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ABSTRACT

Where the Wild Things Are and Why They Will Endure: An Analysis of the Longevity of Maurice Sendak's Work

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This study looks to explain why Maurice Sendak's works have achieved a place in the classic cannon of children's literature. It starts by discussing children's literary theory and looks at the era of children's literature within which Sendak wrote, his illustrations, and his writing. The study then looks at psychoanalytic themes in his work. It analyzes the use of the conscious, unconscious, id, and ego. It further describes the use of archetypes of the collective unconscious in Sendak's work and why this connects to many readers. Then, the study describes bibliotherapy, books as therapeutic aids, and discusses how Sendak's books can help to heal and aid in children's development. Finally, the paper argues that since Sendak has achieved a place in the classic cannon of children's literature, educators should use his works to help promote self-regulation skills and literary readers.

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Introduction

"The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind...and another...his Mother called him 'WILD THING!'"(Sendak, 1963, pp. 1-4).

For almost 50 years *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak has been a staple of children's literature. There are currently more than 17 million copies of the book in circulation all over the world (Zarin, 2010). In 2008 a movie version was released in theaters all across America for the generations of people who had come to love the book as children. It is typical in children's literature for books to go out of fashion. Pictures become culturally dated, characters begin to look like strangers, and the words take on a hollow meaning to the new shining faces waiting to be wowed by the book. Yet, since 1963 *Where The Wild Things Are* has maintained a strong power over the minds of the young.

Maurice Sendak has illustrated over 100 children's books (Zarin). While most know *Where The Wild Things Are* in a snap many children are familiar with his other classics such as *Chicken Soup With Rice, In the Night Kitchen, Outside Over There,* and even his newest book *Mommy!* Children know Sendak's books in spite of competing pressures from the media. Children who latch onto pop culture now populate the world. Today's children spend more time in front of the television, and when they happen to read a book, the characters are often straight from television and the movies. Yet, Sendak maintains a captive hold on a variety of children in the American, or even worldwide, population.

Why? It seems simple enough to ask why children remain captivated by Sendak's wide array of children literature from generation to generation. As the times change, the books stay the same, and children still love them. How? How does Sendak write and illustrate in a manner that seems to defy age and time.

John Cech (1995, p. 22) argues

> Though one can often unravel the threads of cultural associations and personal references that Sendak weaves through a given book or that become repeated patterns in a series of books, as many of those who have written about Sendak have done, what remains to be unknotted is the line that will lead one to the generative force that animates the creation, the "it" that Sendak refers to as the unifying principle of his work.

Forty-six years after the Caldecott award made Sendak a household name this question still remains a mystery. This study will argue that there are three main factors contributing to the success of Sendak's books and their place in the classic cannon of children's literature. The first is a look at children's literary theory, specifically Sendak's role in the shift of illustrations, his illustration style, character formation, writing, and themes. The second, and possibly most important, factor is his use of psychoanalysis in his work. Sendak, albeit unconsciously at times, manages to incorporate battles between the id and the ego in his books as well as using strong imagery based in the archetypes of the collective unconscious. The third factor in the success of

Sendak's books is their strong therapeutic capacity to perform bibliotherapy, the use of books as therapeutic aids without intervention.

The final question then becomes, what do educators do with this information? Does reading Sendak to students create a room full of future super readers who can pass state reading tests in the blink of an eye, or is it simpler than that? There are benefits to using Sendak in the classroom because of the power the books have with students.

In an interview Sendak states, "Books don't go out of fashion with children. They just go out of fashion with adults and publishers," (1988, p. 177). Yet, miraculously, Sendak has stayed popular from year to year and decade to decade. Something deep within his books connects to all people, and knowing why might help educators unlock some keys to success.

Murray's Window: The Life of Maurice Sendak

"What looks inside and what looks outside?"
(Sendak, 1956, p. 35).

In the first book Maurice Sendak illustrated and authored, *Kenny's Window* a rooster asks a young boy named Kenny seven questions in a dream. The sixth question is, "What looks inside and what looks outside." The answer is left vaguely ambiguous. The answer lies somewhere between "self" and "window." Sendak himself spent many years peering out the edge of his brownstone window in Brooklyn. As a sickly child he would spend hours looking and drawing (Zarin, 2010). Looking out his bedroom window, will subsequent self-reflection, was how Sendak started much of his writing.

There are dozens of reflections on how Maurice Sendak's work is a product of his life. You could trace his love of Disney, fear of the Lindbergh kidnapping, and even an allusion to the Morton Salt girl, but these are all isolated facts in the web of his life. It is undeniable that his life is a powerful influence to his work. Maurice Sendak's writing is a product of his childhood and adulthood hopes, dreams, and fears. In order to fully understand why his books are so powerful one needs to understand the man behind the books and take a brief peek into his life as a boy.

Maurice Sendak was born on June 10, 1928 in a heavily Eastern European populated area of Brooklyn, Bensonhurst. He was the third, and youngest, child of Philip and Sarah Sendak who were both Polish Jews (Zarin) When he wasn't drawing he enjoyed movies, reading, and anything Disney (Lanes, 1984). His father worked and his mother stayed at home. Based on his mother's emotionally absent behavior, Sendak theories that she might have dealt with depression during his childhood (Zarin, 2010). In addition to his immediate family, he had many relatives in Brooklyn. Every Sunday his mother would cook for his aunts and uncles, and every Sunday Sendak sat in apprehension that his mother would take so long to cook that his family would eat him up, his first wild things (Sendak, 1988).

While not a fan of school, Sendak loved reading. The first book he ever owned was a copy of *The Prince and the Pauper* given to him by his sister. He notes that the pages were so good he wanted to eat them. He spent many years begrudgingly going to school. In high school he got his first opportunity to

illustrate a book. His high school physics teacher commissioned him to illustrated a children's book about atoms, *Atomics for the Millions,* and thus his career started (Zarin, 2010).

Upon graduating high school he took a job at FAO Schwartz doing window displays. The store's book buyer offered to introduce him to Ursula Nordstrom. They met and the next day she offered him the chance to illustrate *The Wonderful Farm* by Marcel Ayme. He accepted (Lanes, 1984). Although, Sendak might be one of the most successful children's book authors of the 20th century, without the backing of Ursula Nordstrom it is possible he may not have had the same level of success. She functioned as one of the most powerful publishers of children's literature and helped give Sendak the opportunity to write and illustrate books. She supported him in his independent endeavors, no matter how risky they might have been.

In 1950 Sendak also published *Good Shabbos Everybody.* Nordstrom connected him to Ruth Krauss, and from there he began to grow as an illustrator. *A Hole is to Dig* (1954) by Ruth Krauss is often noted as one of the first books where Sendak began to show his illustrative style. The children start to take on the homegrown form and the illustrations are playful. Krauss and her husband Crocket Johnson began to mentor Sendak (Lanes, 1984).

In 1956 Sendak took a giant leap and authored and illustrated his first book. *Kenny's Window* is a whimsical, yet melancholy, book centered on a young boy named Kenny. Kenny is lonely asking, "what is an only goat?" and answering a lonely goat (Sendak, 1956, p. 13). The book is loosely based on the

underlying emotions of Dorothy Baruch's case study *One Little Boy* (1983). Baruch introduces the world to a little boy named Kenneth in her play therapy room and the reader sees some of the sad depths of childhood. At the time of reading the book Sendak was himself undergoing psychoanalysis. He states, "I was blindsided by that kid, by his inability to communicate. Kenny's troubles suggested my childhood to me. I had been that lonely," (Zarin, 2010, p. 5). The book is dedicated to his parents, Ursula Nordstrom, and finally, his psychoanalyst.

After publishing *Kenny's Window,* Sendak is quoted as saying that his ongoing theme would be, "children who are emotionally held back by life and who manage somehow to master their troubles or fears," (Lanes, 1984, p. 85). So he continued to write. He published *The Nutshell Library* (1962), illustrated a wide variety of books, and wrote a few more of his own. Yet, his greatest work was still to come.

In 1963 Sendak truly found his voice in *Where The Wild Things Are.* It is by far his most successful book and his first Caldecott winner. In his acceptance speech he states that while parents try to protect their children in order to prevent later traumas yet,

> What is just as obvious – and what is too often overlooked – is the fact that from their earliest years children live on familiar terms with disrupting emotions, that fear and anxiety are intrinsic part of their everyday lives, that they can continually cope with frustration as best they can. And it is

> through fantasy that children achieve catharsis. It is the best means they have for taming Wild Things.
>
> (Sendak, 1988, p. 151).

So Sendak continued in this fashion, laying out truths during his career. Lanes (1984) states that Sendak's illustrations became "richer" after illustrating *Where The Wild Things Are.* He had found his vision and voice. He continued his work creating an accidental trilogy with *In The Night Kitchen* in 1970 and *Outside Over There* in 1981, two of his other more successful books (Sendak, 1988). He went on to write and illustrate an homage to his dog with *Higglety Pigglety Pop! Or There Must Be More To Life* in 1967. And he continues to write, illustrate, and teach to this day.

Who does Sendak really write for? It might be for himself. He might write stories based in his own childhood anxieties and fear in order to relieve stress. Yet, in his words are gems that help millions of children all over the world relieve their own stress. In his books are pictures and words that most children can connect to and sigh deeply. He may write for himself and from his life, but his books are open for the masses.

