

Six Theories of Gorilla

by Pat Pujolas

1. BLAME THE PARENTS

This seems to be the most popular position on social platforms. Mom and Dad should have been watching this kid more closely. Period. Because how could any good parent fail to notice their own child climbing over a three-foot fence, crawling through some bushes, and falling into the barrier moat at the Cincinnati Zoo's Gorilla World exhibit? Unforgivable. Gorillas are dangerous animals, and the parents should have been on their highest alert. As such, these people deserve our harshest criticisms and/or Internet memes.

2. BLAME THE KID

One eyewitness claims the boy joked about getting into the water before taking off to do just that. What three-year-old says and does that sort of thing? A real ragamuffin, that's who. The Mom surely knew from experience to keep a close eye on this particular boy. We know because there's a little trick that parents do when in public places: make your kid stick their hand(s) in your back pocket to distract them and keep them close. The Mom did this to snap a picture, but the boy pulled free and ran anyway. What a rascal!

3. BLAME THE GORILLA

Anyone who watches the video can see Harambe (ironically, Swahili for “pull together”), a 450-pound primate, roughly dragging a tiny human being through shallow water. A former zookeeper notes: “Harambe was most likely not going to separate himself from that child without seriously hurting him first.” But just as many people see the gorilla protecting the boy, pulling his pants up, holding hands with him, and only reacting to the commotion and screams from above. There's also footage from 30 years ago of a silverback watching over a fallen, unconscious boy at an English zoo until help arrived. So, what were Harambe's intentions? Can anyone really say?

4. BLAME THE CINCINNATI ZOO

If a three-year-old can get past your security measures, are they really all that great? The Cincinnati Zoo is the second oldest zoo in the United States and has earned accreditation by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums for over 25 years (Google it, Fonzie.) In accordance with the Animal Welfare Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture inspects all zoos twice annually to ensure animal and visitor safety. If there were violations involving Gorilla World (est. 1978), they were overlooked fifty-some times. And somehow survived millions of zoo-goers without incident, until recently.

5. BLAME ZOOS IN GENERAL

The year is 2016, and we're still trapping and transporting wild animals for info-tainment. Have we learned nothing since the dawn of mankind? Really, with the advent of the Internet (and now virtual reality), who needs a public zoo? Some might respond: the animals do. Animals in captivity receive healthcare, food, and protection. And if we the people never experience these rare animals in close proximity, would we still care about their extinction in faraway places? Only one way to find out.

6. BLAME HUMANITY

The human race is far from perfect. Sometimes we let children out of our sight, even for a brief moment. Sometimes we make poor decisions, especially before our minds are fully developed. Sometimes sheer emotion overpowers our renowned ability to reason. We demand swift justice when an innocent being is killed. Our brains, it seems, are hard-wired for reciprocity. Blame must be dispensed; punishment must be given. It's how we cope in the wake of tragedy. It's how we, as a social species, have co-existed for thousands of years. A member of our tribe has fallen, and we have to keep moving forward, the only way we know how.

