



PETER THORPE



EARLY LIFE AND INSPIRATION

Peter Joseph Thorpe was born on November 9th, 1957, in Portland, Oregon, USA. His mum was called Virginia Mary Thorpe and his father Peter Quinn Thorpe. He moved with his parents to New Orleans, Louisiana (his mother's hometown) in 1958, and spent his elementary and grade school years there.

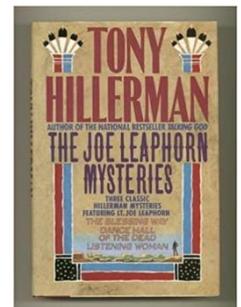
While still calling New Orleans home, he spent his high school academic years attending Florida Central Academy, a coeducational boarding school in Mount Plymouth, Florida. He graduated in 1976.

While attending an exchange program at Lincoln College, Oxford, studying art and literature, he met Pauline Baynes, the artist who was best known for illustrating *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis and *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. Baynes encouraged Peter to pursue his interests in illustration.

He continued his art studies in the autumn of 1976 at the California College of Arts and Crafts, graduating in 1980 with degree in Commercial Art.

CAREER

He began his working life as an illustrator and commercial artist, producing designs for books, products and magazines. He worked with numerous authors over the years. For a considerable period of time, Peter worked illustrated covers for the author Tony Hillerman, producing over 40 editions of his books. Since Hillerman's books were about the Native American people of the Southwestern USA, Thorpe used a simple graphic design for the covers, inspired by the traditional Navajo sand paintings.



ROCKET PAINTINGS



Peter started his Rocket paintings in the 1980s originally as a way to use up acrylic paint left over from other jobs. He didn't like to throw his paint away so he would paint a variety of abstract backgrounds ready for a main subject. Since he was designing for the Space Frontier Foundation at the time, he was inspired to paint rockets onto his backgrounds. He hoped the designs would inspire more people to think about space exploration. Some of the abstract backgrounds in his space pieces are very similar to works of Jackson Pollock, where his brushstrokes and lines seem quite disorganised. Thorpe's paintings became hugely popular with space enthusiasts and professionals alike.



FIND OUT MORE...

<http://peterthorpe.net/rockets>

<http://petershillprimary.org/classblog/Peter-Thorpe-Space-Art>

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What year did Peter graduate from Mount Plymouth boarding school?
2. What was the name of the artist he met at Lincoln College, Oxford?
3. What subject were Tony Hillerman book about?
4. What inspired Peter when he designed the covers for these books?
5. Which decade did Peter start painting rockets?
6. What reason was behind him painting rockets to start with?
7. What foundation was Peter creating art for?
8. What did Peter hope his paintings would do?