Beyond Kiddiebookland

> "Kiddiebookland is where we live. Didn't you know? It next to Neverneverville and Peterpanburg. It's that awful place that we've been squeezed into because we're children's book illustrators or children's book writers. Yes we are! But isn't our work meant for everybody? How infuriating and insulting when a serious work is considered only a trifle for the nursery! When you've worked a year on a book, when you've put your life into it, you expect the point of view of the professionals– editors, teachers, librarians– to be somewhat larger, more expansive,"

(Sendak, 1988, p. 191)

Sendak's literature is some of the most frequently analyzed in the world of children's literary theory. There are a few major ideas that stand out in the analysis as to why his books might have such an impact and be so popular with children. They include: a **shift in children's literature** from the more structured moralistic writing to visual masterpieces that connect to the human psychology; his **character formation**; his **illustrations**; his **text patterns**; and his **common themes**. Each of these factors helps the reader to connect and attach to his books.

Shift In Children's Literature

Early children's literature consisted of mainly moralistic and didactic texts where there was an overly wrought moral. Starting in the 19th century more variations of children's literature began to arise, yet it took until the end of the 19th century for these to become commonplace. Hunt (1999) states that at the end of the 19th century books began to, "demonstrate tension between educational, religious, and political exercises of power on the one hand and various concepts associated with 'freedom' on the other," (p. 6). Starting with Randolph Caldecott, illustrators began to do more than simply echo the text but created a rich interplay of text and pictures that breathed new life and meaning into the picture book (Lanes, 1984). These two factors alone might seem enough to spark such works as *Where The Wild Things Are* yet there was another tipping point.

Around the start of Sendak's career, books shifted from a basically uniform style to a variety of styles. While fiction had been part of children's

literature previously, it began to dominate the field of children's literature. The fiction now more commonly included elements of fantasy and more visceral emotions. Books began to animate inner life (Cech, 1995). His era was a "post-Freudian world" where it became more commonplace for the every day person to contemplate his or her inner feelings (Lanes, 1984, p. 249). Freud and psychoanalysis were all the talk, and Sendak's own analysis provided a framework for his books. Cech (1995, p. 57) states,

> Sendak's engagement with the psychological dimensions of fantasy in children was part of an awakening in child-rearing circles to the general acceptance of many of Freud's developmental ideas that were beginning to take hold in America after World War II.

With the combination of the slow shift to fiction and emotional themes, a new brand of illustration, and a psychoanalytically aware society Sendak and his characters were ready for acceptance.

Characters

Bruno Bettelheim (1975) states that in the ideal fairytale, "all characters are typical rather than unique," (p. 8). Early characters in children's literature looked "sanitized" or "approved" (Cech, 1995, p. 46). Take for example characters Dick and Jane from children's early readers. Their blonde hair always perfectly kept, their white clothing bleached clean, and their eyes maintain a bright blue sparkle in every moment. While perhaps reflecting a former American ideal, it was unrealistic. America in the post war society reflected a community of growing minorities with more and more European

influences. While Sendak has been criticized for his overly European feel, it was a more realistic connecting point for the child consumer.

Sendak recreated the children from "the streets and stoops of his childhood" (Cech, p. 10). Raised in Brooklyn, he was surrounded by everyday people. Those everyday working people are who Sendak portrays in his characters, starting with *A Hole Is To Dig* (Kraus, 1952). In the book, written by Ruth Krauss, his children have gently tousled hair, everyday clothing, and they make faces at each other. Their cheeks are licked by dogs, and their faces are dirty from mud. Although the illustrations are in black ink, it is clear that their hair is definitely not blonde (Krauss). This pattern continues consistently throughout most of his books.

From Kenny to Pierre, Max, and Mickey, all the characters maintain the gently messy hair, clothing slightly messy, and pudgy-faced look of the new typically American child. Rosie represents the face of the girls. In books like *Outside Over There,* the influences are blurred between the American child and the influences of Philipp Otto Runge and other European artists (Rosenblum, 1988). Yet, underneath the European art are photos of real babies that help the reader to connect to the characters (Cech, 1995).

Sendak notes, "They were just Brooklyn kids...old before their time. Many of them resemble the kids I grew up with. Most of them were Jewish, and they may well look like little greenhorns just off the boat. They had, some of them, anyway – a kind of bowed look as if the world were on their shoulders," (Lanes, 1984, p. 26). While his character maintained the neighborly look, they

also used their faces to express their feelings, feelings with which the reader can connect. What matters most about Max, and consequently about most of Sendak's characters, is "the look on his face – the gamut of expressions from grimace to grim that his faux-feral wolf suit slyly manages to both undercut and intensify," (Marcus, 2003, p. 704). These expressions mirror what children feel and by creating a wide range of emotions children can see their own wide range and feel connected to the characters.

There is also power in the chorus of background characters in Sendak's stories. McGuire (2009) notes that having a chorus of background characters leaves room for the reader to fully connect with the main character. In *Where The Wild Things Are* the wild things have no names, and for the most they part blend together (Sendak, 1963). In *In The Night Kitchen* the bakers are nameless, and in many books the background characters stay this way (Sendak, 1970). By leaving room for the reader to identify with the main character, Sendak is allowing for stronger connection to his books. Sendak uses a slight twist in *Outside Over There* where the goblins take on a similar form as Ida's baby brother (Sendak, 1981). By allowing the nameless mob to resemble one on of the main characters, Sendak heightens the anxiety to find him, and the reader must read on. Characters provide one layer of connection and the illustrations provide yet another.

Illustrations

Sendak was born into an era where illustrations became a living, breathing component of the children's book. The illustrations were

interpreting and intermixing with the text as opposed to simply mirroring it. Sendak's three strengths in his illustrations are his ability to blend the classic with the contemporary, his creation of intrigue and anxiety, and his balance.

Sendak draws inspirations from a combination of classic art and illustrations on the one hand and popular American culture and art on the other. Marcus (2003) notes, "one reason that *Where The Wild Things Are* feels so fresh today is that in fashioning the illustrations Sendak largely avoided time bound visual references. The aim seems to have been for a book whose impact would be classical, not contemporary," (p. 703). Sendak's gentle balance between the classical and the modern provided an aesthetic that remains contemporary in many of his books to this day. He was a lover of Randolph Caldecott and an art appreciator. He spent time in the 1950s and '60s studying English and German illustrators. He draws much inspiration from the classic art of Philipp Otto Runge, among others. On the other hand, he is also a deep lover of all things Disney, especially Mickey Mouse, and cartooning (MacGuire, 2009). This combination of American symbols and classical imagery creates a feeling of both the current and nostalgic that readers can connect with across generations. Some books err slightly more towards the classical than popular American culture. *Outside Over There* is clearly inspired by the work of artist Runge. The Nutshell collection bears resemblance to books published for children in the 18th and 19th century in their size and illustration style (Cech, 1995).

Sendak's use of crosshatching in the background and soft painted character illustrations is similar to the styles used in cartooning. He uses this technique in his classic 1963 *Where The Wild Things Are* and in many of his other books. *In The Night Kitchen* is the clearest representation of cartooning with the use of panel drawing and speech bubbles (Lanes, 1984). The key is in the combination of the two, no book is all one or the other. Cech (1995) describes this ability in combining the two as *musee imaginaire* where Sendak becomes the "everyman" devoid of time and place. In using both he appeals to countless people in America, and outside of America.

Sendak's illustrations provide a sense of intrigue and anxiety that pull the reader in. Lanes (1984) notes that the characters are meant to look defenseless. In portraying this true emotion of childhood, Sendak helps to bring in the reader with empathy towards the defenseless anxiety of the child. Readers bond with Ida as she looks forlorn towards her absent mother. They also bond with Max as he sadly goes to his room without supper. His background images further the sense of intrigue. Maguire (2009) notes that the buildings "defy laws of perspectives" (p. 109). People standing behind windows are, "too large to fit inside the implied room within...We pause, we recognize, we try to work it out," (p. 109). The reader becomes engaged in determining what is real and what is not real. In the process, they become engaged in the fantasy.

While he creates intrigue and anxiety throughout a story, in the end there is a balance that proves the reader with a final calm perspective. Marcus

(2003) argues that Sendak uses, "a range of delicate tonal effects that counterbalance the strong, hard feelings of the story," (p. 705). While the message is hard and direct, the balance of the soft paintings gives the reader the feelings that everything will be all right. Even Max's bedroom, which grows the wild jungle, shrinks back to his regular room at the end, with the same moon (Maguire, 2009). The beginning and the end are consistent; the reader is comforted that it will all go back to normal.

The Writing

Sendak begins his books with writing the words. He argues that words must be "very good before he considers illustrating them" (Poole, 1996, p. 33). The words provide an "anchor" for the reader to the story and their adventure in the pages.

Content. The content in Sendak's books is one of the most salient and unifying features in his writing. His topics are always centered around the lives of children. While the adventure, or misadventure, varies, there is always a child with perhaps an extreme emotion and an adventure to be had. Thus, his characters are children, but not just any children. The children are those who could be perceived as mischievous, bossy, or, at times, just sad. They are children dealing with extreme emotions. Other common characters include babies, dogs, and distant, yet loving, parents.

Themes. Sendak uses a selection of themes that have the power to connect to many readers. Sendak describes his three most successful books, *Where The Wild Things Are, In The Night Kitchen, and Outside Over There* as an

"trilogy" because, "they are all variations on the same theme how children master various feelings– anger, boredom, fear, frustration, jealousy– and manage to come to grips with the realities of their lives," (Lanes, 1984, p. 227). All of his books provide variations on these same themes. His books are all about the mastery of childhood emotions namely fear, anger, and abandonment. His books declare that being a kid is hard and life is not as sheltered as people assume.

