

= Horton Hatches the Egg =

Horton Hatches the Egg is a children 's book written and illustrated by Theodor Geisel under the pen name Dr. Seuss and published in 1940 by Random House . The book tells the story of Horton the Elephant , who is tricked into sitting on a bird 's egg while its mother , Mayzie , takes a permanent vacation to Palm Beach . Horton endures a number of hardships but persists , often stating , " I meant what I said , and I said what I meant . An elephant 's faithful , one hundred per cent ! " Ultimately , the egg hatches , revealing an elephant @-@ bird , a creature with a blend of Mayzie 's and Horton 's features .

According to Geisel 's biographers Judith and Neil Morgan , the story was born in early 1940 , when Geisel left a window open in his studio , and the wind fortuitously blew a sketch of an elephant on top of a sketch of a tree . However , according to later biographer Charles Cohen , this account is probably apocryphal . He found elements of Horton in earlier Dr. Seuss works , most notably the 1938 short story " Matilda , the Elephant with a Mother Complex " .

Horton Hatches the Egg was published to immediate critical acclaim and financial success and has remained popular with the general public . The book has also been used as the basis for academic articles on a variety of topics , including economics , Christianity , feminism , and adoption . Horton appeared again in the 1954 Dr. Seuss book Horton Hears a Who ! These two books later provided the thrust of the plot for the 2000 Broadway musical Seussical .

= = Plot summary = =

The book centers on Horton , a genial African elephant , who is convinced by Mayzie , a lazy , irresponsible bird , to sit on her egg while she takes a short " break " , which turns into her permanent relocation to Palm Beach .

Naturally , the absurd sight of an elephant sitting atop a tree makes quite a scene - Horton is exposed to the elements , laughed at by his jungle friends , captured by hunters , forced to endure a terrible sea voyage , and finally placed in a traveling circus . However , despite his hardships and Mayzie 's clear intent not to return , Horton refuses to leave the nest because he insists on keeping his word , often repeating , " I meant what I said , and I said what I meant . An elephant 's faithful , one hundred per cent ! "

The traveling circus ends up visiting near Mayzie 's new Palm Beach residence . She visits the circus just as the egg is due to hatch ( after 51 weeks in Palm Beach ) and demands that Horton should return it , without offering him a reward . However , when the egg hatches , the creature that emerges is nothing more than an " elephant @-@ bird " , a cross between Horton and Mayzie , and Horton and the baby are returned happily to the jungle , rewarding Horton for his persistence , while Mayzie is punished for her laziness by ending up with nothing .

= = Background = =

According to Geisel 's biographers Judith and Neil Morgan , Horton Hatches the Egg was born in 1940 , the day after New Year 's , when he took a break from drawing in his Park Avenue apartment and went for a walk . When he returned , he noticed that he had left a window open in his studio and that the wind had blown one sketch on transparent paper on top of another , making it look like an elephant was sitting in a tree . This account was based on interviews with Geisel , who had told similar stories about the book 's creation to reporters asking about his creative process since as early as 1957 . The story had changed with each telling but always involved the fortuitous juxtaposition of drawings of an elephant and a tree .

Charles Cohen , on the other hand , found traces of Horton Hatches the Egg in early Dr. Seuss works . In an early installment of Geisel 's cartoon feature " Boids and the Beasties " , which began in Judge magazine in 1927 , he juxtaposed a bird and an elephant . A few weeks later , he drew a story in which a whale ends up passed out in a catalpa tree . In a 1959 cartoon for Life magazine , he depicted a dachshund who sits on eggs for storks . In 1961 , he drew an illustration for Judge

that showed a walrus sitting in a tree , trying to hatch the eggs in a bird nest . Some of his earlier work also featured elephant @-@ bird hybrids , which prefigured the elephant @-@ bird that hatches at the end of Horton Hatches the Egg .

In 1938 , two years before Horton Hatches the Egg , Judge published perhaps the most obvious precursor to Horton , " Matilda , the Elephant with a Mother Complex " , a short story by Geisel about an " old maid elephant " who sits on a chickadee egg until it hatches , only to have the newborn chickadee fly away from her . In 1939 , Geisel created an advertisement for NBC featuring a sympathetic @-@ looking elephant lashed with ropes and contained in a cage made of sticks , similar to Horton 's situation when the hunters capture him in Horton Hatches the Egg .

In early drafts , the elephant 's name changed from Osmer to Bosco to Humphrey . The final choice , Horton , was apparently after Horton Conrad , one of Geisel 's classmates at Dartmouth College . The bird 's name changed from Bessie to Saidie and finally Mayzie . In the first draft , the elephant character volunteered to sit on the eggs for the bird , who was very reluctant .

