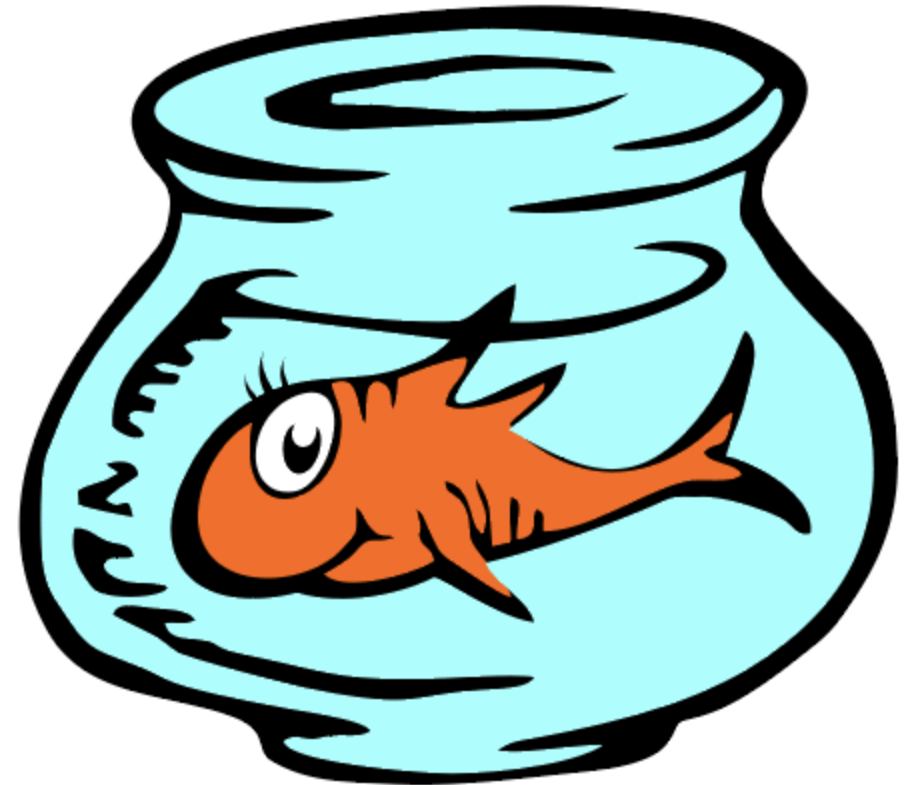


# The Cat in the Hat

Dr. Seuss



# Dr. Seuss

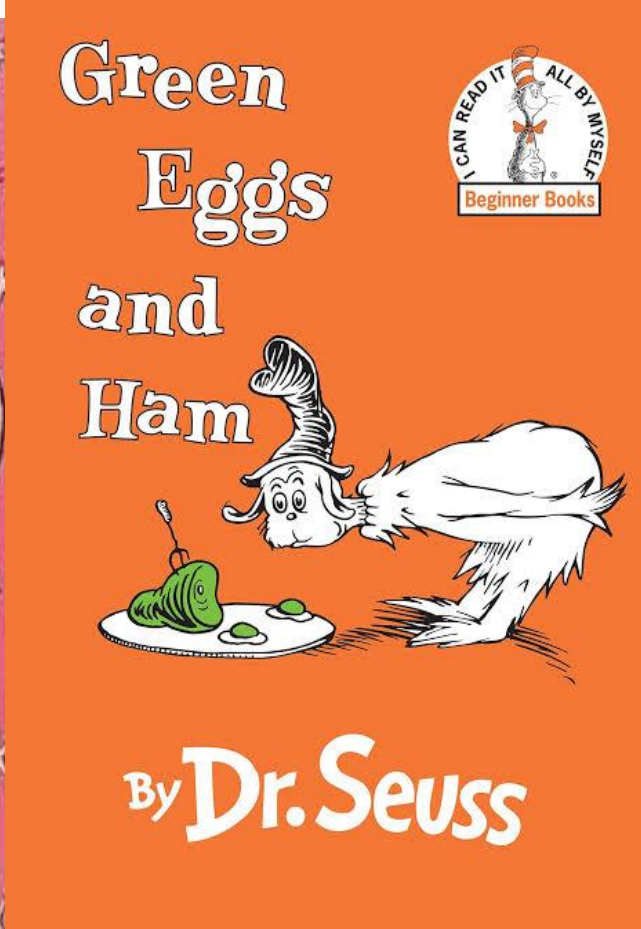
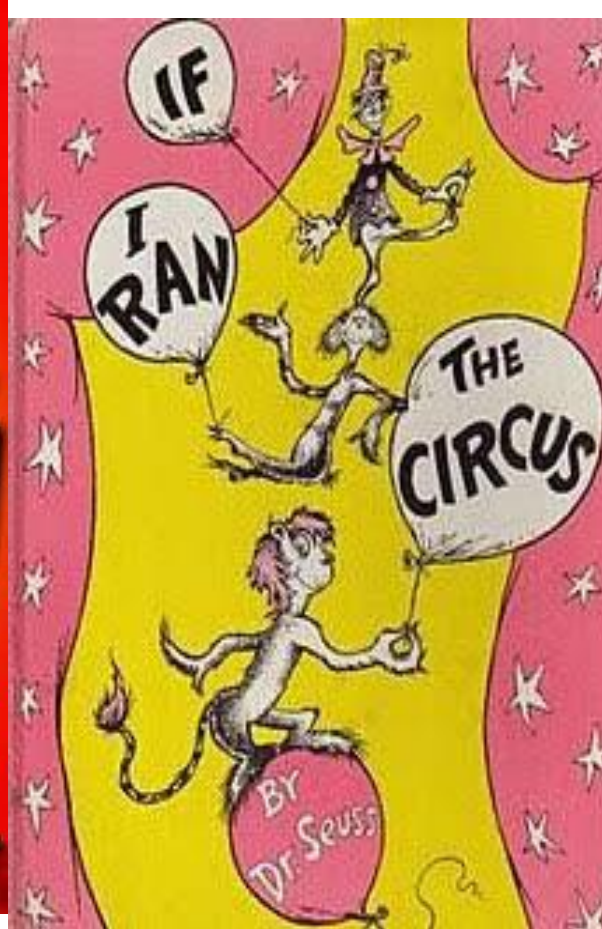
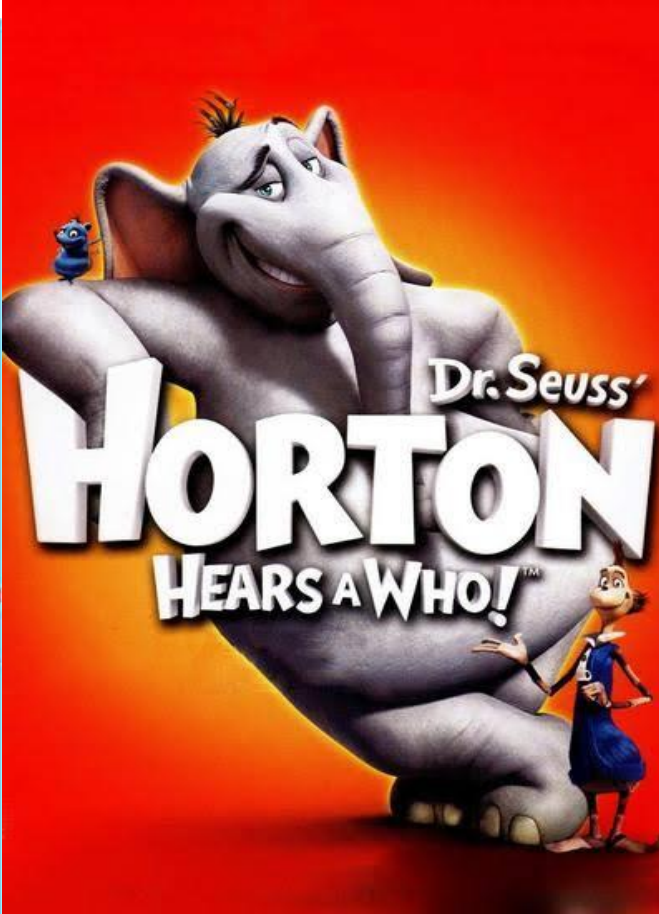
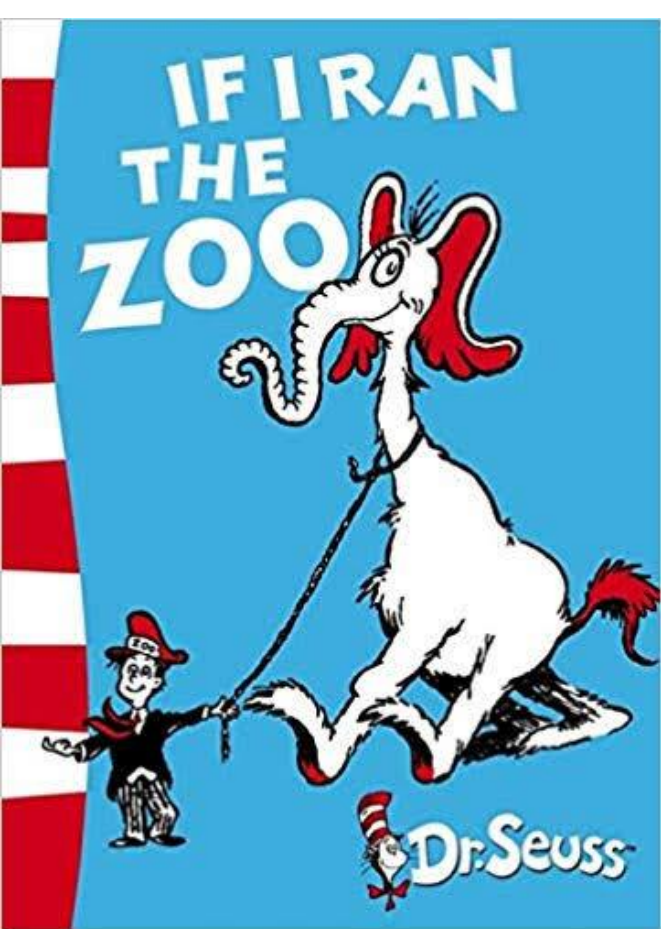
- Theodor Seuss Geisel (March 2, 1904 – September 24, 1991)
- Howard's Street in Springfield, Massachusetts
- American children's author, political cartoonist, illustrator, poet, animator, screenwriter, and filmmaker
- He published his first children's book *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* in 1937 (rejected 27 times by other pubs)
- worked in the animation and film department of the United States Army
- became an illustrator and humorist for magazines before landing a career in advertising.
- The family was of German descent, and Geisel and his sister Marnie experienced anti-German prejudice from other children following the outbreak of World War I in 1914
- Worked for Jack O Lantern
- To Oxford for Doctorate