Abandonment is a common theme in many of Sendak's books. Starting with Kenny and the lonely goat, almost all of Sendak's main characters deal with some level of estrangement from their parents. Kenny acts as a parent figure for the toy soldiers in the book *Kenny's Window*. The book asks the question, "Can you fix a broken promise?" (Sendak, 1956, p. 25). The following conversation precipitates between the toy soldiers as they contemplate leaving the bedroom and going into the outside world,

> "That's the world," said the second, "and it's miles long. We'll get lost."
>
> "Soldiers can't get lost," replied the first.
>
> "Are you mad at Kenny?" asked the second.
>
> "Didn't he promise to take care of us always?" asked the first.
>
> "Yes," answered the second (p. 26).

The fight continues as they discuss all of the ways Kenny has broken his promises. Kenny wakes up and in a fit of anger leaves one of the soldiers outside of the window saying, "Bad soldier!...I never broke my promise." (Sendak, p. 28). Kenny here is reenacting his anxiety about his parents' broken

promises as he pushes away his surrogate children and abandons them in the dark night. Yet in the end Kenny overcomes his abandonment by letting the soldier back in and say, "I love you," (p. 28).

In *Where The Wild Things Are* Max is sent to his room, without super, the biggest abandonment of them all, lack of food. Ida is the ultimate abandoned child as her father drifts out to sea and her mother looks forlorn, stuck in the distance, she becomes the sole caretaker of her sibling (Sendak, 1963). Children respond well to this theme because abandonment, whether real or imagined is a common emotion in childhood. The abandonment is not always simple, sometimes it doubles into fear, and often translates into the world falling apart around the child. The reader can latch onto however they feel abandoned in their life.

Yet, an important part of his theme of abandonment is the eventual resolution. In the end Max is provided with the comfort of food, "and it was still hot," (Sendak, 1963, p. 37). Ida ends up saving her brother and her family is restored. The reader finds comfort in the solution.

Another common theme is childhood anger. Many of Sendak's characters portray angry emotions. Take Pierre, he spends his whole book declaring, "I don't care," (Sendak, 1962, p. 1). He doesn't care about what his mother says, father says, and eventually an alligator eats him up. Much of the characters' anger is directed against parents. Cech (1995) argues that Pierre does a fine job of getting, "himself trapped by his consuming emotions, but he cannot get himself out alone," (p. 103). All children are angry at their parents

at some point in time. Pierre eventually needs his parents to help him resolve his anger, as many children often do.

Throughout all of Sendak's books there is a message that fantasy is a means of dealing with personal difficulties (Cech). Zarin (2010) states, "his narrative is almost always about a child in danger whose best defense is imagination," (p. 2). Almost all, minus Rosie (Sendak, 1960), enter a realm of fantasy to cope with the emotional troubles of childhood. Max grows a forest in his room (Sendak, 1963), Ida calls the goblins with a wonder horn (Sendak, 1981), yet Mickey's story is pure dream and fantasy (Sendak, 1970). His story is so seeped in the fantasy that the reader does not know why he needs to escape into the night kitchen, yet, this ambiguity provides a simple message to the reader that fantasy can be an escape.

There are other themes: sadness, anxiety, sibling rivalry, and emerging independence. The key in Sendak's art is in the layering of themes within a singular book. There are a variety of themes with which different readers can connect. Where one child might connect to the anger in *Where The Wild Things Are* another might connect to his mothers abandonment and return or Max's emerging independence and power. Bettelheim (1975) notes that "Goethe said in his prologue to Faust, 'who offers many things will offer some to many a one,'" (p. 154). That is the power of Sendak, in that each book provides many themes where every reader can find one with which to connect.

A final theme in almost all Sendak books is that wherever your mind takes you, wherever tricky life leads, you can always go home at the end and

feel safe at night. Sendak provides a variety of settings for the characters. Some characters go far away to where the wild things are (1963), some enter the night kitchen (1970), and some go all the way to Switzerland (1954). The unifying factor in his settings is that wherever the characters go, they almost always start and end at home. Max starts his adventure in his bedroom, leaves, and comes back (1963). Mickey flies out of his bed, explores the night kitchen, and is safely back in bed by the morning (1970). The fantasy location is framed by the safety of home.

Text Structure. Sendak sticks to a fictional genre that uses fantasy as a medium of exploration for the characters. The books are narrative (Poole, 1996) and from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. His most important element of text structure is the parallel between the beginnings and the endings. It was noted above that the visuals in the beginnings and endings of Sendak's books mirror one another and the same is true for the text. The character starts in reality, leaves and goes to a fantasy world, and is in a comforted version of reality at the end. In *Where The Wild Things Are* (1963) at the beginning Max is sent to bed without his supper and at the end it is there and "still hot" (p. 37). The end is a more comforting version of the beginning. In *In The Night Kitchen* (1970) Mickey is in bed and cannot sleep because of noise. He leaves home, goes into the night kitchen and in the end in back in bed, "cakefree and dried" (p. 34). Mickey can now sleep and is a cleaner and more comforted version of himself.

Language. Sendak also creates familiarity with the reader by using rhyme in some of his texts. As a great admirer of Mother Goose, Sendak employs some nursery rhyme styles in *Pierre: A Cautionary Take* (1962) and *Higglety Pigglety Pop: Or There Must Be More To Life* (1967). In *Alligators All Around* and *One Was Johnny* (1962), he uses the familiar style of the alphabet book or a counting book yet still throws in scary alligators and a robber for Johnny to count. He takes a familiar foundation of language and rhymes and uses it to support the message in the text.

Sendak then uses a variety of metaphors, both visual and verbal, to support the text. One of his common metaphors is the window. The window is often a link between the world around the child and the fantasy. In Sendak's first book *Kenny's Window* (1956) the premise surrounds a boy, his room, and his window. His window is how he fantasies and sees the outside world. He exclaims, "my window is crying," (p. 36). His window is his barrier from the outside world, while Kenny eventually escapes his sadness by finding a friend out his window; other characters learn to escape more easily. Lanes (1984) notes that windows provide both "protection from the unknown" (p. 248). She additionally notes that when characters pass through a window they are "transformed into something or someone else" (p. 238). Perhaps, that something else, is a more self-actualized version of themselves. In *Outside Over There* (1981), Ida must travel "backwards outside her window into outside over there," (pp. 13-14) in order to enter the fantasy and save her baby sibling. In the beginning of *Higglety Pigglety Pop: Or There Must Be More To Life*

(1967), Jennie is determined to leave on an adventure and the comfort of her home and the plant, the talking plant, comments that Jennie has "two windows" while the plant only has "one" (p. 3). Yet Jenny wants more and must go outside to empower herself.

Within the window in *Where The Wild Things Are* is another symbol, the moon. The moon is the constant between the world of fantasy and reality. In *Where The Wild Things Are* (1963) no matter how much the room changes into the forest, the moon stays the same. Sendak notes that, "the moon is always there. I must have it. My mother had a round white face. She was always watching me...the moon is purity and love," (Zarin, 2010, p. 8). The purity and love is the love of a parent, representing the constant love. Mickey (Sendak, 1970) must fly, "past the moon"(p. 4) and his parents in order to get to the night kitchen. The moon is the constant protecting presence of his parents. As Mickey adventures, the moon is ever present and watching over him, as if his parents had left his house to make sure he stayed safe. The moon keeps the same role in *We Are All in The Dumps with Jack and Guy* (1993), where the children are homeless. When the children act out, the moon is "in a fit" (p. 15). The moon is the stand-in for the parents of the homeless Jack and Guy. The moon sobs, holds Jack and Guy, and follows them as they find their way. In the end as Jack and Guy find a boy who needs more help than they do, they bring him "up", or to the moon, for help protect him. The moon wants the children to take care of each other and take care of themselves and acts as a medium to get them to emotional resolve and as a protector.

Lanes (1984) notes that food, specifically the hot food at the end of *Where The Wild Things Are* maintains a similar metaphor of a mother's love and forgiveness. In *In The Night Kitchen* Mickey is getting baked into bread (Sendak, 1970). He is being baked into loving warming feelings and the safety he so desires. Further metaphors Sendak employs are babies as a symbol of rebirth and hope and flying as a symbol of individuation.

Voice/Style and Other Craft. Sendak's work is based off of his childhood memories. In using the voice of his inner child, he connects to the reader. In the same vein, when characters speak, their voices are those of children. The words out of characters' mouths have the power to connect with the reader.

Form. The text of a children's book is obviously important in creating a connection to the reader. However, beside the emotional undertones in the language Sendak does a few less obvious things that help create a familiar feel to the face of the text. His font choice in *Where The Wild Things Are* maintains the balance of the book. Marcus (2003) notes, "Cheltenham Bold...serves as a 'counterpoint of calm' to the illustrations 'rampant exuberance.' The font makes way for fireworks," (p. 705). The font is familiar, it does not take away from the illustrations, and in effect the familiarity helps to calm the reader further. In addition to *Where The Wild Things Are,* Sendak maintains many of the same familiar fonts.

Sendak uses a variety of punctuation and generally typical grammar to make his points. His form is rarely significant, except in *Kenny's Window*

(1956) where he uses a series of questions to frame the different sections of the book and then answers each section.

Sendak consciously employs many of these illustrative and writing techniques to draw the reader in. Yet, there is another aspect of his work that might be unconscious–psychoanalysis.

Contact Football With Freud and Jung

"Max, too, is having fun, and not by playing hide-and-seek with Sigmund Freud."

(Sendak, 1988, p. 152).

