. The way you designed those is remarkable.

A: (Laughs) Yes, that's true.

M: This approach hadn't been in any of your previous picture books. In this book, you've sharply divided and arranged the colors, crafting each scene as a composition. Especially the platform and tracks at the station in the final scene—and there's a butterfly there, right?

A: Yes, that's a Hikakgechou-butterfly, endemic species to Japan.

M: That kind of presentation demonstrates the design skills essential to picture books. This was originally a line drawing, wasn't it?

A: Yes, a line drawing with color specifications.

M: It's incredibly well done. The editor deserves praise too, but your creative solutions, while staying true to the original text, shine through. After reading, the lingering impression stays with you. This is a masterpiece. You have fully utilized the unique techniques of printing that are distinctive to picture books.

A: Yeah, you could call it a form of printmaking.

M: That's exactly it. The way you leave white space is particularly brilliant.

A: (Laughs)

M: It feels clean and crisp, even though it's set in the past. For example, the shadow of the station is beige, with pure white left beneath it. And the text says, "The train finally arrived at Asahikawa Station. / In the morning mist..." Even though the mist isn't drawn, we can sense it.

A: Yes, exactly.

M: The balance of white space, the slightly elevated position of the train—it's all masterfully arranged. This feels like the kind of picture book that wasn't common in those days: one where adults could admire it with a sigh of awe.

A: Ah, I see what you mean.

M: This is art. Didn't this book win an award?

A: Yes, it received the Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award for Art.

M: Well deserved!

A: Keiko Ochiai was one of the judges.

M: Oh, I see. The way you connected and cut the illustrations of the clover was impressive.

A: Well, I don't want to give away too much, but I'm really good with photocopiers. I basically use them as a printmaking tool. For the clover, I first sketched it. There's a lot of plantain and clover growing around my house, so I sketched them in detail and then pieced them together like a collage, sometimes flipping or rearranging them. After that, I added the color specifications. So, while I made a lot of sketches, there's no original painting for the clover. What's left is just the line drawing.

M: Looking at it feels like watching a short film. It's as if the camera pans under the platform or takes an overhead shot of the horse-drawn carriage. Beyond that, you can see Mt. Asahidake, with a large butterfly in the foreground. My favorite part is the next page, the one featured on the cover: "oh, the larches, the larches". That long, straight, snow-dusted white path lined with trees leading to the government building—it's so quintessentially Hokkaido. No one but you could have drawn that.

A: Yeah, that's true.

M: The wide-open road, the spacing between the trees—it's so distinctly Hokkaido. The composition almost says, "This must have been how Kenji saw it." The moving carriage, the faceless figures, the black-and-white simplicity—it's all so skillfully done. You've even angled the scenes creatively, like the owl perched in a tree with the ground left completely white below it. That's brilliant. Another thing that impressed me was the two riders on horseback. You added a blue line to the black, making them look like soldiers riding from the barracks. What's amazing is how the sound "Zubyatsk, Zubyatsk" enters right when they decide to head back to the station. "Here, we call it the Thunder Bird," it says.



This is something only you could. And then there's the fine detail on the next page, with the Asahikawa mountains and volcanic smoke.

A: Ah, yes.

M: That's one of your specialties. After following your work for so long, when this *Inspired by the poem "Asahikawa."* of Kenji Miyazawa came out, I thought, "Ah, Abe-san's finally reached this point." It's a landmark picture book for me as well.

A: I see. You really get it, don't you? (Laughs)

M: This feels like a culmination of your career as a picture book artist. Even the frame-like design of the bare cover beneath the dust jacket is fantastic.

A: That was designed by Takahashi Design Room.

M: Ah, no wonder it's so good.

A: They submitted about three cover ideas. Takahashi-san really has great taste.

M: Great sense indeed. As I often say, picture books are a team effort. You relied on many people to bring your vision of Kenji arriving in Asahikawa to life.

A: That's true.

M: But the innovative approach may have been a little ahead of its time.

A: (Laughs)

M: Maybe in 30 years, it'll become a huge hit. (Laughs)

A: Maybe so. Kenji's work itself is a bit challenging, and turning poetry into a narrative is no easy task. For example, there's a page that says, "The plantain weeds and clover, all of them glisten with the chill of the morning dew." That's where Kenji's poem ends. Up to that point, the storyline mostly follows his poem, though not exactly. After that, I had to ask, "So what now?" That's where I tied it up with the Latham's snipe, mujō bodai, and a sense of refreshing closure to the journey.

M: This book is truly world-class.

A: Oh, really?

M: What I mean is, this is what a picture book should be. It beautifully captures the nature, scenery, and people experienced by a man passing through Asahikawa, tying them together so effectively.

A: I gathered a lot of materials of that time, Taisho

Era year 12 (1923), for this —the landscapes of Asahikawa, what the carriages were like, and so on. The carriages were particularly tricky.

M: The carriages are great, but the horses are even better. The horses of that era weren't especially sleek or overly stocky—they needed a balance, and you nailed it.

A: This could easily be turned into a movie based on just one of Kenji Miyazawa's poems.

M: I agree. I think a great picture book is like a short film. There's room for all kinds of picture books, from those kids read in nursery school to those adults can savor with a glass of whiskey.

A: Absolutely.

M: This book doesn't need kids to understand it; it's enough for a grandfather to happily flip through it next to them. Unless such a time comes, the perception that "picture books = for children" will persist indefinitely. Abe-san, you've brought joy to children by drawing animals, but the love for your birthplace and Kenji's poetry inspired you to create this. That's an incredible accomplishment.

A: Oh, one more thing. When I got stuck, a friend from Hokkaido University—he's a botanist—helped me out. I asked him, "What's a Babylon willow?" He immediately replied, "That's a weeping willow." Kenji wrote it with its scientific name. Same with *Larix*. To engage with Kenji's work, you have to decode things like that.

