Floyd Cooper
(1956- present)

Floyd Cooper was born and raised in Tulsa, OK. His Father was a construction worker and his Mother stayed home. They lived in the projects. These concepts are important as they shaped Cooper's life. His mother loved to tell stories and encourage his imagination.

Thus, when he was just 3 years old, Mr. Cooper began drawing on sheetrock that his Dad had left over from building construction projects. In addition, when he went to school, he would draw on all his papers. Mr. Cooper stated, “I was an illustrator before I knew that I was. But I did not make the conscious decision to become one until I was in high school.”

Cooper received a degree in fine arts from the University of Oklahoma. After graduating, he worked as an artist for a Hallmark greeting card company in Kansas City. However, in 1984 he traveled to New York City to pursue his dream – a career as an illustrator of books.

At the beginning, his dream was elusive, as he received many rejections. However, he received the manuscript for Grandpa’s Face, written by a well-known author. His illustrations for this first book brought him a lot of attention, which continues today.

Floyd has illustrated over 100 children’s books, 2000 book covers and written and illustrated 3 of his own books. He has established himself as a master craftsman and illustrator of children’s literature books.

Cooper’s primary medium is a method called subtractive oil process. First, he paints a board with various colors of paint and then he starts erasing them to create the pictures. This painting style has inspired a new generation of African American illustrators.

Cooper feelings that children’s books are an important venue that can help to bridge cultures and counteract violence and other negative behaviors as seen in the news. He stated, “I feel children are at the front line in improving society and illustrating children’s books is an exciting way to provide positive models to help children learn how to deal with difficult problems and emotions.”

He goes on to state, “if a picture is worth a thousand words, what does that say about the power of the book? The picture book is not only a great tool for learning to read but for enriching one’s life. A picture book is voice for the voiceless, the discarded, and the forgotten. Yes, the picture book is a gift - A gift of truth.

He now lives in Easton, Pennsylvania, with his wife and two sons.