In Maurice Sendak's Caldecott Award acceptance speech in 1964, he states that Max is not playing hide and seek with Freud. It's possible to argue that Max is playing contact football with Freud and Jung, however, Sendak's books are dripping with layers of psychoanalytic struggles and metaphors. This is not about a child sitting in an analyst's office and sharing his deep dark secrets. This is about how Maurice Sendak's books touch on some of the innermost thoughts of children. In some ways Sendak is right, his books are not written with the intent of acting as psychoanalytic mediums. His books intertwine both Freud and Jung in ways that make them more accessible to young readers. His books play off such concepts as Freud's preconscious, unconscious, ego, and id. Max and company go through many personal battles with their preconscious and their deepest id instincts. Yet, what is most important is Jung's concept of the collective unconscious and how by using the archetypes that all children have embedded in their minds, the reader is drawn to Sendak's literature. The combination of the two are a powerful force that

draw the reader in and help the child to read a book, and gain some psychological insight.

The Id and the Ego

One of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis is Freud's theory of the ego and the id. He states that the ego is the

> ...coherent organization of mental processes...It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship on dreams.
>
> (Freud, 1960, p. 8).

Both the reader and the child character bring their egos to the table. The ego is the interface with the world. Sendak notes that all of his books are about children overcoming and mastering emotions, and that many of these emotions come from his gut (Sendak, 1988). The children are in effect overcoming their id. The id is the emotions and memories of the unconscious, both of the repressed and memories. The id is also the primal, the rough and tumble urges within the child. Each character is coming into contact with deep dark emotions and painful memories and trying to over come them to live their everyday life. This contact is most of his characters' starting battle.

Take for instance Max. Max is a creature of the repressed emotion of rage, he wants to be in power and tower over the dog he owns, yet is squelched

in his own world. He is angry, an emotion of the id often repressed into the unconscious. He is also abandoned, or feels so. As his mother sends him to bed without supper, he fears that he is unloved. A painful memory like this, and the powerful emotion of abandonment might be pushed deep into the unconscious. Yet, he must find a way to meld these emotions with his ego, his face to the world.

Take Ida. Lanes (1984) describes Ida as a primal child and notes the possible significance of the "id" in her name. Her battle is the emotion of not caring about her sibling, and by using the horn, she is essentially asking for her brother to be stolen, a primal urge. She must find a way to deal with her unconscious rage against her sibling and still face the world.

The pattern continues. Each character is set up with an initial conflict between their id, the primordial urges, and their ego, their face to the world. The reader brings this same conflict to the table. Children are in a constant battle between their id and their ego. Children are angry, feel abandoned, or want to kill their siblings. In the characters the reader sees the same psychological battles as their own, and connects, hoping to find a way to solve the same problems and present a new ego to the world. It is in the unconscious and preconscious where Sendak lets the characters fight their battles, and the readers may begin to mend themselves as well.

Unconscious and Preconscious

The id is a center of primordial urges located within the greater unconscious. Freud (1960) describes two types of unconscious, "the one which

is latent but capable of becoming conscious, and the one which is repressed and which is not, in itself without more ado, capable of becoming conscious,"(p. 5). Sendak plays with both elements of the unconscious. He uses unconscious feelings, memories, and urges that can boil over if they aren't dealt with and brought to conscious light in the ego. In order to access the ego an individual might use the preconscious.

Freud describes the preconscious as a part of the unconscious that is closer to consciousness. The ideas in the preconscious are made up of "word representations" which are "residues of memory" (p. 12). The preconscious is where dreams and fantasy take over. The preconscious fantasy is the link for both character and reader where the unconscious and conscious are reformed. Freud further discusses how unpleasant events can become conscious, arguably, it is through the preconscious. The preconscious acts almost as a conduit between the unconscious and the conscious ego. It connects the memories through fantasy and dream. Freud argues that emotions are either unconscious or conscious, however, their link to unconscious memories that need the preconscious conduit might be a link to how they appear in the conscious.

Maurice Sendak's books try to lift the unconscious veil and have the characters, and consequently the readers, unearth memories and feelings from the unconscious, through the fantasy of the preconscious, and into the light of day in the conscious ego. It would be simple enough to say that Max and a variety of characters are dealing with repressing their id and battling with

what face they want to show the world. Max is angry, an almost primordial being. Yet, he is trying to find a balance between his repressed urges and negative associations about his mother disciple and with the face he shows to the world. Sendak's strength is in providing the characters, and subsequently the readers, a preconscious link. This link, the preconscious fantasy, is invaluable in its ability to help the characters and readers bridge their unconscious to conscious and solve the problems with a new face to show the world. What becomes important is less the unconscious memory or emotion, but how the characters solve the problem in fantasy. The preconscious becomes a tool to bridge the unconscious memories, which carry the emotions, to the ego.

Max uses a preconscious dream in order to reveal and help solve his unpleasant feelings and in order to help realize some of his mother's flaws. Lanes (1984) notes, "In *Where The Wild Things Are*, the Hero's adventure among the wild things is preceded by the real-life rage against his mother, which is precipitated by another fact: he has been sent to bed without any supper," (p. 85). Fact, Max has experienced an unpleasant event and an unpleasant emotion that he most likely has pushed to his unconscious. Through the use of fantasy Max can bring both the event and the feelings back into light. Freud notes that, "feelings are either conscious or unconscious," (1960, p. 16). While this might be true, the feelings are often so intertwined with the repressed memories or latent memories that by moving a memory

through the preconscious the emotions can be brought to light into consciousness.

Max, now having repressed his emotion and memory, begins a preconscious fantasy. The wild thing tacked to the wall of his home a hint of what is to come. Lanes notes that the trees grow in a dreamlike way and as Max sails gently into his unconscious, he joins the wild things. With the wild things he can recreate his painful memory of being sent to bed without supper. He tells the wild things that they must go to bed without supper. Here, a "word residue" helps Max start to remember his painful unconscious memory and begin to master the emotion and event. He then wants to go back to the place where, "someone loves him best of all," (Sendak, 1963, p. 30). In recreating his memory through word residues in the preconscious fantasy, Max has brought the memory to light and perhaps some of the feelings of abandonment. He sees the other side now, and starts to understand the big picture. Sendak notes that in the end his ideas are all, "a dream or fantasy," (Cech, 1995, p. 23) and the preconscious here solves problems best between the conscious and the unconscious.

The reader also needs a preconscious fantasy in order to resolve personal problems. While dream and fantasy are typical mediums of the preconscious, the book can also be used as a tool for the reader to delve into preconscious fantasy. All people have unconscious memories and emotions. While reading the book might spark a certain feeling or memory in the unconscious through a word residue. The book then acts as the preconscious

fantasy medium where the reader can work through their emotions, memories, and hopefully come to some resolution. The pattern repeats, each character and reader uses fantasy as a preconscious medium, as does Sendak when he writes.

Sendak pulls many of his ideas from his unconscious, through his preconscious, and to his fingertips. He states,

> None of my books come about through 'ideas' or by thinking of a particular subject and exclaiming 'Gee, that's terrific; I'll just put it down!' They never happen quite that way. They well up. Just as dreams come to us at night, feelings come to me, and I rush to put them down. But these fantasies have to be given a physical form, so I build a kind of house around them–the story– and the painting of the house is the picture making. Essentially, however, it's a dream of fantasy.
>
> (Lanes, 1984, p. 85)

He further states that all successful fantasies must be rooted in fact. That is just what he does. He pulls from those ideas that "well up" from his unconscious, to his preconscious where dreams live, and puts them on the page. By using the facts of his life to support the fantasies he is creating, his stories become more powerful and more realistic to the reader. The wild things are his Eastern European relatives, and Max is a younger version of himself. Kenny's loneliness is Sendak's loneliness and Ida's baby kidnapping is Sendak's fear about the

Lindbergh kidnapping. Artists use of their unconscious and personal life helps become a, "conduit for those works of art that help maintain a 'psychic equilibrium' and satisfy the deepest needs of the spirit of his own times as well as that of successive generations. Sendak's children are among these vital forces," (Cech, 1995, p. 34). In effect, by using his own unconscious and life and seeking his own psychic equilibrium in his texts, Sendak is helping readers to battle their own unconscious and maintain equilibrium.

Collective Unconscious

Past the personal battles with the id and the ego, Sendak uses another powerful tool to connect to the reader, the collective unconscious. Cech (1995) argues that when Sendak claims that his ideas "well up" he is writing from his unconscious, yet, part of this is through Sendak's experience with, "ancient roots in myth and the archetypal vocabulary of the unconscious," (p. 22). He is writing from both his personal unconscious and using the archetypes of the collective unconscious. Carl Jung, a student of Freud's, argued that besides the personal unconscious there was a greater collective unconscious for society. He states, "The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche with can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition," (Jung, 1990, p. 42). The collective unconscious is full of images, characters, and stories that have been part of society for thousands of years. He further states, "the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness, and therefore have never been

individually acquired," (Jung, p. 42). People are born with the collective unconscious and without knowing, readers connect to these symbols in literature, movies, and society. Sendak uses a wide variety of archetypes and symbols from his personal unconscious yet mixes them with many important archetypes from the collective unconscious providing a balance of new ideas with which that people from all over the world and all ages can connect.