You can't just make stuff up. If you're a picture book artist drawing from imagination, that's fine, but Kenji's work is so precise that you can't afford to wing it. That makes it tough.

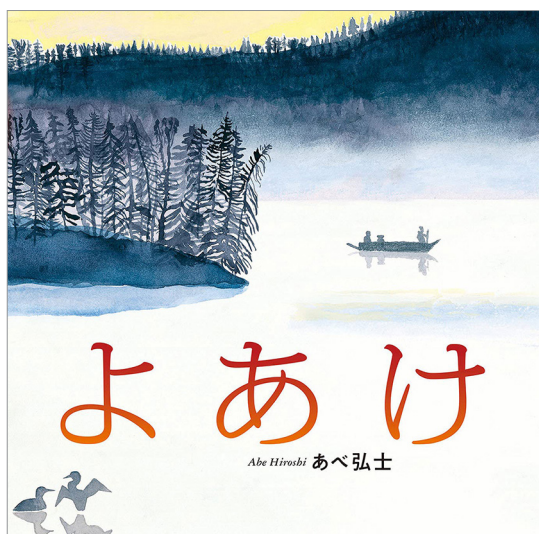
M: You've done an excellent job.

A: (Laughs) You know, a picture book isn't made by one person. Editors like Sagawa-san, the printing staff, the designers—they all contribute. And the people around me offered solutions and hints that gradually brought me closer to the final form.

M: True. But the starting and finishing points are up to you. "I'll do it" and "It's done"—those decisions rest solely with the creator. That's what makes being an artist so fascinating.

## ★ Book Sent to the Jurors

### ***The Dawn***



original title	よあけ
romanisation	Yoake
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Tokyo: Kaiseisha
publication year	2021
awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• JBBY selection</li><li>• Nominee for BIB</li></ul>
translation	Chinese Simplified

## REVIEW

### ■ *Nursing Management* vol. 32 no. 5

May 2022

**Oh, the tranquil red of the setting sun,  
the breathtaking brilliance of dawn's  
vivid colors**

**Yanagida, Kunio** (Nonfiction writer)

The portrayal of the emotions and thoughts of characters (or anthropomorphized animals) in picture books varies greatly depending on the author and the story, regardless of whether the audience is children or adults. While these emotions can be expressed through text or symbolic words, in the case of picture books, the style of illustration is critically important. It is in these moments that the imagery leaves a lasting impression, so vivid that it lingers in the reader's mind, etched behind their eyelids.

The experience of being profoundly moved by an encounter with something in nature undoubtedly

takes different forms for each person. Hiroshi Abe, who has traveled to places like Africa and the Arctic Ocean, meeting various living creatures and creating numerous picture books, has released a new work, *The Dawn*. Using daring brushstrokes and vivid tones, Abe has captured an awe-inspiring experience in nature that seems to surpass even his previous encounters with the wilderness.

According to Abe, the inspiration for *The Dawn* came from a long-held dream. During his early years as a zookeeper, he read the historic Far East Siberian exploration account *Dersu Uzala* by Vladimir Arsenyev (translated by Shirō Hasegawa and published by Heibonsha), praised by writer Maxim Gorky. Since then, Abe had longed to visit the virgin forests of the Far East Siberia described in the book. This dream finally came true in the 2000s, thanks to a connection with someone familiar with the region. His destination was the pristine forest area along the Bikin River, a tributary of the upper Amur River in the easternmost part of Primorsky Krai.

The natural beauty of this region has been depicted in works like the picture book *Oh, My Brother*,



*the Deer*, a collaboration between writer Toshiko Kanzawa and Siberian painter G.D. Pavlishin, portraying the stunning beauty of autumn foliage and the deer-hunting traditions of the indigenous people. However, Abe wanted to experience the region with his own feet, eyes, and senses, seeking to immerse himself in the natural landscapes and the local spiritual culture. Over the course of five visits, Abe completed a work brimming with his unique vitality.

The book depicts a season known as "Golden September," when the mountains and rivers are bathed in intense colors. Traveling upriver in a small boat with two elder locals, they visit a sacred prayer site on a riverside cliff. After offering prayers, they gather around a fire, sharing drinks and hearing legends imbued with spiritual significance—stories featuring forest monarchs like tigers and wild boars. Abe's familiar style of depicting elders and animals remains evident here. However, in the latter half of the book, his artistic style shifts dramatically, as though he has leaped to a new level.

Awakening to the sound of birds, the surroundings are enveloped in mist. Within this mist, scenes unfold—washing one's face in the river, rowing the boat, ripples trailing behind the boat, moose grazing on the riverside, and waterbirds floating and calling. Each moment feels like a departure from Abe's previous works, evoking the serene atmosphere of hymns wafting from an old church.

As the mist clears and the morning light floods the landscape, the scene transforms. Mountains glow with intense reds and yellows, the water's surface turns golden, and the small boat carrying Abe and his companions appears to float atop this radiant world. "I was floating in a sea of gold," he recalls, a sentiment deeply felt.

Whether it is the ethereal landscapes in the mist or the unimaginable colors of the dawn, Abe's recollections carry an almost transcendent tone. *The Dawn* can be seen as a work that expresses the extraordinary emotions Abe experienced, a masterpiece born from a truly profound encounter with nature.

## INTERVIEW

### ■ *It's Time for Hiroshi Abe*

September 2024, Saitama Literature Museum

by **Masuda, Yoshiaki** (bookseller)

**Masuda:** Since your *The Dawn* is a homage to Uri Shulevitz's *Dawn*, I feel the main challenge for you lies in capturing the grandfather and the animals, right?

