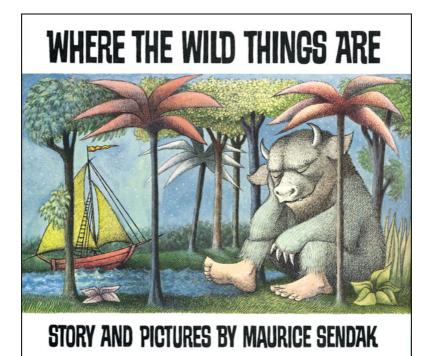# WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

MAURICE SENDAK

TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

by Suzanne Oakley

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
Teaching Support Kit

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

From the back flap of the 1993 Bodley Head hardback edition

Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* was first published in New York in 1963. Four years later the Wild Things came to Britain where they soon tamed the initial furore from the critics, and carried on with their own wild rumpus to make the book an acknowledged classic of twentieth-century children's literature.

Where the Wild Things Are is the first book of a trilogy that includes *In the Night Kitchen*, a dream fantasy, but as the artist says, 'a fantasy rooted ten feet deep in reality', and *Outside Over There*, which *The Sunday Times* described as 'his most outstanding work yet; entirely real, other worldly and not to be missed.'

An author-artist of world renown, Maurice Sendak was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Illustrator's medal in 1970 in recognition of the excellence of the entire body of his work.

2. NOTES ON STRUCTURE

THEMATIC SCENES IN THE STORY

- Max is playing
- Max is sent to his room
- Max begins his journey
- Max arrives at the Land of the Wild Things
- Max stands up to the Wild Things
- Max is made King
- Max organises the Wild Rumpus
- Max sends everyone to bed
- Max decides to return home
- Max is back in his bedroom

3. THEMES

- Parental love
- The nature of our emotions
- Power and control
- Resolving conflict
- Empathy for others' feelings
- Taking responsibility for our actions

4. ACTIVITIES

STORYBOARDING OR COMPOSING A JOURNAL

Have students storyboard using text and images, or create a journal of the thematic scenes in the story (p 3 of these notes). Have them summate the plot, then describe how Max is feeling in these moments.

CREATE THE UNSPOKEN TEXT

Sendak has left four pages of Wild Rumpus-ing without text. Have students write dialogue and story for these four pages.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE: THE MOVIE

The tagline for the movie poster is 'there is one in all of us'.

- What do the film makers mean by this statement?
- Do you agree?
- What changes have they made to the story for the movie? Compare the changes to the narrative referring to characters, art design, etc.
- Discuss why these changes were important, what more (or less) they tell us about the characters or the story.

READERS' THEATRE SCRIPT

Create a readers' theatre script of the text, allowing students to read the narration and act the parts of the characters. To learn more about readers' theatre visit:
www.education.tas.gov.au/curriculum/standards/english/english/teachers/reading/theatre

CREATE A DREAMSCAPE

Max's time in the Land of the Wild Things is an envisioned world of his imagination. Have students create an artwork that looks like their dreams and imaginings. Ask them to think about their use of palette (colours), materials (paint, crayons, pencils, textas etc.) and creatures (who or what are in it). Get then to name their imagined world.

READING THE IMAGES

Have students 'think, pair and share' their thoughts about these questions.

- Why did Maurice Sendak choose this colour palette?
- Notice the framing of the illustrations and their relative size on the page throughout the story. How does it change and why?
- Notice changes to Max's suit throughout the story. (Is the hood on? Does he have his crown?) What role does this have in telling his story?
- How do the images show Max's power in the story? (Relative size of objects, etc.)

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY – QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Create questions that have different cognitive demands on students and allow them to look at a text on a number of levels. For more competent students, ask them to create their own questions for all of the levels in the Taxonomy.

Bloom's Domain	Verbs	Sample Questions/Activities
Remembering (read at text level, directly from the words)	Recalling information, recognising, listing, describing, retrieving, naming, finding.	What is the boy in the book's name? How did Max get to the land of the Wild Things? What was waiting for Max when he returned?
Understanding (requires some understanding, comprehension, interpretation of events)	Explaining ideas or concepts, interpreting, summarising, paraphrasing, classifying, explaining.	Why was Max sent to his room? Why was Max made King of all Wild Things? Why did Max wish to return home?
Applying (must be able to apply understanding to a new situation)	Using information in another familiar situation, implementing, carrying out, using, executing.	Write a dialogue between Max and his mother before he was sent to his room. Write a dialogue after Max returned from his adventure.
Analysing (comprehending relationships and their effects)	Breaking information into parts to explore understandings and relationships, comparing, organising, deconstructing, interrogating, finding.	Why did the Wild Things like Max? Why did Max like the Wild Things? Why was Max unhappy to be sent to his room? Why do we never see Max's mother?
Evaluating (students should analyse the characters and author's intent)	Justifying a decision or course of action, checking, hypothesising, critiquing, experimenting, judging.	Was Max's mother justified in sending Max to his bedroom? Was it a fair punishment? Max's dinner was still warm when he returned. Did he really go anywhere? What is a Wild Thing? Does the author want us to sympathise with any character? If so who, why and how? Why did Max send the Wild Things to bed without any supper?
Creating (requires original thought and planning)	Generating new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things, designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing.	Retell *Where the Wild Things Are* from the perspective of one of the Wild Things. Write text for the four pages without text.