

Jeff Brown had worked in Hollywood and as an editor and writer in New York before creating Flat Stanley, a hero for the youngest readers whose adventures, with illustrations by Tomi Ungerer, were first published in 1964. Flat Stanley became the star of a series of perpetually popular books. The last, "Stanley, Flat Again!," was published the year he died. All together, Stanley's tales have sold nearly a million copies in the United States alone. The character's life extended further, as schoolchildren mailed cut-outs of him to their friends. In translation, he traveled to France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Japan and Israel, among other places.

Jeff Brown was born Richard Chester Brown. Originally a child actor, he became Jeff Brown because Actors Equity already had a Richard Brown as a member. A graduate of the Professional Children's School, he provided a child's voice in a radio drama and appeared onstage.

In Hollywood he worked for the producer Samuel Goldwyn Jr. and was a story consultant at Paramount. Preferring to write himself, he sold fiction and articles to national magazines while working at The New Yorker, Life, The Saturday Evening Post, Esquire and finally at Warner Books, where he was a senior editor until 1980. The idea for Stanley came to him one night at bedtime when his sons J. C. and Tony were young and stalling for time. One asked what would happen if the big bulletin board on the wall were to fall on J. C., and Mr. Brown said he would most likely wake up flat. That led to speculation about what such a life might be like. After writing "Flat Stanley," Mr. Brown went on to "Stanley and the Magic Lamp," "Stanley in Space," "Stanley's Christmas Adventure," "Invisible Stanley" and finally "Stanley, Flat Again!"

The Flat Stanley Project was started in 1995 by Dale Hubert, a third grade schoolteacher in London, Ontario, Canada. It is meant to facilitate letter-writing by schoolchildren to each other as they document where Flat Stanley has gone with them. The Project provides an opportunity for students to make connections with students of other member schools who've signed up with the project. Students begin by reading the book and becoming acquainted with the story. Then they make paper "Flat Stanleys" (or pictures of the Stanley Lambchop character) and keep a journal for a few days, documenting the places and activities in which Flat Stanley is involved. The Flat Stanley and the journal are mailed to other people who are asked to treat the figure as a visiting guest and add to his journal, then return them both after a period of time. In 2005, more than 6,500 classes from 48 countries took part in the Flat Stanley Project.

Retrieval

1. What had Jeff Brown worked as before creating Flat Stanley?
2. What was Jeff Browns name when he was born?

Vocabulary

3. That led to speculation about what such a life might be like.
What is meant by speculation? Talk to you partner.

Inference

4. What did people think of Flat Stanley books? How do you know?