**Abe:** Yeah.

**M:** Of course, I think the hardest part must have been the illustrations. After all, you're competing with Shulevitz.

**A:** Haha.

**M:** Like your work *Inspired by the poem "Asahikawa."* of Kenji Miyazawa, which draws on Kenji Miyazawa, it's all incredible. But in *The Dawn*, what I think makes the book so impactful are the animals—the tiger, the boar, and there is an owl in the tree, although it doesn't say anything.

There's even a butterfly resting there if you look closely. Not only is the intensity of the tiger and boar from the grandfather's stories striking, but the inclusion of the moose, red-throated loons, and other creatures that appear occasionally transforms this book into something uniquely yours. It's not Shulevitz's; it's Hiroshi Abe's *Dawn*. In a word, this is a "picture book that smells of life." In every landscape, you can sense something lurking—through the branches or the atmosphere. I'd love to hear about the challenges you faced in portraying this.

**A:** First of all, Shulevitz's book is magnificent—it's the foundation of my work. So the key was how to make it distinct from his version. Originally, Shulevitz was also inspired by Liú Zōngyuán's poem—

**M:** —he is influenced by it.

**A:** Yeah, so the storyline is based on Liú Zōngyuán's poem. Shulevitz's version stays almost entirely faithful to the poem, which is great, but I wanted to create something different. The story ultimately arrives at dawn, but my focus was on how to depict

“the night” leading up to it.

M: I see.

A: In both versions, there’s a scene where the boy and his grandfather camp out, pitching a tent. Morning comes, they row their boat again, and eventually, they witness dawn. While the general storyline is the same, I wanted to place much more emphasis on the night—not just as a setting, but as a story. I often visited Siberia, particularly the Bikin River, where I spent nights chatting around fires with the elder of the Udege hunters, who was the same age as me, drinking vodka.

M: Sharing stories like these?

A: Exactly. Mythological tales, legends about tigers and boars—so many fascinating stories. I took notes because it was all so captivating. In other words, it’s cultural anthropology, right?

M: Absolutely.

A: I listened to these local stories, visited the actual locations, rode their traditional boats, and ate bear and deer meat they had hunted.

M: So you experienced it firsthand.

A: Yes, and I made plenty of sketches. So, for the nighttime scenes in the book, I incorporated these anecdotes. That’s where my work diverges from Shulevitz’s.

M: Completely different.

A: With that foundation, I fleshed out the first half of the story, including the tiger and boar tales. Then the scenery shifts dramatically in the morning, with dense mist covering the Bikin River. You can’t see a thing in the thick mist. Then the mist clears, and suddenly dawn breaks. And one more thing, I always go there on September 20th.

M: Why September 20th?

A: Because the temperature in the morning and evening drops around -1 to +1 degrees by then, so there are no mosquitoes.

M: Ah, I see!

A: Mosquitoes are relentless otherwise.

M: It’s already cold by then?

A: Yes, chilly. You need to stay near the fire in the mornings and evenings. Well, aside from that

impression of the Bikin River, there’s one more thing. The Bikin River is close to the Chinese border. The Udege people is Asian, and the main stream of Bikin River flows into the Heilong River in China. It feels quite connected to Liú Zōngyuán’s world.

M: Fascinating.

A: That’s why I wanted to create a structure distinct from Shulevitz’s. Although both conclude with dawn, there’s one more scene from Liú Zōngyuán’s poem that Shulevitz didn’t depict, and that’s what I included at the very end of my book. At the conclusion of Liú Zōngyuán’s poem, he writes, “Two clouds drift playfully above a rock”, but Shulevitz left that out. It’s the conclusion of the poem, so I can’t help but wonder why Shulevitz didn’t depict the two clouds.

M: Liú Zōngyuán did write about it, didn’t he?

A: Yes, it’s there in the poem. I felt strongly that I had to illustrate it. So, one of the differences between Shulevitz’s work and mine is that I included the storyteller of the night and the playful interaction of the clouds at the very end.

M: That final illustration of yours, Abe-san, with the two clouds and the red mountain reflected in the water, drawn so beautifully—I think it’s a masterpiece. This is what sets it apart from Shulevitz’s work and defines the conclusion of *The Dawn* as uniquely yours. And here, we see Toshiko Kanzawa’s name mentioned. What exactly is the gratitude or respect for?

A: Kanzawa-san visited the Udege two years before I did and lived in tents there. Later, she wrote *Oh, My Brother, the Deer*. That’s set on the Bikin River.

M: I see.

A: So, I think she was thinking the same thing. Kanzawa-san had been also in Hokkaido, and despite her appearance, she is adventurous and bold.

M: Haha, despite her appearance?

A: Yes, quite unexpectedly. I’ve always admired her as a senior in this path. This book is a kind of message to her: “I finally created my *Dawn*.”

M: She must have been delighted.

A: I sent her a copy right away.



M: Who is this G.D. Pavlishin?

A: He's the illustrator of *Oh Deer, My Brother Deer*. His work is incredible.

M: Right, the illustrations were really good.

A: They were a huge source of inspiration for me.

M: So you've learned from his work as well.

Shulevitz's *Dawn* focuses exclusively on the gradual breaking of the dawn. It's a picture book entirely dedicated to the process of night turning into day. On the other hand, in your version, when we turn the page that says, "Looking up, I saw the Milky Way stretching across a sky full of stars," it suddenly shifts from night to the scene of "A bird called out." The misty dawn arrives right after the starry night. This abrupt transition feels like your unique style. And if we look closely at the mist, we notice you use faint yellow tones to show the light breaking through. These tones gradually increase with each page.

A: Yeah, that's true.

M: Then there's this double-page spread, where the text reads, "The waves created by our boat followed behind us." This illustration is stunning—on par with Shulevitz. What's particularly striking is the mist. It must have been challenging to draw.

