

# Say Hello to the Giant Gorilla

By W.M. Akers



"Holy cow!" said Brian.

"That's not a cow," said Kara. "It's a water buffalo."

"So what? It's still pretty cool."

Kara was not impressed. She and her family had been at the zoo for three hours. They hadn't seen anything good. First there were mountain lions. They were boring. They just looked like big versions of the cats they had at home. Next was the insect house: a bunch of dark rooms full of creepy, crawly, disgusting bugs. Worst of all was the archaeology exhibit. It was nothing but rocks!

The zoo could have been fun if it weren't so hot out. Kara was surprised the water buffalo weren't being boiled alive. Sweat streamed down her face as they finally started walking towards the next exhibit. It tasted salty and gross. Her feet got heavier with every step. If she didn't start having fun soon, she was probably going to die.

It didn't help that Brian was so cheerful. He had been begging to go to the zoo for months. When Mom told him they were going, he got so happy that he started sneezing. It took him ten minutes to stop. Every animal they saw, Brian got more excited. It's like he didn't know how boring animals could be. He kept saying things like, "Wow! Mountain lions!" or "What a cool bug!" or "Hey Kara—come look at these rocks!" Brian was two years older than Kara, but at the zoo he turned into a little baby.

"I'm thirsty," said Kara.

"We'll get lunch soon," said Mom.

"Do I have to wait for lunch? My mouth feels like the desert."

Brian's eyes lit up. "That reminds me!" he said. "There's a whole exhibit about desert animals. We'll get to see sand worms!"

“Mom,” said Kara. “That will be boring.” She stretched out the “O” in boring, so that it took almost a minute to say. Booooooooooooooooooooooring. When she was finished, her mom smiled.

“Let’s try to have fun,” she said. “I think there’s a water fountain over there.”

Kara stomped her way to the water fountain. “Stupid zoo,” she said. “Stupid big brother. Stupid desert exhibit. Stupid sand worms!”

She drank water until her stomach hurt. This made her feel better. “Maybe if I get a bad enough stomachache,” she thought to herself, “they’ll have to take me to the hospital. And maybe the doctors will tell Mom that I can’t go to the zoo ever again.” She tried drinking enough water to make herself sick. It didn’t work. She just got her hair all wet. She was about to start drinking again when Mom shouted.

“Kara! Come on!”

“Yeah, Kara!” shouted Brian. “They’re feeding the sand worms in ten minutes. I don’t wanna miss it!”

Kara ran after them. It was hard with her stomach full of water. She had just caught up when a sign caught her eye. It said:

MEET THE GIANT GORILLA! TODAY ONLY. ONE O’CLOCK, AT THE MONKEY HOUSE.

“Mom?” she said. “Mom! Mom!” This time, Kara dragged the O in Mom out so that it took almost two minutes to say. Mooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooom.

“Yes?” said Mom.

“I want to meet the giant gorilla.”

“Oh really? I thought you hated the zoo.”

“I do! But I like people. Gorillas are practically people.”

“There’s no time for that!” said Brian. “We’ve gotta see the sand worms.”

“Please Mom?” said Kara. “It’s the only thing at this stupid zoo that will be any fun.”

“I don’t know...” said Mom.

“It’s today only.”

“Okay.”

Inside the monkey house, a long line of people waited to meet the giant gorilla. Normally Kara hated waiting, but this would be worth it. It’s one thing to look at animals all day, to see them sleeping and eating and doing all that boring stuff. But to meet a gorilla is something nobody ever gets to do. Kara hummed while she waited.

“Please stop humming,” said Brian.

“I can’t,” said Kara. “Gorillas love music. He’ll expect me to be humming.”

"That's not true," said Brian. "You don't know anything about gorillas."

Brian was grumpy because they were missing the sand worms. Kara didn't care. Everyone knows gorillas are better than sand worms. But he was right—she didn't know anything about gorillas. What if it was scary? What if it was mean? What if it bit her hand? Kara wouldn't tell Brian, but as the line inched forward, she got more and more frightened. By the time it was her turn, she was sweating almost as much as she had outside.

"Go ahead, Kara," said Mom. "It's time to meet the giant gorilla."

Kara was about to ask to leave, to say she was too scared, to quit. But one look at her brother convinced her not to chicken out.

"All right," she said. "I love gorillas."

She turned the corner, her toes trembling and her palms sweating, and there was the ape.

"Holy cow," she muttered.

She had expected the gorilla to be scary. To be tough. To be mean. But instead, it was beautiful, with a long flat face, round sloping shoulders, and nostrils big enough to hold a cigar. It looked at her with big, brown eyes and yawned.

"He's pretty sleepy today," said the zookeeper. "He drank too much water."

"I know how he feels," said Kara. "It's a boy?"

"An old man. Over thirty years old."

"What's his name?"

"Christopher. Do you want to shake his hand?"

"It isn't dangerous?"

"He's been doing this a long time. Never hurt anybody yet. Come on, Christopher. Say hello!"

The gorilla stuck out its hand. Kara took it in her sweaty palm. It was soft, cool, and gentle. It looked like Christopher was smiling. She laughed.

"I think we're going to be friends!" she said.

"I think you already are," said the keeper.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why is Kara not having a good time at the beginning of the story?

- A She doesn't like crowded places.
- B She doesn't like spending time with her family.
- C It's too hot and she is bored at the zoo.
- D She had a fight with her brother.

2. What suddenly gets Kara excited?

- A She drinks some fresh water.
- B She reads a sign saying, "MEET THE GIANT GORILLA."
- C She sees a lot of desert animals.
- D She convinces her mother to leave the zoo.

3. Brian is particularly excited about seeing the desert animal exhibit. Which sentence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A "Brian was two years older than Kara, but at the zoo he turned into a little baby."
- B "He kept saying things like, 'Wow! Mountain lions!' or 'What a cool bug!' or 'Hey Kara—come look at these rocks!'"
- C "He had been begging to go to the zoo for months. When Mom told him they were going, he got so happy that he started sneezing."
- D "Brian's eyes lit up. 'That reminds me!' he said. 'There's a whole exhibit about desert animals. We'll get to see sand worms!'"

4. Read this sentence: "She turned the corner, her toes trembling and her palms sweating, and there was the ape."

Based on the evidence, how does Kara feel about meeting the gorilla at this point in the story?

- A Kara is nervous about meeting the gorilla.
- B Kara is happy about meeting the gorilla.
- C Kara is angry about meeting the gorilla.
- D Kara does not care about meeting the gorilla.

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A how gorillas end up in the zoo
- B why desert animals are boring
- C a girl who goes to the zoo and meets a gorilla
- D two siblings who don't get along

6. Read the following sentences: "He kept saying things like, 'Wow! Mountain lions!' or 'What a cool bug!' or 'Hey Kara—come look at these rocks!' Brian was two years older than Kara, but at the zoo **he turned into a little baby.**"

What is the author suggesting about Brian by writing "**he turned into a little baby**?"

- A Brian cried a lot when he was at the zoo.
- B Brian was so excited about being at the zoo that he behaved like a little kid.
- C Brian shrunk in size at the zoo.
- D Brian was treated like a baby when he was at the zoo.

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Kara expected the gorilla to be scary and mean; \_\_\_\_\_, he was beautiful and gentle.

- A however
- B especially
- C therefore
- D finally

8. How does Kara try to get her mother to leave the zoo?

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9. Why does Kara want to meet the gorilla?

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10. Did Kara enjoy her day at the zoo? Why or why not? Support your answer using details from the passage.

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