# Major Works

- If I Ran the Zoo (1950),
- Horton Hears a Who! (1955),
- If I Ran the Circus (1956),
- The Cat in the Hat (1957),
- How the Grinch Stole Christmas! (1957),
- Green Eggs and Ham (1960)
- Illustrated 44 children's books
- Over 600 million books sold
- His honors included two Academy awards,
- two Emmy awards, a Peabody award and the
- Pulitzer Prize.







# Life and Work

- Father had to shut down brewery due to prohibition in 1920s
- Became a superintendent of a park which also had a zoo
- The young Theodore began drawing animals

# Context

- Primer for young children involved the story of two characters name **Dick and Jane**.
- The problem: Dick and Jane were boring, and educators and parents knew it. Consequently, these boring characters impeded children from learning how to read and advance their skill level
- Writer John Hershey delineated the problem in a 1954 article in Life magazine:
- Hershey added: "Why should [school primers] not have pictures that widen rather than narrow the associative richness the children give to the words they illustrate — drawings like those of the wonderfully imaginative geniuses among children's illustrators, Tenniel, Howard Pyle, 'Dr. Seuss,' Walt Disney?"

# Continued...

- Dr. Seuss was asked to write a more entertaining primer by William Spaulding, whom he had met during World War II and who was then director of the education division at Houghton Mifflin
- Houghton Mifflin-- education edition, which was sold to schools
- Random House published the trade edition, which was sold in bookstores.
- “kids can see a moral coming a mile off and they gag at it”

# Specificities of the style

- a delight in words for their own sake,
- creating ever more surreal combinations through surprising rhymes;
- drawings of fantastical figures and complicated inventions; and
- a questioning of the values and conventions of adults.



