



Picture Books About Visiting Museums

Needless to say, we just love visiting museums, but sometimes reading about visiting museums in the cozy comfort of our homes is just the thing. So here's a somewhat idiosyncratic list of books for you and your children to enjoy together, perhaps after you've enjoyed a visit to Boston Children's Museum, or to get you excited about visiting us. In this list we have tried to focus on books about having an enjoyable trip to a museum, even if sometimes they veer off into fantasy.

Natural History/Science Museums

Danny and the Dinosaur by Syd Hoff (New York: Harper & Row, 1958). There are an awful lot of books about museums and dinosaurs, but this one is the classic. Danny goes to a museum to see the dinosaurs and ends up spending the day outside with one. The dinosaur is drawn in a manner no longer considered accurate, and it also needs to be mentioned that the narrator places "an Indian, a bear and an Eskimo" in one exhibit, but the book still works as an expression of a common childhood fantasy.

Frank's Great Museum Adventure by Rod Clement (New York: HarperCollins, 1999). The unnamed narrator announces, "Traveling in time is not as hard as you think. All you need is a backpack, good walking shoes, and two tickets to the museum." And then he and his dog, Frank, are off for a joke-filled romp through their museum, from Ice Age through the lunar landing.

How to Take Your Grandmother to the Museum by Lois Wyse and Molly Rose Goldman (New York: Workman, 1998). Grandmother and granddaughter enjoy a visit to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City together. Photos of the museum's objects and exhibits are incorporated in the marvelous illustrations.

No Moon, No Milk by Chris Babcock (New York: Dragonfly Books, 1995). The American Museum of Natural History in New York City again makes an appearance in this story, and provides the unexpected solution to a dilemma faced by a boy and his cow.

Art Museums

Matthew's Dream by Leo Lionni (New York: Knopf, 1991).

A young mouse is profoundly affected by the paintings on a field trip to an art museum and discovers his calling as an artist.

Seen Art? by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith (New York: Viking, 2005). While looking for his friend Art, a boy wanders through the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. There are some funny depictions of museum visitor types, as well as images of the museum's collection, which are incorporated into the illustrations by the incomparable Lane Smith.

The Shape Game by Anthony Browne (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003). An autobiographical tale of Browne's family's trip to the Tate Gallery in London when he was a boy, this story is the best of the bunch. Nothing can beat it to explain why museums are great and what going together as a family can mean.

All Museums

Behind the Museum Door: Poems to Celebrate the Wonders of Museums edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2007. Fourteen poems that celebrate the fun of visiting museums and all the marvelous art and artifacts to be experienced.

A Novel, for reading aloud

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Konigsburg (New York: Atheneum, 1967). A brother and a sister run away and hide in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. A Newbery medal winner, this is the book that started many a current museum curator on his or her career path.

And One Video, just because it's fun

Don't eat the pictures: Sesame Street at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Children's Television Workshop/ Random House Home Video, 1987).

The whole Sesame Street gang find themselves accidentally locked in the Metropolitan Museum overnight. Among the highlights are: Cookie Monster among the paintings with food in them singing about not being able to eat the pictures, and Oscar the Grouch in the rooms with Greek and Roman statues singing about how they are the most beautiful trash he's ever seen. (This is not available on DVD, but if you still have a VCR, look for this in your local library.)