

APPENDIX 2.11 Tomie dePaola: Author and Illustrator

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Background

Family

Tomie dePaola was born on September 15, 1934. Tomie lived with his family in Meriden, Connecticut. His mom was Florence Downey, and she was Irish. His father, Joseph, was Italian. Tomie had one brother and two sisters.



Tomie's grandfather was also a great **storyteller**. He would use funny voices for different characters. He told Tomie that some of his stories were true and some stories were imaginary. Tomie always tried to guess which tales were made up (he liked those the best).

The Importance of Stories

Books and stories were a very important part of Tomie's childhood. His mother loved books and read to him every day. One of his favorite stories was about a wooden doll named Hiddy. He enjoyed

reading about her adventures with the children who took care of her. His favorite film was *Fantasia*. He loved watching the flying horses and mermaids.

Tomie also loved to share stories with others. When he was three, he dumped all the sand out of his sandbox so he could use it as a stage. He sang and tap-danced for friends and family. He also shared the stories his grandfather had told him.

Growing Up

Learning to Draw

When Tomie was four years old, his aunt asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. Tomie looked into her eyes and told her he wanted to be an **artist**.

Tomie went to an art college in Brooklyn, New York. He learned to draw tin cans, dogs, horses, trees, and many other things. For four years, he practiced and practiced until he could draw everything for his books.

APPENDIX 2.11 Tomie dePaola: Author and Illustrator (*continued*)

Becoming an Artist and Writer

After school, Tomie made drawings for many picture books. His most popular book is called *Strega Nona*. The first book is about an old Italian grandmother named Strega Nona and her magic pasta pot. Strega Nona leaves to visit her sister in another town and asks her grandson Big Anthony to watch her magic pasta pot. But while Strega Nona is away, Big Anthony forgets her magic words. He cannot stop the pasta from pouring out of the magic pot.

Pasta takes over the village, but Strega Nona returns just in time.

Life Now

Happy Living

Tomie has won many important awards and prizes for his popular picture books, including **Caldecott and Newbery Awards**. He has sold more than 15 million books all over the world. Today he lives with his dog Bronte in a barn in Massachusetts.