

"I'll Eat You Up!": Childhood Survival, Social Justice, and the Works of Maurice Sendak

Long a fixture on childhood and library bookshelves, *Where the Wild Things Are* is, without a doubt, Maurice Sendak's most famous publication. In fact, it may be the only work with which those outside the children's literature world are familiar. However, in a career spanning more than fifty years, Sendak's work as both an author and illustrator goes far beyond *Wild Things*. A close look at the catalog of the author's publications and art provides a look at the breadth and depth of Sendak's care, commentary, and advocacy regarding children and childhood. Sendak viewed children as exceptionally resilient to the unpleasant world around them, and through his work, recognized, educated, and helped children navigate the perils of being a child.

Through examining Sendak's own words and works, both pre and post *Wild Things*, as well as looking at some of his lesser known art contributions, this paper seeks to explore how this beloved author approached and attempted to answer the question which is woven within his entire body of works-how do children survive childhood? Specifically, this paper looks to address how Sendak tackled issues, both social and personal, including homelessness and the AIDS epidemic, that continue to be of import and impact to children today.