Jung states that a typical symbol for the unconscious is the sea. This is a symbol many people identify as journeying from the ego to the unconscious. Sendak employs water at the beginning of many of his books. This water signifies the beginning of the characters battle to overcome their unconscious. In *Where The Wild Things Are* the jungle has already started to grow in Max's room when "an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max and he sailed off through night and day," (Sendak, 1963, p. 13). The jungle could have continued to exist in Max's room, but in order for Max to battle his unconscious, he must cross the sea. The sea takes him, "to where the wild things are," (Sendak, p. 15). In *Outside Over There* the sea is an ever-present force. Papa goes away to sea at the beginning and then the sea is constantly just a glimpse through the window as Ida lets her sibling get stolen and worries (Sendak, 1981). She only comes to face her unconscious when she hears her Sailor Papa's song. She must turn around in the rain to save her sister, and as she fights to distinguish the baby from the goblins, "those goblins pranced so fierce, so fast, they quick churned into a dancing stream," (Sendak, pp. 25-26). The sea, which has been out the window through many of the pictures, the window representing the journey

about to be taken or those emotions, which are repressed, is now at her feet. She is now about to truly battle her unconscious emotions about her sister. Once the floodgates to the unconscious are open, Sendak uses archetypes of the collective unconscious with which the reader can connect.

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious

Archetypes of the collective unconscious are symbols that permeate generations and cultures which people implicitly understand and can connect with. Sendak uses these archetypes across many of his books, specifically the mother archetype, the anima, and finally and most importantly, the child archetype. By providing these archetypes that lie dormant in the minds of most children, Sendak and others help readers to more easily connect with books.

One of the archetypes used consistently through out Sendak's books is the mother archetype. Jung notes that the mother archetype can be both positive and negative. Sendak uses a combination of the positive and negative archetype to create a realistic view of many mothers. Jung further notes that many mother figures portray an ambivalence of attitudes that he named the "loving and terrible mother," (Jung, 1990, p. 82). The positive archetype is characterized by "maternal solicitude, sympathy...all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility," (Jung, p. 82). The negative archetype is characterized by, "anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate," (Jung, p. 82). While Sendak uses some aspects of the positive archetype, his mother characters are generally colored

more heavily by the negative archetype. This might be due to a combination of the archetypes of the collective unconscious and his own unconscious memories where his mother was often distant, and he suspects depressed (Zarin, 2010). Jung notes that while the archetypes at their core are universal, they are colored by the individual psyche. Thus, while the books have a slight skew towards the negative archetype, the reader truly takes the archetype to the end of the spectrum that they need to deal with the problems in their personal unconscious.

Sendak starts with a negative mother archetype. Max's mother sends him to bed without supper and just like that the mother is "poison." Yet, while the mothers might be evil, they are more likely negligent. Ida's mother sits in the arbor and looks out to the sea, she is absent and "hidden." Kenny's parents never enter the picture and Mickey's flies past him in the night and they do not wake from their slumber. The parents start the books as absent and hidden. They are in the "abyss" that Jung gives to the negative mother archetype. Children reading see the negative in their parents, the absence, the fear of being alone, and connect.

Yet, Sendak transforms these absent characters throughout the pages into the "loving and terrible mother" in order to comfort the reader. In *Pierre: A Cautionary Tale* his parents have seemingly given up on Pierre, left him and his "I don't care" attitude to the gruesome lion (Sendak, 1962, p. 7). Cech (1995) notes that, "Because the lion has sprung full blown from Pierre's uncontrolled fantasy, it is all the more appropriate he should resemble, at least

in his verbal mannerisms, Pierre's parents (p. 103). Like the negative archetype states, the lion "devours" Pierre, eats him up whole, and the only people who can step in to help are his parents. Having previously left him, they return, and triumphantly save him from the lion. They become the positive archetype, leaving him with that warm fuzzy feeling. Pierre goes from "I don't care," to "Yes, indeed I care!" (1962, p. 46).

Max goes through a similar pattern. He starts with that "evil parent" who sends him to bed without supper. Then, when he goes to where the wild things are, he encounters wild things. Sendak notes that the wild things are based on his relatives (1988) and in some ways they might even stand in for that absent mother. They roar terrible roars and are terrifying, yet, he softens them, changes them, they become terrible yet loving. Their parting words are, "Oh please don't go–we'll eat you up we love you so," (Sendak, 1963, p.31). When Max returns, his real mother has given him dinner, and it is still hot, the mother archetype returns to the positive, that which "sustains," by providing a warm dinner.

The reader can start by latching onto the negative archetype. As happy as a child is, there are always times where they might see the negative in their parents. Sendak gives a child an outlet to feel anger, frustration, and even sadness towards a parent, especially an absent one. Yet, by taking the parent in the book from the negative archetype to the positive archetype, the reader can try to place the positive archetype back on his or her own parents. The reader goes on the same archetypal journey as the characters.

Sendak also employs the sub-archetype of the mother/child interaction. There are many interaction possibilities including: complicated encounter, resistance to the mother, and identity with the mother (Jung, 1990). The strength in Sendak's characters is that they portray a combination of many relational archetypes. Ida is a strong example. She is at first resistant to her mother, she leaves her alone on the porch and rejects motherly tendencies by using the wonder horn which eventually leads to her siblings being kidnapped (Sendak, 1981). She is resistant to the role of the mother. In the resistance relationship, the child rejects the role of the mother (Jung 1990), and Ida does this in not taking care of her baby sibling. Yet, in the end she chooses to save her brother and mend her family, which is akin to the 'identity with the mother' relationship. In the 'identity with the mother' relationship the child takes on the role of the mother (Jung). Ida does this when she chooses to save her brother from the goblins (Sendak, 1981). Many of the characters start with one of the less positive relationships and ends with a more positive relationship. All real children fight with their parents; they edge into the negative relationships, and the flow of the archetypes can give the reader comfort that they can flow right back to the positive relationship.

The second important archetype that Sendak employs is the anima or animus. The anima and animus are the unconscious representations of everything feminine, anima, or everything masculine, animus. Jung notes, " the anima image, which lends the mother such superhuman glamour in the eyes of the son, gradually becomes tarnished by commonplace reality and sinks back

into the unconscious," (Jung, 1990, p. 69). The anima is a more idealized version of the female figure and the animus is the glamorized male figure. They are archetypes of power and perfection. The anima or animus can be blurred with the mother archetype. For example, in *Where The Wild Things Are* (1963) the wild things are both the mother and the glamorized ideal of the male, all-powerful and beautiful.

A cleaner example of the animus archetype occurs within *In The Night Kitchen*. This story resolves around independence and self-actualization. Jung states that at age 35 the anima archetype should subside from the fantasies of men as they need to become more independent (Jung, 1990). The animus, or all that is masculine, are the men in that night kitchen. The bakers are round, bearded, and totally independent. They can bake, "till the dawn," and they are baking Mickey right into the masculine independent man he so wants to be (Sendak, 1970). Yet, before he gets put in the oven he escapes and shouts, "I'm not the milk and the milk's not me! I'm Mickey!" (Sendak, p. 12). By escaping the batter he becomes a truly independent version of himself. He has escaped the animus. He is independent. The anima typically represents a more idealized version of the self that is far in the future. Jung (1990) claims this self-actualization doesn't happen until age 35. Yet, Sendak is showing through his books that childhood independence may be happening earlier than it used to occur. The animus is possibly more attainable than Jung thought. Children seem to become independent at an earlier age than in previous generations. By throwing the anima or animus off at an earlier age, Sendak is showing the

reader how they can be independent without parents and do not have to conform to the anima/animus ideal but can be what they want to be.

Sendak's most important, and most powerful archetype of the collective unconscious is the child archetype. The child archetype is a king, a symbol of the future, and a hero. The child is both "divine" and "insignificant" and "despite all dangers will pull through" (Jung, 1990, p. 170). The child can be a hero, "The hero's main feat is to overcome the monster of darkness: it is the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious,"(p. 167). In the child hero's battle with monsters, the unconscious is also tamed. The child archetype is also a symbol of the future,

> One of the essential features of the child motif is in its futurity. The child is potential future...the "child" paves the way for a future change of personality. In the individuation process, it anticipates the figure that comes from the synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. It is therefore a symbol, which unites the opposites a mediator, bringer of healing, that is, one who makes whole. (p. 164).

In using children to solve problems and showing independence, Sendak shows how the child can take control of their own lives.

One of the sub-archetypes is the "child hero". According to Jung, the child hero is abandoned, semi-divine, and while still human, his powers border on supernatural. Take Max. His mother abandons him when she sends him to bed without supper, and he enters the world of the wild things (Sendak, 1963).

Jung (1990) states that abandonment is a "necessary condition" for the child hero archetype (p. 168). Many other child hero characters face this abandonment. Ida's father is at sea and her mother cannot separate from the arbor (Sendak, 1981), and Max goes unnoticed as he slips out in the night (Sendak, 1963). Then we get to the powers that are "human," yet border on "supernatural" (Jung, 1990, p. 163). Max tames the wild things with a "magic trick" (Sendak, 1963, p. 19). His powers are still human, although the trick seems supernatural. Ida plays her wonder horn, a magic that sends the goblins into a frenzy and helps her save her baby sibling (Sendak, 1981).

Another element of the child archetype is the child archetype as representing, "the potential anticipation of an individuation process which is approaching wholeness," (Jung, 1990, p. 166). The children in Sendak's books are not whole yet. They must reach individuation, maturity, by battling those monsters. Jung further notes that elements of "danger" or "abandonment" surrounding the child archetype signifies how difficult it is to reach that independence. Jung and Sendak agree here, it's hard to be independent. Yet, where Jung notes all of the obstacles that get in the way, Sendak creates characters that work past the obstacles and embody the child hero archetype, and some even the child god. The characters are strong, powerful, and represent a future of independence for both themselves and the reader.