A: I actually started with detailed line drawings—of the trees, everything. Then I added mist, which obscured the entire landscape. It's all done with pastels. As I worked, the mist covered up everything I had drawn so carefully.

M: Really?

A: Yeah. When the boy woke up, it was already dawn. However, the mist keeps the scenery hidden. So, rather than depicting dawn, I wanted to capture the breaking of the mist.

M: There are four scenes of this misty landscape. First, the birds are chirping, then the boy washes his face, while the grandfather prepares breakfast. On the next page, they start rowing the boat. You see birds flying behind the boat. What kind of birds are they?

A: Ducks.

M: Oh, Ducks. What's great about your work is that

you don't explicitly mention the animals in the text. Whether they're owls, ducks, loons, or moose, you leave it up to the reader to discover them in the illustrations. That creates a sense of experiencing the dawn together with the characters. Speaking of the waves behind the boat. Your depiction of the waves is excellent—it captures how the waves ripple outward beautifully.

Um, about the moose part. The grandfather isn't holding a stick, right? The one for rowing. Those little details are really well done.

A: He's going with the flow of the current, so he set the paddle down. That's how it is in reality—people there don't resist the flow; they move calmly. I wanted to depict the moose and the loons in a style reminiscent of ink wash painting.

M: The moose is depicted as a silhouette, drawn with lines, while the loons are depicted more realistically. We can really sense the passage of time between the scene of moose and the loons. It's excellent. The gradual clearing of the mist is strongly emphasized by the loons. And we can see how the color of the mountains changes little by little. Then, we turn the page, and the sunlight bursts in.

A: That page was the hardest. Depicting the transition from misty darkness to golden and crimson mountains—how to show the light breaking through? Editor Hiromatsu kept telling me, "Add a bit more light."

M: Haha.

A: So I kept adding light and reducing the mist to create the effect of it flowing away. Without this scene, the transition wouldn't make sense.

M: On the loons' page, the boy and his grandfather are drawn in richer tones, and the mountains become a deeper blue. These are signs that time is passing and dawn is breaking. Many things start to appear.

A: The mist gradually clears.

M: And then you conclude with those clouds—a very Abe Hiroshi-esque ending. Recently, when I was at a gallery in Kobe, someone asked how the illustrations were made. Specifically, they were curious about the red and orange mountain in *The Dawn*, where the

text says, “I found myself floating in golden light.”  
The yellow water surface and sky—are those painted with watercolors?

A: Yes, that’s right.

M: But the mountains look like they were done with something different.

A: Crayons.

M: Crayons, huh? The mountain peaks look like they repel the watercolor.

A: Exactly. The crayon resists the watercolor, leaving a faint, glowing effect. It gives a soft, luminous feel. I use crayons a lot—I really like them. The next page also uses crayons.

M: The recurring image of the boat gives a sense of movement. Since they’re not paddling here, that means they’re drifting downstream, right?

A: Yes, exactly. That’s another way it differs from Shulevitz’s version.

M: So, while it’s a completely different work, naming it よあけ—the same three hiragana characters—feels like a bold move!

A: Haha.

M: Was the title approved without any issues?

A: Editor Hiromatsu handled all of that...

M: Using kanji would’ve been boring.

A: Exactly. And the design was by Takahashi Design Room. Takahashi used Mincho font to emphasize よあけ on the cover. It really stands out. The moose on the cover is also Takahashi’s idea—he reversed the illustration and added it. Design is so important, especially for the cover. By the time I’ve drawn all 15 pages and two additional ones, I’m too tired to think about the cover. That’s why I consult the designer.

M: Takahashi brings a refreshing perspective to the world of picture books. His sense of design is remarkable. The future of picture books should embrace this kind of thoughtful design—colors and layouts. Each time we turn the page, we can gaze at it in admiration. What Abe-san experienced in *Inspired by the poem “Asahikawa.”* of Kenji Miyazawa has been taken to the next level in *The Dawn*. It’s amazing.





## ★ Book Sent to the Jurors

### *Aleutian Magic*



original title	アリューション・マジック
romanisation	Aryushan majikku
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Tokyo: Nora Shoten
publication year	2022
awards	• JBBY Selection

## REVIEW

### ■ *Asahi Elementary School Newspaper*

January 5, 2023

### The Dynamic Nature of the Arctic

In the Arctic and around the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska, countless animals and creatures gather from all over the globe in search of the abundant plankton that blooms in spring.

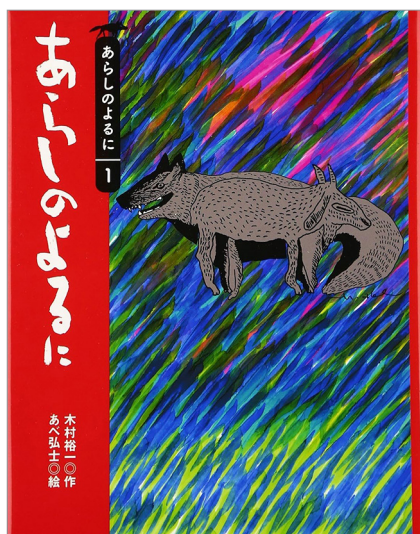
Hiroshi Abe wanted to see this phenomenon with his own eyes, so he traveled to the Arctic, and this book was born from that journey.

The dynamic natural world is depicted with humor, centering on a young sea otter, but the book also conveys the power and awe-inspiring aspects of nature. While we may not be able to fully imagine the amazement and inspiration Abe experienced firsthand, the overflowing joy expressed in the book is palpable. When I first held the book, I couldn't help but exclaim, "Wow! Amazing!" "It's a wide world out there," and "There's still so much we don't know." These messages seem to echo from the pages of this book.

