

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

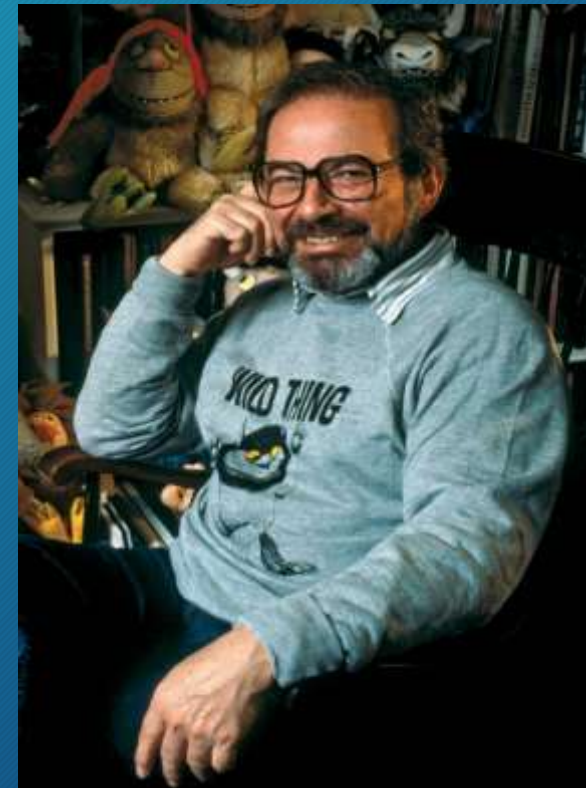
- Children's literature, the body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people. The genre encompasses a wide range of works, including acknowledged classics of world literature, picture books and easy-to-read stories written exclusively for children, and fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folk songs, and other primarily orally transmitted materials.
- Children's literature first clearly emerged as a distinct and independent form of literature in the second half of the 18th century, before which it had been at best only in an embryonic stage. During the 20th century, however, its growth has been so luxuriant as to make defensible its claim to be regarded with the respect—though perhaps not the solemnity—that is due any other recognized branch of literature.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

MAURICE SENDAK

MAURICE SENDAK(1928-2012)

- Maurice Bernard Sendak
- Born in Brooklyn, New York
- American artist and writer best known for his illustrated children's books.
- The first children's books he illustrated were Marcel Ayme's "The Wonderful Farm"(1951) and Ruth Krauss's "A Hole Is to Dig"(1952)
- Illustrated more than 80 children's books by a number of writers.
- With "Kenny's Window(1956), he began writing some of the stories he illustrated. These include the tiny four-volume "Nutshell Library"(1962) and his innovative trilogy composed of "Where the Wild Things Are"(1963), "In the Night Kitchen"(1970), and "Outside over There"(1981)
- In 1975 he wrote and directed Really Rosie, an animated television special based on some of the children in his stories. It was expanded into a musical play in 1978.
- Other works: "Higglety Pigglety Pop!; or, There Must Be More to Life" (1967), "Seven Little Monsters"(1977), and "Bumble-Ardy" (2011).
- Sendak published Caldecott & Co.: Notes on Books and Pictures, a collection of essays and reviews on writers and illustrators, in 1988. He was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 1996.



Quick Overview

- Published in 1963.
- winner of the 1964 Caldecott Medal for the Most Distinguished Picture Book of the Year - annual prize awarded “to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children.”
- “Where the Wilds Things Are” was notably adapted into a 2009 movie that was directed by Spike Jonze.
- The work was considered groundbreaking for its honest treatment of children’s emotions, especially anger

SUMMARY

- Young Max is naughty, engaging in such mischief as chasing after the dog with a fork.
- His mother calls him a “wild thing,” and, when he is cheeky to her, she sends him to bed without supper.
- Dressed in a wolf suit, Max is in such a rage that his bedroom starts to turn into a jungle and a boat appears.
- He sails to the land of the wild things, which had huge monsters with claws.
- Not frightened of anything, Max tames the wild things, who agree that he is the wildest of them all, and they make him their king.
- Max decrees, “Let the wild rumpus start,” [a noisy disturbance] and he and the wild things dance in the moonlight, hang from the trees, and generally run riot, until Max realizes he misses his mother’s love. Although the wild things beg him to stay, he returns to his bedroom, where his supper is waiting for him.