Through the use of psychoanalysis Sendak's books build a base for readers to connect to his books. The readers mirror the battles between the id and the ego. The readers use the books as the preconscious fantasies. The

readers connect to the archetypes of the collective unconscious. With this strong base in place the reader can now fully embark on a journey of self-reflection and healing.

Bibliotherapy

> "How much does it cost to get to where the wild things are? If it is not expensive my sister and I want to spend the summer there. Please answer soon."
>
> (Sendak, 1988, p. 155).

Soon after *Where The Wild Things Are* was published Sendak received the above question in a letter from a seven-year-old boy. He says he never responded for he had, "no doubt that sooner or later they will find their way, free of charge," (pp. 154-155). Children connect to the psychological undertones of Sendak's works. They see the battles between the id and the ego, the use of the preconscious fantasy, and the archetypes of the collective unconscious. All of these elements come together in the process known as bibliotherapy. Bruno Bettelheim (1975) states "before a child can come to grips with reality, he must have some frame of reference to evaluate it with," (p. 117). That is the simple version of what bibliotherapy does for the reader.

What Is Bibliotherapy?

Bibliotherapy has many different, although similar, definitions. The 1995 dictionary of social work defines bibliotherapy as,

> The use of literature and poetry in the treatment of people with emotional problems or mental illness. Bibliotherapy is often used in social group work and group therapy and is reported to be effective

with people of all ages, with people in institutions as well as outpatients, and with healthy people who wish to share literature as a means of personal growth and development," (Pardeck, 1998, p. 2).

Stamps (2003) defines bibliotherapy as, " a strategy that helps students overcome or deal with a current problem or issue in their lives" (p.26). Essentially, bibliotherapy is the use of books as therapeutic aids.

Books have been used as therapeutic aids for years. One library in ancient Thebes bears the inscription, "Healing Place of the Soul." In the 19th century readers began to share moral values in addition to teaching reading. Then, in the 1940's Dr. Menninger began to use non-fiction with adult patients in therapy. In the 1960's the many self-help books were published to be used in a therapeutic manner (Pardeck, 1998). The field of bibliotherapy is disconnected, and there are no unified answers in the field. Thus, it is unclear when bibliotherapy began being used with children.

There are some studies on reading books with children who have suffered trauma; using social stories with autistic children; and group therapy with angry teenagers. However, research in the field is limited, unconnected, and focuses on the extremes. Bibliotherapy has the power to help children grow and change. However, because the field is unconnected, thereby making quantitative research difficult, it tends to become quartered to specialists.

In the mid-1990's Pardeck published many papers and books on the clinical use of books with children, and in 2003 Stamps provided a perspective of bibliotherapy with children in the classroom. While neither author

recognizes the other, together they provide a similar viewpoint and similar language.

While the field is primarily clinical, all teachers, librarians, and parents have the power to use bibliotherapeutic techniques in the daily lives of children. The key words are "daily lives." An often overlooked fact is that bibliotherapy should not be quartered to social workers and therapists. Bibliotherapy can, and should, be performed by many people.

Why Use Bibliotherapy?

Children hurt. They have pain in their lives that adults do not see, and they need to be heard; they need to know that there is an eventual solution. Bibliotherapy provides a literary medium with which readers can figure out emotional solutions. Pardeck (1998) states that you use bibliotherapy to, "(5) create awareness that others have similar problems, (6) to provide solutions to problems, (7) and to provide realistic solutions to problems," (p. 5). Sendak (1988) often argues on the reality of childhood and in some ways argues the same line as bibliotherapy. Sendak states in his Caldecott Award Acceptance speech.

> Certainly we want to protect our children from new and painful experiences that are beyond their emotional comprehension and that intensify anxiety; and to a point we can prevent premature exposure to such experiences. That is obvious. But what is just as obvious–and what is too often overlooked–is the fact that from their earliest years children live on familiar terms with disrupting

> emotions, that fear and anxiety are an intrinsic part of their everyday lives, that they can continually cope with frustration as best they can. And it is through fantasy that children achieve catharsis. It is the best means they have for taming Wild Things.
>
> (p. 151).

One thing that Sendak does well is to mirror the feelings that others have similar problems. Further his belief in the power of "fantasy" is akin to the power of the fantasy in his books, and thus the healing power of books. His books are filled with of emotions and problems that the typical child has.

There become a few dozen reasons to do bibliotherapy with many possible outcomes. The reader can use the mirror image to help,

> develop a child's self concept and helps nurture and heal the self-esteem; increases the possibility that the student will understand himself and others more fully; helps a child to appraise himself honestly...helps relieve emotional pressures; demonstrates to the child that he/she is not the first or only one to face a specific problem or challenge; demonstrates there is more than one way to solve a problem/ assists the child in discussing the problem; and enhances a constructive method of solving the problem or meeting the challenge.
>
> (Stamps, 2003, p. 26).

All reasons relate to Sendak except for "provide realistic solutions." On the plus side some of Sendak's books can perform every other benefit of bibliotherapy.

What becomes more important is the kind of bibliotherapy being performed and the framework for using the books.

This is different from "clinical bibliotherapy" which is conducted by licensed professional for serious needs. This is about bibliotherapy that teachers, parents, and children can even complete independently. Most people assume bibliotherapy is specific therapy for specific situations and concerns. Children might read *A Terrible Thing Happened* (Holmes, 2000) for a child who has encountered a traumatic event, *Samantha Jane's Missing Smile* (Kaplow, 2007) for a child who lost a parent, or *This is How We Became A Family: An Adoption Story* (Willis, 2000) for a child who was adopted. Yet, all of these books work because the caregiver knows the exact cause of a child's grief or trauma, and often as educators we do not know what happened.

Sendak's books work in a bibliotherapeutic way almost naturally for two reasons. As educators we do not know the cause of the pain, and often neither do the children, yet, the books act as preconscious mediums to pull out the memory and then the child can use the bibliotherapeutic processes of: identification and projection, abreaction and catharsis, and insight and integration (all to be discussed further below). The reader can thus engage with the book. Second, Sendak's books also fall into the category of bibliotherapy known as "self development." Stamps (2003) defines developmental bibliotherapy as, "the act of meeting needs before they become problems," (p. 26). This can be conducted by parents, teachers, librarians, and many adults but should still be approached seriously.

Pardeck (1998) does not separate the two as distinctly but uses "self-development" as a category for clinical bibliotherapy. He claims that self-development includes improving leadership skills, positive self thinking, creating healthy relationships with others, and has a lot to do with "self-actualization." He further states, "Self-development means the psyche has evolved to a new center; that is, the self takes the place of the old center, the ego." (p. 147). Essentially, self-development is the result of the battle between the unconscious and the conscious; it is all about creating a new face for the ego. It is about independence, growing up, and developing as a person and ties in well with the psychoanalytical undertones and themes in Sendak's literature.

Choosing a Book

A Sendak book can be a powerful tool for bibliotherapy. When choosing a book the reader must have some idea of the situation the child is in. Different Sendak books have slight variations on themes and work more effectively for different needs. For a child who is feeling abandoned by their parents, you might choose *Where The Wild Things Are, Kenny's Window* or *Outside Over There.* For a child who is struggling with control issues in their lives, you might choose *Pierre: A Cautionary Tale* or *Where The Wild Things Are.* For a child who is struggling with a sibling, you might read *Outside Over There.* For a child who is angry, you might choose *Where The Wild Things Are.* For a child who is becoming more independent, you might choose *Higglety Pigglety Pop: Or There Must Be More To Life, Outside Over There, Where The Wild Things Are,* or *In The*

Night Kitchen. The beauty of Sendak's books is that many of the books provide multiple avenues for developmental bibliotherapy. One book can be used to propel a child further along several avenues, and since children latch onto the books independently through unconscious archetypes, they at times pick the bibliotherapeutic literature themselves. At times, the therapeutic nature of Sendak's books pop up naturally and a seemingly normal read aloud can create a bibliotherapeutic situation and effect bibliotherapeutic change.

Now, the question becomes, can or should all of Sendak's books act as bibliotherapeutic aids. Some of his books, while almost always using archetypes of the unconscious, provide slightly different themes and are less easy for the reader to latch onto in the same psychoanalytic therapeutic manner. *The Sign on Rosie's Door* (1960) is a delightful read about a child who puts on a show, and while there might be some undertones of development and control, it is not about those same id and ego themes. This applies to most of the books in the *Nutshell Library* (1962), *Pierre: A Cautionary Tale* being an exception. Then take *Brundibar* (2003), which is based on children during the Holocaust. While this book is a beautiful read, it remains removed from childhood themes, and most importantly, the resolution is not present. The childhood reader needs the resolution in order for the book to perform a bibliotherapeutic act. The Sendak books best used for bibliotherapy are the psychodynamic ones that have multiple thematic undertones and can aid in the development of many readers.

The Stages of Bibliotherapy

Once the parent, or child, has chosen the book the stages of bibliotherapy can begin. According to Pardeck (1998) the first stage of bibliotherapy is **identification and projection**,

> Identification is generally defined as an adaptive mechanism which the human being utilizes, largely unconsciously, to augment his self-regard. It takes the form of real or imagined affiliation of oneself with another person, a group of persons, or with some institution, or even with a symbol.
>
> (p. 11)

In identification the reader identifies with the character in the book and then puts him or herself in the character's shoes for the duration of the book. The adult can help discusses the character (motives, wants, needs, etc.). Jung argues that projection is an unconscious process. The child will not say, "I am Max!" or "I am Ida!" They see the character, they might at times comment on similarities, and the identification might be verbal. They might say, "I am like Max." or, "Oh man, I sometimes don't want to watch my brother just like Ida." The key becomes that unconsciously the reader identifies with the character. In projection the reader becomes Max and Ida.