Now, join us in experiencing the captivating Aleutian Magic that unfolds in the Arctic.



## One Stormy Night (series 7 vols.)



original title	あらしのよるに (全 7 巻)
romanisation	Arashi no yoru ni (7 vols.)
text	Kimura, Yuichi
publisher	Tokyo: Kodansha
publication year	1994
awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kodansha Publishing Culture Award for Picture Book</li><li>• Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award JR Prize</li><li>• Selection of the Japan Library Association</li><li>• Selection of the School Library Association</li><li>• Living Newspaper <i>Misesu</i> Choice Book Awards - Winner in the "Books to Read to Children and Grandchildren" Category</li><li>• Selectef for <i>White Ravens</i> (Germany)</li><li>• LEGA AMBIENTE "Environmental Alliance" Best Book Award (Italy)</li></ul>
translation	Chinese complex   Chinese simplified   Italian   Korean   Portuguese

## REVIEW

### ■ Mainichi Shimbun Newspaper

November 1, 2015

### Humanity's Tendency to Create "Enemies"

**Yamagiwa, Juichi** (premate scientist, former president of Kyoto University)

This autumn, I watched the new Kabuki play *One Stormy Night* at Kyoto's Minami-za Theatre. Shido Nakamura played Gabu, the wolf, while Matsuya Onoe portrayed Mei, the goat. Nakamura's raspy voice and Onoe's high-pitched, whimsical tone perfectly suited the roles of the wolf and the goat, making their performances truly remarkable. On a stormy night, Gabu and Mei seek refuge in a hut, talking in the dark without realizing each other's true identities. They become close friends. The following day, they agree to meet again, but upon seeing each other in the light, they discover they are

natural enemies—a wolf and a goat, predator and prey.

Both struggle within their respective animal worlds. For the wolf, a goat is a delicacy, and for the goat, a wolf is a mortal threat. Each is pressured by their own kind, almost to the point of breaking. However, the story concludes with them prioritizing the bond of friendship they formed during that stormy night over their historical roles as enemies. Together, they choose to walk forward, hand in hand.

Don't dismiss it as a simple fantasy. This story reveals unexpected truths and possibilities. Who decided that goats must always be eaten by wolves? Is it truly impossible for a wolf to survive without eating goats? Are wolves destined to be eternal enemies of goats? In reality, these seemingly common-sense, absolute adversarial relationships have been arbitrarily created—and just as arbitrarily dissolved—by humans. Gorillas, which I have studied for many years, have been victims of such human-imposed notions. Ever since they were "discovered" by Europeans in Africa in the mid-19th century, gorillas



gained a reputation as ferocious giants of the jungle. Stories about them attacking humans and abducting women were taken as truth, leading to the slaughter of countless gorillas.

Conversely, in the lowlands of Central Africa, gorillas have long been hunted as a source of meat. For gorillas, humans are akin to wolves. However, once the peaceful nature of gorilla life became widely known, the perception shifted dramatically. Gorillas transformed into valued neighbors and became a focal point of ecotourism. Even in the lowlands, they are gradually ceasing to be seen as a food resource. The same can be said of human relationships. During the Edo period, white people were seen by the Japanese as ogres who ate humans. During World War II, the fear and hatred expressed through terms like "demonic Westerners" were palpable—what was the true nature of those feelings? Even today, terrorist groups and so-called rogue states are viewed as entities that must be eradicated. But is it truly impossible to coexist with them peacefully? Since ancient times, fables and fantasies have used animals to depict the subtleties of human society and convey lessons we ought to learn. What can we take away from Stormy Night? It teaches us that even relationships that seem unchangeable at first glance can, in fact, be altered with a shift in perspective. This isn't a concept limited to highly intelligent humans.

Even wild chimpanzees occasionally eat meat. According to Japanese researchers who have been

studying chimpanzees in Tanzania's Mahale Mountains for over 50 years, the types of prey they hunt have changed in recent years. In the past, they hunted animals like wild boars and antelopes, but now they almost exclusively eat monkeys. This shift is attributed to a change in the chimpanzees' perception of hunting itself.

In Africa, there are lions that attack humans, but there are also lions that show respect and keep their distance. This is because both lions and humans have spent a long time building a friendly relationship. I have worked to establish such a bond with gorillas in regions where they were once hunted for food, without using weapons or bait.

At first, the gorillas would flee as soon as they saw us, and if pursued, they would respond with terrifying roars and attacks. I myself suffered injuries to my head and legs from their charges. However, by patiently and consistently demonstrating that we harbored no hostility, the gorillas gradually changed their behavior and began to accept us. It took nearly a decade, but finally, we and the gorillas were able to face each other calmly.

This kind of friendly relationship has only been achieved with a single group in this region. Tens of thousands of other gorillas still harbor strong fear and hostility toward humans. Yet I am confident that a day will come when this changes. Couldn't the same be said for human society?

I strongly encourage everyone to experience Stormy Night.



## The Story of the Ezo Wolf



original title	エゾオオカミ物語
romanisation	Ezo ookami monogatari
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Tokyo: Kodansha
publication year	2008
awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selection of the Japan Library Association</li><li>• Selection of the Japan School Library Association</li><li>• Kenbuchi Picture Book Village, Viva-karasu award</li></ul>

### REVIEW

#### ■ Association of Japan Wolf web

August 26, 2014

#### *The Story of Japan Wolf*

Fujiwara, Sachiko (Japan Wolf Association)

Picture books are often said to be the first artistic encounter for children. They are also a treasure trove of knowledge and wisdom, sparking curiosity and inviting young minds to explore unknown worlds. Such is the experience with *The Story of the Ezo Wolf*. The first thing that strikes you is the powerful impact of the cover illustration—a commanding presence of the Ezo wolf illuminated by a glowing blue moonlight. The harsh winter nature of Hokkaido is vividly expressed in shades of white and blue, with the snow under the moonlight radiating an otherworldly blue beauty. The sharp observational eye honed over 25 years as a zookeeper at Asahiyama Zoo is evident in every detail.

