

Steve goes to Carnival

By Joshua Button and Robyn Wells

Notes by Robyn Wells, March 2018

ORIGINAL ARTWORK (unmodified art used for final publication)

1. STEVE

Manila folder containing 14 pieces of original artwork

Steve the Gorilla was created after Joshua had researched gorillas as part of his Year 5 classroom project on endangered species. Joshua has always had an interest in gorillas and is a big fan of *King Kong*. Joshua admires the way gorillas live in family groups and look out for each other.

We asked ourselves how a gorilla could have come to live in a zoo in South America. Joshua created a plausible backstory based on the information he gained from doing his Year 5 project: Steve grew up the highlands of Africa with his gorilla family until he was captured by poachers and sold to the Rio de Janeiro Zoo. Antonio the Zookeeper becomes Steve's new family.

There was a great deal of exploration and development for the illustrations of Steve. We carefully examined the posture and characteristics of gorillas; how they squatted, lounged, stretched out, walked on their knuckles and sometimes stood upright. We slowly built up a method for showing the massive frame of a gorilla; an underlying sketch of a skeleton established the wide shoulders, long arms, short legs and large skull. Cardboard stencils were created for each illustration to put down an underlying layer of colour for the body, rough brushes and hair curlers were used to create a layer of hair, and finally, fine brushes were used to portray the details of the face, hands and feet.

Many, many pieces of art were created during the development of Steve's character; however, most of the illustrations used in the final publication were produced in a short period in 2016, so that a consistent style could be achieved.

In early versions, Steve was disguised in a top hat, coat and a mask, but in the final versions, it is a simple hat that magically transforms Steve.

These illustrations were scanned and then embedded into the background of the zoo, the carnival or the jazz club, as needed.