Pardeck states that one limitation of bibliotherapy is, "the client may fail to identify with a character in a fiction book, resulting in a form of projection that can only serve to relieve the client of any responsibility for a resolution to the problem," (p. 15). Sendak's literature maintains its power

because of the susceptibility of readers to identify and project. Sendak's characters are easy targets for projections and identification.

Sendak uses characters that mirror the neighborhood child (Cech, 1995). This provides the opportunity for the reader to more easily connect with the characters they see on the page because the images are more realistic. Further, his frequent use of black and white illustrations provides racially ambiguous characters with which more children can identify. Finally, some of his characters portray gender ambiguity. Sendak notes that *A Hole is to Dig* contains some of the most unisex characters of any children's book, and this pattern continues on some of his later books where even the boys are not overtly boyish (Cech).

Yet, his three most famous characters, Max, Mickey, and Ida maintain their gender and skin color. The most important factor in the easy identification and projection of Sendak books is his use of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. As noted above Pardeck states that part of what the reader can identify with is a "symbol" and these characters relate strongly to the symbols, or archetypes, of the collective unconscious. By tapping into the child archetype, as discussed above, with his main characters, they become instantly identifiable to the reader as all readers contain the archetype in their collective unconscious. Thus, when a reader sees Max, part of their unconscious screams *child archetype,* discussed above, and latches on without further ado.

After the reader identifies and projects they continue to the second state of bibliotherapy, **abreaction and catharsis**. Stamps (2003) states,

> During Catharsis the student follows the character through some challenge or situation and then comes to a resolution. Children can experience a release of emotions as they react in similar ways to the character about a given situation. This phase is known to adults as the stage in the book when we laugh or cry.
>
> (p. 27).

Pardeck (1998) further argues that this emotional release can be verbal or nonverbal. With Sendak, the emotional release might be nonverbal, a simple quiet release of emotions in the comfort of the similar characters resolving similar emotions. Cech (1995) argues that *Where The Wild Things Are,* "opens up the fantasies of the young child and lets the monsters out" (p. 110). Max's emotional adventure releases the pent up emotions of the reader, as do most of Sendak's books. Where most bibliotherapy focuses on the "situation," Sendak's books help to achieve catharsis for a given emotion or theme. The child is not solving an obvious problem, but resolving feelings of anger. Thus, as a child reading *Pierre: A Cautionary Tale* (Sendak, 1962) might see how angry and stuck Pierre is in always saying no and learn that they themselves might learn to compromise at times. The characters are very rarely left hanging with the deep emotions. Max ends up with food, Ida finds her brother, and the reader releases a bit of the pent up emotions in the process.

The final stage of bibliotherapy is **insight and integration.** This is where the reader, "begins to apply the character's experience to his or her own experiences," (Stamps, 2003, p. 27). This is where the projection ends, and the reader begins to think, how is this applicable to me. This is the step most commonly guided by the therapist, however, it can happen without a clinician. Since the archetypes are based off of the collective unconscious, when the projection ends, they go back to where they started. Since the problems explored during abreaction and catharsis are less tangible and more emotion based, and often personal, children can often integrate the emotional reaction without the aid of an adult. This is not to say that the parent or teacher cannot or should not ask questions after reading. It is possible for the adult to ask questions surrounding the emotional themes that further help integrate the resolved emotions and help to provide insight for the child.

Possible Bibliotherapy Scenarios

So much of what occurs during developmental bibliotherapy is internal. This makes it difficult to conduct quantitative or even qualitative research. Yet, there are many ways in which the bibliotherapy might occur, the following are some theoretical examples of the bibliotherapeutic process.

Imagine, for example, a child who has anger or control issues. Cech (1995) states that, "the myth of *Where The Wild Things Are* is about seeking a solution to one of those every day problems," (p. 115), and children can use it in bibliotherapy as such. A parent can purposefully choose to read the book to their child, noting that their child might feel like Max. Lanes (1984) states that,

"Max leave his bedroom because of rage at his mother. And the young reader's feelings are deeply engaged from the start" (p. 87). The reader identifies with Max, they see a child just like them with the same feelings, and as they consciously identify, they unconsciously project on the character. They become Max as he crosses the sea, still angry at his mother. Yet, they feel Max's loneliness where the wild things are, the parent reading might ask throughout the book, "how does Max feel now? Why?" The child achieves catharsis when Max returns home, less angry, missing his mother, and the dinner is there...still hot. The reader feels a sigh of relief as they learn they can be angry, and their parents will still love them. The insight and integration happens when the projection ends. The projection ends when the ideas become conscious (Jung, 1990), so a parent might ask "How did Max feel at the end?" "Why?" and the classic connection, "Have you ever felt like that?" and the child will often reply yes. He sees the connection, and integrates into his psyche the comfort that the parent will always be there. He becomes comforted in the future when he feels angry at his parents or when his parents do something he does not like. He knows it's okay, because it WILL be resolved. This reading can be chosen and preformed by a parent, teacher, or librarian. Yet, it can also happen naturally. Just reading the book, the child can question themselves in their head.

The same process can occur with *Outside Over There*. Take, for instance, a child who happens to stumble upon this book. The parent, typically absent has no intentions, but to enjoy a read aloud with their child. The child listens and upon seeing the parent lost at sea and the emotionally lost mother, clings

to the idea, this is like me; my parents are not usually here with me. She projects, and the key is that the projection is unconscious. In bibliotherapy the clinician can choose a book they believe the child will project onto, but it is ultimately up to the child to project. It is largely an unconscious effort. However, suppose that the reader projects on Ida. She is the older sibling who is sad or angry for being the caretaker for her younger sibling. Yet, in her acting out, more bad things happen. Whether or not the reader has a sibling does not matter, the reader feels the pain of not caring, of not trying. When she finally saves the baby sibling, this reunites the family. The catharsis comes with the whole family reuniting. The book stops, and Ida and the reader separate into their respective beings. The child thinks, wow, that family was all together at the end; maybe my mom and dad will be here with me more soon.

It doesn't have to happen like this. The power of Sendak's literature is that each book is carefully layered with enough unconscious archetypes and themes that reflect typical childhood feelings. Each reader has something to grasp onto. Each reader has someone that they can project onto to solve an emotional problem. The readers come out more whole and emotionally sound. So, what now? The child is emotionally sound, and ready to go. Yes, Sendak's books will be loved by children for generations to come, but what educators can do with this information becomes the key to success.

The World Is So You Have Something To Stand On

"A book is to look at."
(Krauss, 1952)

Sendak's work of literature has achieved a place in the classic cannon of children's literature. The foundations of psychoanalysis and bibliotherapy will keep it there for years to come. The question becomes, what now? What do you do with this information so children become stronger, independent, and literate individuals? The world might exist "so you have something to stand on" (Krauss, p. 20), but a book can create a "world." The key is determining how educators can use the theory behind Sendak's literature to affect children.

Books have many purposes,

> Some are 'good' time-passers; others 'good' for acquiring literacy; others 'good' for expanding the imagination or, or 'good ' for reading in that 'literary' way which is a small part of adult culture, or 'good' for dealing with racism...and most books do several things.
>
> (Hunt, 1999, p.11)

Sendak's books come equipped to do a variety of things. Their strength is their ability to serve many purposes. Hunt further argues that, "Children's books are used for different purposes at different times– for more things than most books are," (p.11). Sendak's books are powerful for dealing with problems and resolving emotions. His books help create self-regulation skills and self-efficacy. His books foster imagination in the reader. And when used correctly, his books can help develop literacy skills.

Hunt states that children's literature is, "'good' for inculcating general (or specific) social attitudes, or 'good' for dealing with issues or coping with

problems," (p.11). Self-regulation is a common goal in the early childhood classroom and a necessary feature for the elementary school age child. Self-regulation can be defined as the ability for an individual to manage his or her own behavior and emotions. This includes the ability to self soothe in times of distress, set up their own "internal standards" (Crain, 2005, p.205). In Gesell's work with infants he discussed self-regulation as, "the organism's capacity to maintain an overall integration and equilibrium," (Crain, p.25). Sendak's literature, through the process of bibliotherapy, can help build self-regulation skills in children. When the teacher reads aloud the child can go through the bibliotherapeutic process informally and receive help in maintaining equilibrium with their emotions. Children are constantly "dealing with issues" and "coping with problems" (Hunt, 1999, p.11). From the character models in the books, the children are helped in creating internal standards for regulation. Later, they can refer back to those character models in order to self soothe. A child who can self-regulate is able to integrate and resolve emotional inner conflicts with ease. When a child can self-regulate, they become less dependent on adults to solve the constant inner battles between internal standards and the outside world. Children learn to solve the problems within themselves and become more independent. Thus, the child is better equipped to focus on academics and work independently in the classroom setting.

Hunt also argues that books can be good for, "'good' for expanding the imagination," (p.12). Sendak's literature helps to build imagination and fantasy. Cech (1995) notes that Sendak's books are all about, "how children

rely on fantasy in order to cope with their personal difficulties," (p. 52). While the child is exploring his or her fantasies for in order to cope, he or she learns how to use fantasy on a daily basis. It becomes a daily coping mechanism as well as a medium for exploration. Having access to a working imagination can help build inquisitive thinkers and children who generate new ideas in the world.