The story takes place only about a hundred years ago... Uncle Blakiston's fish owl tells the flying squirrels the history of wolves, now extinct, and their relationship with humans. "Wolves were truly

wonderful creatures. But, you see..." At this point, children often react, saying, "That's not true! Wolves are bad!"

As the story progresses, it explains:

"Wolves hunt and eat deer. However, by being eaten by wolves, deer populations remain balanced. This means the amount of grass and leaves eaten by deer is kept in check, allowing forests and meadows to stay lush and green. Wolves eating deer and deer being eaten by wolves are not bad things. Both wolves and deer understand this balance."

This passage teaches children that the clash between living creatures is what maintains the balance of the natural ecosystem. It's a powerful example of how picture books can convey profound truths using simple language.

However, as the story continues, it recounts how wolves were gradually hunted and killed after they began attacking settlers' horses due to the sharp decline in deer caused by heavy snowfall. This relentless extermination eventually drove wolves to extinction. As a result, deer populations have since grown excessively.

The story concludes with the poignant lines:

"The distant howl of wolves can no longer be heard. But, you see, now Ezo deer are seen as villains. So,



who really made them that way?"

This progression—depicting the folly of humanity with sharp insight—is deeply moving. By this point in the story, the children's eyes shine even brighter. One of the remarkable features of this picture book is its use of double-page spreads from beginning to end, where the bold, expansive illustrations powerfully and vividly draw readers into the story. Reflecting on the author's choice to focus on nocturnal animals as protagonists, it seems as though something vital, forgotten by modern society, lies hidden in the darkness. Uncle Blakiston's fish

owl's concern that "even our own habitat might disappear someday" also resonates deeply.

The wolf pack depicted on the inside front and back covers seems to say, "Leave the forest to us," as if their presence alone assures balance.

This book made me reflect on the responsibility adults have to convey the truth to children. The Tale of the Ezo Wolf is an outstanding environmental textbook, and I believe it is a must-read for as many children as possible, as well as the adults who surround them.

## ***The Bear and the Boy***



original title	クマと少年
romanisation	Kuma to shonen
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Tokyo: Bronze Shinsha
publication year	2018
awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Japan Children's PEN Award for Picture Books</li><li>• Hokkaido Affiliated Picture Book Grand Prize</li><li>• JBBY Selection</li></ul>

## **REVIEW**

■ **Asahikawa Shimbun Newspaper**

August 22, 2018

### ***The Bear and the Boy***

Matsuura, Miyuki (bookseller)

"We must not contaminate Ainu lands with radiation." These were the words of Ms. Sui Kamada that I heard seven years ago. Ah, Ms. Kamada, you are absolutely right.

This year, amid various events commemorating the 150th anniversary of the naming of Hokkaido, I am truly delighted that this book has been published. This land was once home to the Ainu people, who lived richly and harmoniously with the harsh natural environment. They lived by respecting all life, guided by their wisdom, unique ethics, and philosophy, while maintaining a dialogue with the earth. Then came the mainlanders, who took their language and land, forcibly altering their way of life. The Japanese do not speak of this dark history. While they shine a light on the struggles of pioneers

and tondenhei (military settler-farmers), *The Bear and the Boy* allows us to reflect on the culture and philosophy of the Ainu, which thrived until 150 years ago, as we turn its pages.

The image of a boy growing stronger as he faces life head-on. The sacred presence of his mother on the ice. The bear, Kimrun, looming in the darkness. The indescribable flow of emotions glimpsed amidst the raw wilderness. The warm, gentle bond shared between those who drank the same milk. And the joy of spring's arrival, known only to those who live on this land. It makes one want to give thanks to all living things.

The fact that, despite their poverty, the Ainu raised an abandoned infant left by mainlanders. That they sheltered Koreans who had escaped from forced labor camps. That they accepted those deemed outcasts without discrimination. They had no written language, but they had words. Surely, these words carried the power of kotodama—the spirit of words. The ending of this picture book remains a mystery. Let us use our atrophied imaginations to uncover it.

#### ■ **Hokkaido Shimbun: Children's Newspaper**

May 19, 2018

### **Nature and the Vibrant Ainu People**

**Miyamoto, Takeshi** (writer)

Hiroshi Abe, a picture book author from Asahikawa, has released a new book titled *The Bear and the Boy*. When Abe was a child, he would visit his grandfather's house, where many Ainu people lived in the neighborhood. Among them, some even kept bear cubs in their yards. Abe says he had long wanted to create a picture book capturing the lives of the Ainu people, who lived in harmony with nature, and this story was born from that desire.

The protagonists of this picture book are a boy born in an Ainu kotan (village) and a bear named Kimrun. To the Ainu, bears are sacred beings—gods. Kimrun, too, was brought to the kotan as a cub and was lovingly raised with great care. However, when it was decided that Kimrun would “return to the

land of the gods next year,” the bear left the kotan. Eight years later, the boy, now grown, sets out to find Kimrun. The story unfolds as they finally reunite.

Abe worked at the Asahiyama Zoo in Asahikawa for 25 years, during which he developed a deep bond with the animals as a caretaker. He often discussed with his colleagues the essence of life and the role of zoos.

“Being close to bears, you can see how extraordinary they are. They're huge, strong, incredibly fast, can climb trees, swim, open doors skillfully with their snouts, and dig out food from the ground. While their expressions are limited, they have these beady, gentle eyes,” Abe explains.

He also recalls the “bears in the yard” from his childhood. “They weren't mere pets. The Ainu viewed bears as beings equal to or even above humans, recognizing their individuality and treating them with great respect,” he reflects.

