

“Where the Wild Things Are” by Maurice Sendak [B1]

Scritto e illustrato da Maurice Sendak, “Dove vivono i mostri” è tra i libri per bambini più amati degli ultimi decenni. Pubblicato nel novembre 1963, questo breve libro genera ancora polemiche per il suo messaggio.



In just a few hundred words, Maurice Sendak, author and illustrator of *Where the Wild Things Are*, captured the essence of childhood emotions and captivated generations of children. Published sixty years ago, in November 1963, it is still considered one of the best-loved children's [picture books](#) of all time.

THE STORY

The protagonist is a young boy named Max who is sent to his bedroom by his mother after he causes [havoc](#) in the [household](#). Alone in his room, Max enters an imaginary world and [sails](#) to a mysterious island inhabited by monsters called the Wild Things. After trying and failing to scare Max, the Wild Things declare him their king, and they all have fun together. However,

Max begins to feel terribly lonely. [Despite](#) the [rage](#) of the Wild Things he returns home, to find a hot supper waiting for him.

THE AUTHOR

Sendak's early life provides a key to understanding his book. He was born in New York in 1928 to Polish Jewish immigrants, who had arrived in the US before World War One. Many members of his [extended family](#) were later killed in the Holocaust, and Sendak had [to cope](#) with trauma at a young age. He processed this difficult reality through books, and went on to become an illustrator, illustrating children's books by other authors before writing and illustrating his own.

CONTROVERSY

When *Where the Wild Things Are* was first published, it received some negative reviews and was even [banned](#) in some places in the US. The criticism revolved around Max's inability to control his emotions, which was considered psychologically [damaging](#) to young readers. But many other experts argued that this is precisely what makes the book so [appealing](#) and [reassuring](#) for children. In a 1970 interview, Sendak said that children "are extraordinarily vulnerable and have few defences" and that "childhood suffering is intense."

APPRAISAL

In 1964, Sendak's book won the Caldecott Medal, honouring it as the year's "most distinguished American picture book for children". It also won many other awards and inspired a film, an opera and an episode of *The Simpsons*. Unfortunately, in an age when banning and [challenging](#) books has escalated to an unprecedented level in the US, *Where the Wild Things Are* risks being [targeted](#) again. Perhaps the book's new critics should pay attention to what Sendak once said, that "*Where the Wild Things Are* was not meant to please everybody – only children."

Glossary

- **to cope** = gestire
- **banned** = proibire
- **damaging** = nocivo
- **reassuring** = rassicurante
- **household** = casa
- **extended family** = famiglia estesa (non solo quella nucleare)
- **appealing** = attraente
- **targeted** = prendere di mira
- **Despite** = nonostante
- **rage** = rabbia
- **challenging** = impugnare
- **picture books** = libri illustrati
- **sails** = navigare
- **havoc** = caos