# *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of Children's Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books*

By Philip Nel

- a scholar of children's literature and English professor at Kansas State University who also is director of the children's literature program at the school.
- the Cat in the Hat is in the title because he's the ideal metaphor for the often unseen ways in which racism persists in children's culture
- inspired by blackface minstrelsy and by an actual person of color — Houghton Mifflin elevator operator Annie Williams, an African American who wore white gloves and a secret smile.

# Blackface Minstrelsy



# Blackface

- Blackface minstrelsy, also called blackface, indigenous American theatrical form that constituted a subgenre of the minstrel show. Intended as comic entertainment, blackface minstrelsy was performed by a group of white minstrels (traveling musicians) with black-painted faces, whose material caricatured the singing and dancing of slaves. The form reached the pinnacle of its popularity between 1850 and 1870, when it enjoyed sizeable audiences in both the United States and Britain.



This reproduction of a 1900 William H. West minstrel show poster, originally published by the Strobridge Litho Co., shows the transformation from "white" to "black".



# Cat as the Blackface

- Underneath his feline aspect, this hep cat threatens the stability of a white household and challenges the white social order. The clues to the cat's black lineage have been so effectively covered up that they have to be meticulously decoded to demonstrate how the story reflects subconscious white fear of black power.

# “The Cat is Out of the Bag: Orientalism, Anti-Blackness, and White Supremacy in Dr. Seuss's Children's Books,”

- Katie Ishizuka and Ramón Stephens
- looked at 50 books and more than 2,200 characters written by Theodor Geisel over 70 years "to evaluate the claims that his children's books are anti-racist," according to the paper.
- “In the fifty Dr. Seuss children's books, 2,240 human characters are identified. Of the 2,240 characters, there are forty-five characters of color representing two percent of the total number of human characters. The eight books featuring characters of color include: The Cat's Quizzer: Are YOU Smarter Than the Cat in the Hat?; Scrambled Eggs Super!; Oh, the Places You'll Go!; On Beyond Zebra; Because a Little Bug Went Ka-choo; If I Ran the Zoo; And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street; and Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?”



# Continued...

- "Of the forty-five characters of color, forty-three are identified as having characteristics aligning with the definition of Orientalism. Within the Orientalist definition, fourteen people are identified by stereotypical East Asian characteristics and twenty-nine characters are wearing turbans. Characters aligned with Orientalism are sometimes attributed an ethno-racial identity, but are generally situated within a colorblind lens, often from an unspecified nationality, race, or ethnicity. Only two of the forty-five characters are identified in the text as "African" and both align with the theme of anti-Blackness.
- "White supremacy is seen through the centering of Whiteness and White characters, who comprise 98% (2,195 characters) of all characters. Notably, every character of color is male. Males of color are only presented in subservient, exotified, or dehumanized roles. This also remains true in their relation to White characters. Most startling is the complete invisibility and absence of women and girls of color across Seuss' entire children's book collection."

# Freudian Reading

- **The id** is the part of the personality that contains our primitive impulses—such as thirst, anger, hunger—and the desire for instant gratification or release. The id wants whatever feels good at the time, with no consideration for the other circumstances of the situation. The id is sometimes represented by a devil sitting on someone's shoulder. As this devil sits there, he tells the ego to base behavior on how the action will influence the self, specifically how it will bring the self pleasure.

# The Ego

- The ego is the part of the personality that maintains a balance between our impulses (our id) and our conscience (our superego). The ego works, in other words, to balance the id and superego. The ego is represented by a person, with a devil (the id) on one shoulder and an angel (the superego) on the other.

# The Super Ego

- The superego is the part of the personality that represents the conscience, the moral part of us. The superego develops due to the moral and ethical restraints placed on us by our caregivers. It dictates our belief of right and wrong. The superego is sometimes represented by an angel sitting on someone's shoulder, telling the ego to base behavior on how the action will influence society.

# Videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jK6l1WJKUU> (Warner Bros Animation film)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgX-QawahyE> (Google Talk at Google by Philip Nel)