

# Where the Wild Things Are

by Maurice Sendak

## Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Jennifer Lee Richards

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### Synopsis

Max is wearing his wolf suit and causing mischief when his mother calls him "Wild Thing!" and sends him to his room without his supper.

Max then sails his private ship to the land where the wild things are. After taming the wild things Max becomes their king and holds a wild rumpus. Max quickly becomes bored, though, and is lonely for someone who loves him.

To the dismay of the wild things Max sails back home only to find his supper there waiting for him, and it is still hot.

### Biographical Sketch

Maurice (Bernard) Sendak was born in Brooklyn, New York on June 10, 1928. He attended the Art Students' League for two years. He has homes in both New York City and Ridgefield, Conn.

Sendak describes his childhood as "one long series of illnesses." Some of his happiest memories are of his father who "invented beautiful imaginative tales."

Sendak worked for a comic book syndicate, All-American Comics, part-time during high school. He was a display artist for a F.A.O. Schwartz toy store for three years.

Sendak is an author and illustrator of children's books. He was also the writer, director, and lyricist of the animated television special, "Really Rosie," which is about some of his book characters. He has also been involved with set and costume designing for operas.

Sendak received the Hans Christian Anderson Medal in 1970 for the entire body of his work. He received the "New York Times" Best Illustrated Children's Book Award in 1977 for *Fly By Night*. He also received the Caldecott Medal in 1964 for *Where the Wild Things Are*.

### Critic's Corner

*Where the Wild Things Are* was originally written in 1955 in an unpublished work called "Where the Wild Horses Are." Sendak explained that the horses became things because he could not draw horses very well.

The wild things were modeled after Sendak's Jewish relatives who had bad teeth and hairy noses and who on Sunday visits to Sendak's house would say something threatening to him like, "You're so cute I could eat you up."

Although at first librarians thought *Where the Wild Things Are* was too scary for young children the book has had great success and has been published in thirteen foreign languages, including Latin.

### Objectives

1. To discuss Max's punishment
2. To discuss the uses of imagination
3. To analyze Max's conclusion

### Comprehension Study

1. Discuss the kind of mischief Max was making. Why do the students feel Max should or should not get sent to his room?
2. Have the students ever been sent to bed without their supper? Why? Do the students feel this is a fair punishment? Why or why not?
3. Discuss dreams and whether the students think Max dreamed about the place where the wild things are. Discuss how sometimes events that happen in real life can create particular parts of a dream someone might have. Possibly the fact that Max's mom called him "wild thing" and sent him to bed without supper, plus having drawn the picture that hangs by the staircase may have caused Max to dream of a land of wild things. Ask the students if their dreams have ever been affected by such factors.
4. If students had a private ship where would they go?
5. Make a list of other terrible things the wild things could do besides roaring, gnashing their teeth, rolling their eyes, and showing their claws.
6. Examine the illustrations of the wild things. See if the students can identify some body parts that are recognizable as other known animal features.

EX: a rooster's head and duck feet.

### Student Activities

1. Read the book aloud or to or with your students.
2. Research the Caldecott Medals.
3. Do the students have a favorite costume they like to play in? Maybe wear these costumes at school.

4. Research about wolves. What kind of wolf do the students think Max was dressed as?
5. Look at Max's bedroom. Does it look like a typical child's bedroom? What makes it different from those of the students? Design a new bedroom for Max as he might like it after taking his journey to the land of the wild things.
6. Ask the students if their room could turn into something like a forest, as Max's did, what would they like theirs to change into? Why? Have students illustrate the way their room slowly changed in a picture book format similar to Sendak's style where parts of the room change first and then finally the entire room is transformed.
7. Research the names of the oceans of the world.
8. Make up a name for the ocean Max sailed on and make a wall-size mural showing Max's journey. Have students add imaginary places to the map.
9. Learn about sailing. Find out what the point on Max's ship was.
10. Learn magic tricks.
11. List names of wild and tame animals and discuss the differences between the two types.
12. Have students design their own wild things with various art supplies.
13. Have students decide what kind of proclamations they would establish if they were king of the wild things. What else would they do?
14. Ask students what they would have done during a wild rumpus.
15. Have students notice the phases the moon goes through during the story. Notice there is a crescent moon when he is sailing to the land of the wild things and yet it is a full moon during the rumpus and when Max is sailing home. Research the phases of the moon. Discuss how long Max would have had to have been in the land of the wild things for the moon to have changed.
16. Have students work in three groups. Have each group create text for one of the wordless double pages in the book. Join together and share these by including them in a reading of the story. Discuss why the students feel Sendak left the pages wordless.
17. List what foods are student's favorites to smell. Graph results.
18. Have students try to guess what Max's supper was based upon the dishes on his table.
19. Note the endpapers. Have students design their own endpapers for the book.

### **Bibliography**

ed. Commire, Anne. *Something About the Author: Facts and Pictures About Authors and Illustrators of Books for Young People*, Vol 27, 1982.

### Vocabulary Test

Read the definitions and use the book to find the correct words to place in the blanks below. When you are done you will have the answer to the starred question by reading the word in the boxes.

- |  |    |       |       |                      |       |       |       |
|--|----|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. wooded land                                     | 1. | _____ | _____ | <input type="text"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. rolled and tossed over and over                 | 2. | _____ | _____ | <input type="text"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. made to be no longer wild                       | 3. | _____ | _____ | <input type="text"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. used or owned by a certain person or group only | 4. | _____ | _____ | <input type="text"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. a costume                                       | 5. | _____ | _____ | <input type="text"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. trouble   | 6. | _____ | _____ | <input type="text"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |

★ Max and the wild things held a wild \_\_\_\_\_.

### Comprehension Test

Each of the following words ends in an -ed. Place the correct words in the sentence where they belong.

waved  
gnashed

frightened  
smelled

wanted  
roared

called  
sailed

1. Max's mother \_\_\_\_\_ him a "Wild Thing."
2. Max \_\_\_\_\_ his private boat to where the wild things are.
3. The wild things \_\_\_\_\_ their terrible teeth.
4. After he tamed them with a magic trick the wild things were \_\_\_\_\_ of Max.
5. From far away across the world Max \_\_\_\_\_ good things to eat.

## ANSWER KEY

### Vocabulary Test

- |            |            |             |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| 1. forest  | 3. tamed   | 5. suit     |
| 2. tumbled | 4. private | 6. mischief |

★ sentence answer: rumpus

### Comprehension Test

- |           |           |            |               |            |
|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------|
| 1. called | 2. sailed | 3. gnashed | 4. frightened | 5. smelled |
|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------|



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