As an adult, Abe deepened his understanding by speaking with Ainu people. This led to one of the book's most memorable scenes, where the boy and Kimrun share the same breast milk. Inspired by stories of people who had breastfed bear cubs, Abe created a profoundly impactful illustration.

Abe remarks, “Things we see as children can eventually hold immense significance.” He recalls an unforgettable experience from second grade: his determination to catch a cricket. He realized that instead of chasing it, waiting patiently would bring success. However, he couldn't effectively communicate this insight to others. “I didn't have the words to express it. That memory stayed locked inside me,” he says. Over time, though, those experiences can transform into words, or for some, into art, allowing them to share their insights. Childhood experiences and feelings, if not forgotten, can become treasures—foundational “origins” in one's life.

For Abe, seeing the bears in the yard may have been one such origin. That experience, combined with his work at the zoo and his journey as a picture book author, has culminated in this remarkable book.



## Osamu



original title	オサム
romanisation	Osamu
text	Tanikawa, Shuntaro
publisher	Tokyo: Dowaya
publication year	2021

## REVIEW

■ *Kyobunkan, NARNIA-koku news*

### Drawing a 'good person', and it turned out to be a gorilla!

Shuntaro Tanikawa has a poem titled "Boku no Yume" (My Dream), included in his poetry collection *Boku wa Boku* (I Am Me). When Kazuo Tanaka, an editor at Dowaya, asked Tanikawa if he could create a picture book about the "good person" described in *Boku no Yume*, Tanikawa responded, "It's hard to put 'a good person' into words, so I'd like it to be depicted in drawings." Thus, Tanikawa wrote the text for *Osamu*. Upon reading Tanikawa's text, Hiroshi Abe, who has seen countless animals (humans included) as a zookeeper, immediately came up with the illustrations, and the result was the picture book *Osamu*. (Which brings us back to the opening statement.)

The fact that Abe, with his experience observing animals as a zookeeper, chose to portray a "good person" as a gorilla holds a profound meaning. When you see how Tanikawa's textual depiction of

*Osamu* the human inspired Abe to illustrate *Osamu* the gorilla, it feels as if the poet and the painter have handed the baton to one another, expanding their stories in harmony to create a larger world.

Abe's illustrations of the gorilla exude a sense of inclusiveness, strength, and humble kindness. These qualities captivate readers, making them think, "I want to be someone like that." This picture book, blending poetry and illustration, is truly enchanting.

(Ka)



## Summer



original title	夏
romanisation	Natsu
text	Abe, Hiroshi
publisher	Tokyo: Holp Shuppan
publication year	2023

## REVIEW

### ■It's Time for Hiroshi Abe

September 2024, Saitama Literature Museum

### Two Summers

Ekuni, Kaori (author)

Even when depicting the same season of summer, *Summer* and *Inspired by the poem "Asahikawa."* of Kenji Miyazawa differ astonishingly in their presence. The atmosphere of the former feels thick, as if it encompasses all memories, while the latter feels thin, as if sharpening all five senses. Time in the former seems condensed, while in the latter, it seems to unravel. The former is hot, while the latter is cool. Yet both are unmistakably embodiments of summer. It's dramatic, like the notes of a piano keyboard—sounds an octave apart but equally resonant.

I recall being struck by the beauty of blank space when I first read *Inspired by the poem "Asahikawa."* of Kenji Miyazawa. Having been deeply impressed by the dense, powerful illustrations of Abe's earlier works, filled with colors dancing across the pages, I found the sophisticated composition and sense of openness in this book epoch-making. The delicate beauty of the willows, repeatedly depicted, the presence and shadows of inanimate objects like

buildings, roads, carriages, and utility poles, and the pleasant tranquility of the world—all captivated me.

On the other hand, the charm of *Summer* lies in its vibrant liveliness. It begins with the sound of a railroad crossing (why does the sound of a railroad crossing in summer feel so much more resonant, shaking the skull and echoing through the body, than in winter?), followed by the sound of trains, the loud cries of cicadas, and the wind brushing past your ears as you ride a bicycle. Even the breath of living things and the quiet itself can be perceived as sound. The rumble of a bus engine (mixed with the scent of dust and exhaust), the faint flutter of a butterfly's wings breaking the forest's stillness, and the sound of thunder—all add to its richness.

I love how this picture book ends. Though the rain itself isn't depicted, you can unmistakably sense the smell of it. It must be the kind of rain that falls in big droplets, hitting roofs and the ground with a loud patter. It pours intensely, so much so that it obscures your vision, cooling the world down in an instant. This moment exists just slightly ahead of the picture book's conclusion. In other words, even the future is encapsulated here.

The contrasting summers depicted in these two books resemble Hiroshi Abe himself—a person who is both bold and sensitive, sociable yet reserved.