At a Brooklyn elementary school art teacher Sarah Ellis used *Where The Wild Things Are* (1963) to spark a unit in her classroom. When asked why she chose *Where The Wild Things Are* (S. Ellis, personal communication, March 24, 2011). Ellis admitted it was one of her favorite books as a child. She wanted the children to have a chance to be illustrators for the day and explore their creativity. As part of the unit she read the book to the children and had them act out the roles of the wild things. She then simply asked them to draw their favorite part. After that the children created lists of "things monsters have." The classes explored images of monsters from India and then got to start drawing their own wild things. Ellis wanted the students to make their own wild things and not just draw a copy. Some students drew happy wild things, some silly, and some all together scary, but in the end each student drew their own version of the story and was able to explore their own creative side. While her purpose was mainly to explore creativity and creating monsters, students might have gained some emotional release from drawing monsters. It might have helped with that process of learning to control the monsters inside and

self-regulation. The question becomes what else can be done with the book within the school.

It seems like an obvious argument that children who can control their emotions and have an active imagination are better equipped to learn. However, this argument is not enough in modern American society to fuel the importance of Sendak's literature. The question at hand everywhere in education is the "education gap." Sendak's world of fantasy seems so far removed from the education gap. Money is thrown into canned reading programs and decodable texts that alone ultimately fail. Sendak's literature provides social emotional growth and literary reader skills, which, along with other literature and insightful teaching, might ultimately help close the education gap.

Williams (1998) notes that children are already "involved" with *Where The Wild Things Are.* She further notes that when children are more connected to literature emotionally, it becomes easier to learn literary components. So, while children are growing emotionally and socially, they are also learning plot, character, and story structure. They want to read on because they feel connected to Max and all the meanwhile they are learning to read. I recently heard my principal argue why our guided reading library is full of "authentic texts," as opposed to a stock reading program with materials for small groups. She explained to the teachers that children need "real books" in their hands in order to comprehend. Williams states, "literary texts are needed for creating literary readers," (p. 20). If young children are only introduced to decodable

texts and leveled reading programs they will not develop the skills needed to understand more difficult texts later on. Embedded in literary texts are comprehension skills that are needed for years to come.

Simply reading Sendak's literature will not teach your students how to read. Reading *Where The Wild Things Are* your students will not become better at decoding cvc words, remembering sight words, or even recalling events from the text. Cooper (2006) argues that, "we are teaching in an education era where how young children learn to read, not what or why, has become the focal point of early childhood curriculum" (p. 316). I believe educators need to step aside from the blinding fear of children never learning **how** to read in order to truly help children become literary readers. We need to invest in real texts so the reader can first becomes emotionally grounded in the literature, sees himself or herself in the books, and becomes motivated to **want** to read.

In his book *Improving Comprehension with Think- Aloud Strategies* (2001), Jeffery D. Willhelm argues that, "the relationship between engagement and reading achievement is at least correlative and perhaps causative," (p.113). He argues that engaged reading is a "highly visual experience" (p.113) and promotes strategies of a visual think aloud that help to engage the readers in the text. A visual think aloud is the ability to the reader to imagine the story in his or her head. He or she can read the text and see a picture in his or her mind. The visual think aloud is aided by the images that the children see on each page. Wilhelm explains that one of the features of the visual think aloud is imagining yourself as the character, and this happens naturally with Sendak's

books in the identification and projections process. Children are engaged from the start. Once the readers are able to visualize and engage, they can judge characters, replay scenes, make predictions, and connect emotions to the text. Sendak's texts are naturally a visual experience. Readers have experienced the emotions in the book and can visualize on their own. Although Wilhelm's strategy is for non-engaged readers, he acknowledges that some children are engaged without the help of a visual think aloud. The ability to get lost in the book and engage in the literature then helps the readers interact with the text in a literary way.

Sendak's literature provides a strong interaction base for the adult and child readers. Williams (1998) argues that the interaction between the reader and the student helps to booster the quality of the literary experience. Sendak's literature is a powerful read not only for children, but also for adults. Adults often remember their relationship with his books as children and because of this display their feelings and attachments more readily than with other books. The adult reader also might see themselves as more of a reader due to their connection with the text. The adult emotional connection to Sendak's literature can create an interaction between adult reader and child that may not occur with other books with which adults have had no previous connection. In 2008 *Where The Wild Things Are* was made into a motion picture that garnered huge box office numbers and swarms of adults at the theaters. Why? Adults still connect with Sendak's books, and so many years later the message on the page is just as powerful to adults. Due to this

investment the interaction between the adult and child can have more power. The stronger the interaction is between the adult and the child over the work of literature the more potential there is for conversation. Talk can help invest students in the literature, and the questioning and conversation helps to build literary reader skills, even when a non-teacher adult is reading the book.

'What now' is a question that will continue being redefined over the years, but Sendak's books will create paths towards self-regulated students and literary readers. Susan Moran (2010) used favorite childhood books to start a unit on short stories. Many students brought in *Where The Wild Things Are* or *In The Night Kitchen*. Students brought in the books and then discussed them and why they were favorites. They then read fairy tales and used those as inspiration to write their own stories. The use of Sendak's literature, a sort of modern day fairy tale, helped to invest them in their reading and writing of short stories. Moran states

> The monsters and naked kids, as it turned out, opened a door for these children. As they thought about why theses stories never sat for very long on the shelf, they realized that the stories spoke to a deep need within young children: for reassurance and tranquility on the one hand, and for an acknowledgement of the "wild thing" within each of us on the other. We talked about the pattern in many stories of beginning in a safe place, having an adventure, and returning to the safe place again at the end," one child pointed out, "kids need to know that they can explore the world" another "but

they also need to know that someone will take car of them when they go home."

(Moran, pp. 1-2).

The thematic focus of Sendak's literature helped the children center their lives and the structure in Sendak's literature also became a starting point for writing their own stories. The facility with the stories, understanding of story structure, and ability to connect texts are many of the skills embedded in literary reading. Years later the books have helped the students tackle an academic battle, one that only literary readers could face and win.

And It Was Still Hot

(Sendak, 1963, p. 37)

On March 24th 2011, I read *Where The Wild Things Are* to a group of approximately 50 children and their surrounding families. For the culminating read aloud of a family pajama story night, the dean of students had chosen Sendak's most famous book for the school staff to act out for the students and for me to read aloud. As I read, our "Max" threw papers in the air to make mischief and rode a scooter across the ocean. The wild things danced about. From the audience, I heard a clamor of "I know that book" and "that's the book with the monsters!" It was a hit. As the staff acted out the book, the students roared and smiled from ear to ear and then would quiet down again to hear the next line of the book. The dean of students named it "books in motion" and suggested we take this show on the road. The following day I read *Where The Wild Things Are* for all of my students before lunch. You could have heard a pin

drop in the room. Their five-year-old bodies edged forward; their eyes were open wide to see what happened next.

Sendak's books consistently capture the attention of children. Bettelheim notes that in Goethe's introduction to *Faust* he states, "'who offers many things will offer some to many a one,'" (1975, p.154). Sendak's books provide layer upon layer of connection for the reader. Children might connect to the homegrown characters, themes of anger and abandonment, the natural therapeutic process, or the battles between the id and the ego. The multiplicity of connectors is the key factor that brings readers from around the world to Sendak's books generation after generation.

It is no wonder that Sendak's books have been banned so many times over the years. While critics can immediately draw attention to the nude images of Mickey in *In The Night Kitchen* (1970) or a naked baby in *Outside Over There* (1989), yet, there are no nude images in *Where The Wild Things Are* (1963). The banning might be due to the strong pull of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. It might be scary for adults to realize that a book can have that much more power over a child as opposed to their words. Jung (1991) notes that, "Dogma takes the place of the collective unconscious by formulating its contents on a grand scale...Almost the entire life of the collective unconscious has been channeled into the dogmatic archetypal ideas and flows along like a well-controlled stream in the symbolism of creed and ritual," (p.12). Water is the collective unconscious. Yet, is this "well-controlled stream" a truthful version of it?

The books are banned because Sendak extrapolates from the collective unconscious a truer version without controls that the reader prefers to typical dogma. Sendak's works can drive the reader's feelings and intentions as well as heal, and giving that power to a book can be terrifying.

After reading the book the child leaves the fantasy world and is back in their reality. While the journey itself is powerful, the battle is not complete. Cech (1995) notes, "In the final pages of *The Sign On Rosie's Door*, Rosie returns home– like Martin and later, like Pierre and Max, Mickey and Ida–sated by her fantasy and ready to move on to the other creative challenges posed by daily life," (p.64). Reading the book is only half the battle; it is now our jobs to take the children further once they have left the fantasy of the book.

Sendak has created a powerful book and that power must now be handed off to educators, parents, and librarians to share the wealth of Sendak's works. Whether children are gaining emotional resolve or learning to love literacy, there is power in the consistent use of Sendak. Cooper (2006) notes

We might ask if it is fair to expect any picture book author to match Sendak's genius for hitting the developmental nail on the head? Probably not, but this begs the question of what role books can play in children's lives. (p. 320)

As educators, we must strive to use meaningful books to promote a love of literacy and to teach literacy. A book is more than just a tool to learn to read. It is a tool to resolve problems, gain critical literacy skills, and yes, learn to decode a text. The goal is not to replicate Sendak or only use his books in the

class but to key into student needs and find books that connect to them. The book must have powerful messages and help build a multiplicity of skills.

Like Max's supper, Sendak's books are still hot. From generation to generation children and families love Sendak. In a conversation with Virginia Haviland, Sendak (1988) states, "there's so much more to a book than just the reading," (p. 173). Now is the time to find ways to make literacy more than reading words and recalling details. It is time to start connecting to the reader.

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