= = Publication and reception = =

Horton Hatches the Egg was published by Random House in fall 1940 to immediate success . It received primarily positive notice from critics . Kirkus Reviews called it " sheer nonsense , but good fun . " The reviewer for The New York Times Book Review wrote , " A moral is a new thing to find in a Dr. Seuss book , but it doesn 't much interfere with the hilarity with which he juggles an elephant up a tree . To an adult the tale seems a little forced compared to his first grand yarns , less inevitable in its nonsense , but neither young nor old are going to quibble with the fantastic comedy of his pictures . "

The book also found early success with book buyers and the general public . It sold 6 @,@ 000 copies in its first year and 1 @,@ 600 in its second . Frances Chrystie , the juvenile buyer for FAO Schwarz , wrote to Bennett Cerf , Geisel 's publisher , " I 've been sitting alone in my apartment reading Horton aloud to myself over and over again ... It 's the funniest book I 've ever seen ... [ Our ] merchandise manager thinks he can find an elephant in the store , and we can make a tree and lay an egg and have a very fine window for Book Week . " Mary Stix of James Book Store in Cincinnati , Ohio , noted the book 's popularity with adults as well as children . Numerous booksellers invited Geisel to hold autographing events at their stores , and Cerf sent him on a tour across several U.S. cities to promote the book . However , the book was less well received in England , where it was rejected by seven publishers before Hamish Hamilton finally published it , to modest success , in 1947 . This mirrored a general trend , as Dr. Seuss books were slow to catch on in England .

Horton Hatches the Egg has remained popular in the United States . In 2001 , Publishers Weekly reported that the book had sold 987 @,@ 996 to that point , placing it at 138 in the magazine 's list of the best @-@ selling children 's books of all time . It was included in Six by Seuss : A Treasury of Dr. Seuss Classics , which was the main selection for the Book @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Month Club in June 1991 . In 1992 , less than a year after Geisel 's death , Horton 's refrain was included in the 16th edition of Bartlett 's Familiar Quotations . In 2007 , the National Education Association named the book one of its " Teachers ' Top 100 Books for Children " , based on an online poll .

= = Analysis = =

Horton Hatches the Egg has been used in discussions on a wide variety of topics e.g. , economics , Christianity , feminism , and adoption . James Kemp , a retired United Methodist pastor , compared Horton to the early Christians to whom the First Epistle of Peter was addressed . Like those early Christians , Horton faces persecution and ridicule for his actions , but Horton is faithful to his mission and is rewarded , as evidenced by the elephant @-@ bird that hatches at the end of the book .

Richard B. Freeman , writing in 2011 about the contemporaneous economic situation in the United States , called Horton Hatches the Egg a tale of investment . Freeman argued that " economic growth requires long @-@ term investments " , as embodied by Horton 's sitting on the egg , and that " trust is important in a well @-@ functioning economy " , as embodied by Horton 's repeated

maxim , " I meant what I said , / and I said what I meant . "

Alison Lurie , in a 1990 article about Dr. Seuss from a feminist perspective , criticized Horton Hatches the Egg as a statement for fetal rights and for its negative treatment of Mayzie . Lurie pointed out the almost complete lack of strong female protagonists in Dr. Seuss books and argued that Mayzie , who is obviously an antagonist and is depicted as lazy and irresponsible , is " the most memorable female character in [ Dr Seuss 's ] entire oeuvre " . Geisel responded to Lurie 's criticism , by way of his biographers near the end of his life , by remarking that most of his characters are animals , noting , " if she can identify their sex , I 'll remember her in my will . "

Jill Deans , in a 2000 article , used the book in a discussion of adoption , surrogacy , and particularly , embryo donation . She noted that it is " a classic tale of surrogacy " and that it " evokes the intricacies of the nature / nurture debate " . She contends that the book celebrates adoptive parents and caregivers , in the form of Horton , but vilifies birth mothers , in the form of Mayzie . Both Deans and Philip Nel point to the book 's real @-@ life implications for Geisel and his wife . Deans draws a connection between the elephant @-@ bird in Horton and the Infantograph , a failed invention Geisel created that combined two photos and was meant to give couples an idea of what their children would look like . Nel , meanwhile , connected the book to the short story " Matilda the Elephant " . Noting that the Geisels could not have children , Nel argued that " Matilda " , and by extension Horton , may have been manifestations of the Geisels ' longing for children .

= = Adaptations = =

The book was adapted into a ten @-@ minute animated short film by Leon Schlesinger Productions and released in 1942 as part of Warner Bros. ' Merrie Melodies series . The short was directed by Bob Clampett and marked the first time a Dr. Seuss work was adapted for the screen and also the only time WB animated short was licensed to be based on pre @-@ existing work still under copyright .

In 1966 , Soyuzmultfilm released an 18 @-@ minute Russian film adaptation called I Am Waiting for a Nestling . It was directed by Nikolai Serebryakov and won the Silver Medal for Best Children 's Film at Tours in 1967 .

In 1992 , Random House released " Horton Hatches the Egg " in its series of Dr. Seuss videos , narrated by Billy Crystal and directed by Mark Reeder . " If I Ran the Circus " is second in the double feature video .

Horton appeared again in Horton Hears a Who , published in 1954 . The plot of the 2000 Broadway musical Seussical , a retelling of a number of Dr. Seuss books , borrows heavily from both Horton books .