ANALYSIS

- Although now considered a classic, “Where the Wild Things Are” was initially met with mixed reviews, as some critics claimed it would traumatize children.
- However, others praised the work for dealing with childhood anger, noting that it explains the purpose of “time-outs,” assists children with anger management, and teaches them to channel their tempers creatively.
- It also shows young readers that even if they sometimes want to be wild things, a home with loving discipline is the best place to be.
- In addition, Max’s adventures demonstrate that children’s imaginations are a wonderful thing, taking them anywhere they want to go.
- Author Maurice Sendak once said: ‘I only have one subject. The question I am obsessed with is How do children survive?’
- According to the writer Francis Spufford, Where the Wild Things Are is ‘one of the very few picture books to make an entirely deliberate, and beautiful, use of the psychoanalytic story of anger’

- Although just 10 sentences long, it has become acknowledged as a masterpiece of children's literature, inspiring operas, ballets, songs and film adaptations.
- Barack Obama once told a White House crowd that "Where the Wild Things Are" is one of his favourite books. It inspired some to suggest that 'it is perhaps time to separate [Sendak] from the word 'children's' and deal with his work as an explorative art, purely and only seemingly simple'
- As the lavishly illustrated book opens, we meet the main protagonist, Max, a young boy armed with a very large hammer.
- He is wearing his wolf-suit and making mischief about the house.
- This includes chasing the dog about with a fork. His mother, never seen in the story, is unsympathetic and shouts at Max that he is a 'WILD THING!' Max responds by shouting back, 'I'LL EAT YOU UP!'
- Because of this, he is sent to bed 'without eating anything'.
- In his bedroom, Max's rage continues, but soon trees begin to grow from the floor and the walls begin to disappear.
- His room becomes one with a surrounding forest. Max walks through the forest, coming soon upon a 'private boat' that he takes across the ocean to 'where the wild things are'.

- Wild things appear from the jungle, bearing sharp, pointed teeth and menacing claws. Max's Wild Things are threatening, too, but he confronts and dominates them and becomes their king, commanding them to commence a wild, orgiastic romp in which he joins them.
- He commands them to stop the 'wild rumpus', sends them off to bed without their supper, and begins to feel lonely, wanting 'to be where someone loved him best of all'.
- He smells 'good things to eat' from 'far away across the world', and journeys home, leaving the wild things, 'into the night of his very own room, where he found his supper waiting for him, and it was still hot'.
- Sendak's art addresses our deepest, frequently repressed, often unspeakable concerns about ourselves and our loved ones. Often it speaks to children and to the adults who read to them from a place of anguished inner struggle, struggle that had rarely been directly addressed in children's literature prior to Sendak.
- In straightforward, undisguised fashion, Sendak's work has addressed problems as monumental for children as being in a rage at mother, relating to a depressed or emotionally unavailable mother, or coming to terms with a mother who cannot or will not recognize her child's concerns or state of mind.

- The most traumatic circumstances – according to Sendak – are the rages children feel toward the very persons whom they love and depend upon, rages that threaten to disorganise themselves and disrupt vital sustaining relationships.
- He manages nonetheless to maintain the optimistic view that all of these troubles can be tamed, even if not fully overcome, through imagination.
- The ultimate magic of his work resides in his presentations of imagination, dream, fantasy and – ultimately – art itself as sources of resilience, of the strength to soldier on.
- So, ‘How do children survive?’ It would seem that Sendak’s answer must include the power of art (including fantasy, dream and daydream). The child transforms otherwise crippling traumatic circumstances into his (or her) very means of survival, growth, and positive maturation. They go to where the wild things are. They conquer them, and then they return.