

Meet Maurice Sendak

Where the Wild Things Are has raked in millions of dollars at movie theaters. Maybe you saw the movie. Perhaps you read the book on which it is based, too. But what do you *really* know about the book and its author, Maurice Sendak?



Maurice Sendak was born in Brooklyn, New York, on June 10, 1928. He was a frail and sickly child who spent much of his early life indoors. The only world he knew was his family and the relatives who visited. He saw few other people, except through his bedroom window. It was a pretty lonely life, but Maurice made the best of it. He and his older brother, Jack, often made drawings and toys together. They read lots of books too.

Maurice's world changed when he was 12 years old. That's when he saw a movie -- Walt Disney's *Fantasia* -- for the first time. The animated movie was full of imagination, and it would have a huge influence on Maurice as he continued to draw. After high school, Maurice got work drawing illustrations for books. He also worked at a toy store, where he used his imagination to decorate the store's windows.

In 1963, Maurice's life would change again. That's when he wrote *Where the Wild Things Are*. When the book was first published, many parents thought it was too scary for kids. Some librarians would not put the book on their shelves. But, before long, the story was a favorite among children everywhere.

NEWS WORD BOX

decorate relatives animated
influence mischief frail
quirks imagination reduce

How did Maurice dream up his wild characters? He says the monsters were based on the relatives who visited his family home as a child. "They grabbed you and twisted your face, and they thought that was [a friendly] thing to do," Maurice said. The relatives didn't speak much English and they had lots of quirks, he added.

Maurice seems happy with the movie that's been made from his best-known book. When the filmmaker first talked with Maurice about making the movie, Maurice told him to make lots of mischief. "Do not reduce Max to the good little boy that you find in too many books," he said.

MORE ABOUT MAURICE SENDAK

- *Where the Wild Things Are* has sold more than 19 million copies in 15 languages.
- The artwork in the book earned Maurice a Caldecott Medal in 1964.
- An elementary school in California has been named after Maurice.
- In recent years, Maurice has created "wild" stage sets for many operas and ballets.