# 街の中の あべ弘士

あべさんの作品は、絵本  
だけにとどまりません。  
北海道を中心とした街に息  
づく、イラストや立体作品  
の一部をご紹介します。

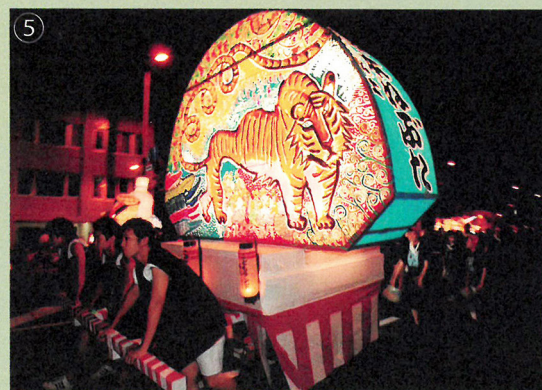
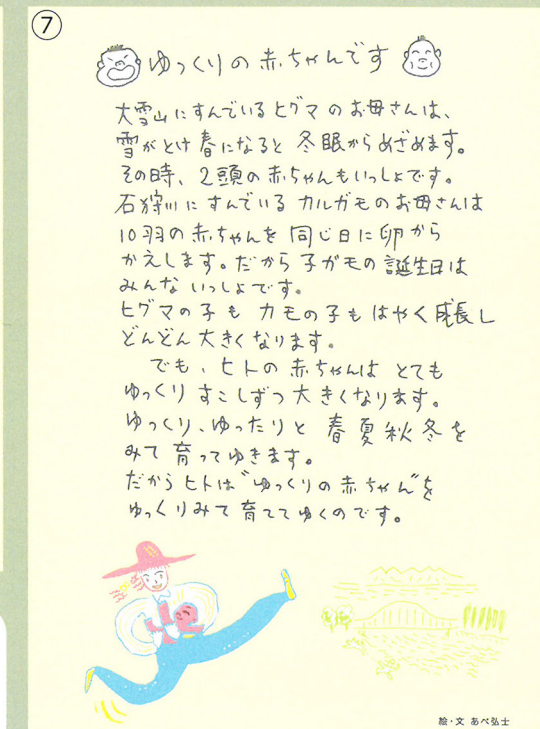


① 剣淵町保育所の園舎壁画



② 『旭川どうぶつピアノ』

③ 旭川信用金庫本店ディスプレイ



④ この大きな絵が…

⑤ ねぶたになりました

⑥⑦ 旭川市の母子手帳表紙は  
あべさんのイラスト  
コメントも素敵です

## Abe Hiroshi in the City

- ① Mural on the wall of Nursery School
- ② Asahikawa Animal Piano
- ③ Display of bank window in Asahikawa city
- ④ A large painting ↓
- ⑤ Became a Nebuta Festival float
- ⑥⑦ Cover of Asahikawa City's Maternal and Child Health Handbook is by Abe Hiroshi, with his message as right

### A baby grows slowly: Message from Abe Hiroshi

The mother bear living in the Daisetsuzan mountains wakes up from hibernation when the snow melts in spring. At that time, her two cubs wake up with her.

The mother spot-billed duck living in the Ishikari River hatches ten ducklings on the same day. That means all the ducklings have the same birthday.

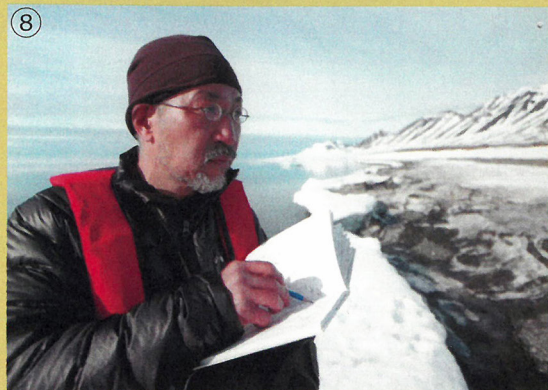
Both bear cubs and ducklings grow rapidly and become bigger and stronger.

But human babies grow very slowly, little by little.

They take their time, watching the seasons change—spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

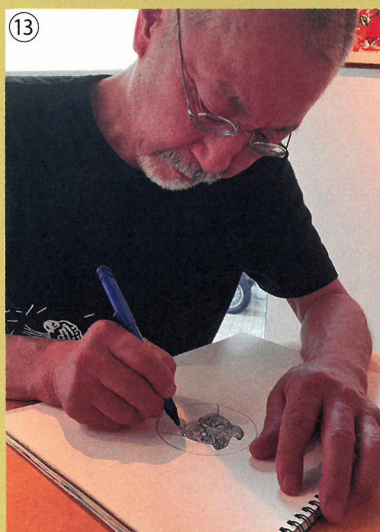
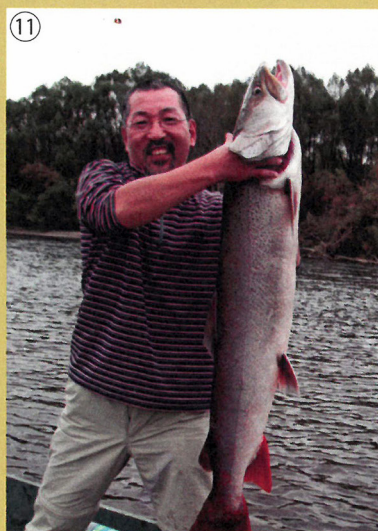
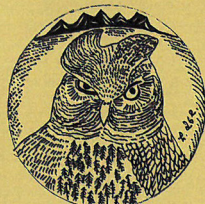
That is why humans should also take their time raising a baby who grows slowly.





# あそぶ 旅する あべ弘士

あべさんは、旅上手で遊び上手。世界中で見て、聞いて、体験したものごとが、また新たな作品の源となるのです。



- ⑧ 旅先ではたくさんのスケッチを
- ⑨ アフリカにて
- ⑩ 趣味の野球も全力で！
- ⑪ 釣りも得意なんです
- ⑫ 旭山動物園飼育係時代
- ⑬ グッズ用の絵を描いているところ
- ⑭ '24年5月『ギャラリー島田』にて

excerpted from *It's Time for Hiroshi Abe* (Saitama Literature Museum)

## Abe Hiroshi: Traveling & Playing

- ⑧ Sketching a lot during travels
- ⑨ In Africa
- ⑩ Playing baseball passionately as a hobby
- ⑪ Skilled at fishing
- ⑫ During his time as a zookeeper at Asahiyama Zoo
- ⑬ Drawing illustrations for merchandise
- ⑭ At Gallery Shimada on May 2024