



## Biography

Theodor Seuss Geisel (March 2, 1904 to September 24, 1991) was an American writer and cartoonist, known for his children's books written under his pen name, Dr. Seuss. He published over 60 children's books, and his work has been used in movies and even a Broadway musical.

Geisel also worked as an illustrator for advertising campaigns, like Standard Oil. He was also a political cartoonist and worked in the animation department of the U.S Army.

In May of 1954, Life magazine wrote that children were having trouble to read because their books were boring. This inspired Geisel's publisher, who encouraged Geisel to write a book using 250 words (the publishers idea of how many words at one time a first grader could absorb). Nine months later, Geisel, using 220 of the words given to him published *The Cat in the Hat*, which went on to instant success. Later, someone bet Geisel \$50 that he couldn't write an entire book using only fifty words. The result was *Green Eggs and Ham*. He never got the \$50!

Many considered *The Lorax* a pointed commentary on the expansion of the logging industry in the early 70s. *The Lorax* is believed to be a representation of the great northern owl of the Pacific Northwest, which makes its home in the coastal redwoods and Douglas fir trees. See the resemblance?



About 20 years after the book was first published, spokespeople for the loggers protested the story and considered it biased propaganda targeted at the industry. In 1989 the Laytonville California School District tried to ban the book from public libraries, but failed.



More fun facts:

- His first book, *And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street* (1937), was rejected by twenty-eight publishers before it finally found a home at Random House.
- Dr. Seuss claimed his ideas started with doodles: "I may doodle a couple of animals; if they bite each other, it's going to be a good book."
- His honors included two Academy awards, two Emmy awards, a Peabody award and the Pulitzer Prize.
- At the time of Theodor Seuss Geisel's death in 1991, his 46 children's books had sold more than 200 million copies, and his last, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (1990), was still on the bestseller lists.
- You can visit the Dr. Seuss National Memorial & Sculpture Garden in the city where he was born—Springfield, Massachusetts.

- Dr. Seuss | Biography

Theodor Seuss Geisel a.k.a. Dr. Seuss (1904-1991)

For nearly sixty years, Theodor Seuss Geisel has delighted millions worldwide with his fanciful and often times surreal worlds in which moral and social tales unfold with the ease and excitement of a perpetual child. His unbridled creativity and his ability to touch the hearts of children, parents and grandparents alike goes unmatched within the 20th century art world.

As an illustrator, Dr. Seuss reached beyond the scope of most artists; his collection of more than 48 books for kids turned children's literacy on its head. It began in 1957 with a captivating story about an uninvited cat in a tilted stovepipe hat that created mayhem and magic known as the Cat in the Hat. He was a proponent for equality and became the education of tolerance to a whole generation with books such as The Sneeches, Horton Hears a Who and Yertle the Turtle. Green Eggs & Ham is the 3rd largest selling book of all time! Seuss is also recognized for raising our conscience with hidden and not so hidden morals and messages, such as The Lorax, who remains a hero for environmentalists of all ages. In 2002, three museum exhibitions opened featuring The Art of Dr. Seuss; one at the Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, one at the Connecticut Valley Historical Society and the third museum show opened at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, which featured all of the original works from "The Lorax." A most notable occasion to honor the life of this beloved man was the unveiling of The Dr. Seuss National Memorial & Sculpture Garden, which will remain a permanent tribute to the characters he created.

Another biography:

Theodor Seuss Geisel was born 2 March 1904 in Springfield, MA. He graduated Dartmouth College in 1925, and proceeded on to Oxford University with the intent of acquiring a doctorate in literature. At Oxford he met Helen Palmer, who he wed in 1927. He returned from Europe in 1927, and began working for a magazine called Judge, the leading humor magazine in America at the time, submitting both cartoons and humorous articles for them. Additionally, he was submitting cartoons to Life, Vanity Fair and Liberty. In some of his works, he'd made reference to an insecticide called Flit. These references gained notice, and led to a contract to draw comic ads for Flit. This association lasted 17 years, gained him national exposure, and coined the catchphrase "Quick, Henry, the Flit!" In 1936 on the way to a vacation in Europe, listening to the rhythm of the ship's engines, he came up with And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, which was then promptly rejected by the first 43 publishers he showed it to. Eventually in 1937 a friend published the book for him, and it went on to at least moderate success.

During WW II, Geisel joined the army and was sent to Hollywood. Captain Geisel would write for Frank Capra's Signal Corps Unit (for which he won the Legion of Merit) and do documentaries (he won Oscar's for Hitler Lives and Design for Death). He also created a cartoon called Gerald McBoing-Boing which also won him an Oscar.

In May of 1954, Life published a report concerning illiteracy among school children. The report said, among other things, that children were having trouble to read because their books were boring. This inspired Geisel's publisher, and prompted him to send Geisel a list of 400 words he felt were important, asked him to cut the list to 250 words (the publishers idea of how many words at one time a first grader could absorb), and write a book. Nine months later, Geisel, using 220 of the words given to him published The Cat in the Hat, which went on to instant success.

In 1960 Bennett Cerf bet Geisel \$50 that he couldn't write an entire book using only fifty words. The result was Green Eggs and Ham. Cerf never paid the \$50!

Helen Palmer Geisel died in 1967. Theodor Geisel married Audrey Stone Diamond in 1968. Theodor Seuss Geisel died 24 September 1991.

Dr. Seuss

The beloved author of more than 46 children's books

by Borgna Brunner

At the time of Theodor Seuss Geisel's death in 1991, his 46 children's books had sold more than 200 million copies, and his last, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (1990), was still on the bestseller lists. His books, which he both illustrated and wrote, have been translated into twenty languages as well as Braille.

Wockets, Whos, and Grinches

Better known by his pen name, Dr. Seuss, he populated his odd and fanciful children's books with a hybrid bestiary of Wockets, Whos, Grinches, bunches of Hunches, Bar-ba-loots, red fish, blue fish, and a fox in socks. He once remarked in an interview, "If I were invited to a dinner party with my characters, I wouldn't show up."

His stories march forward at an incantatory, rhythmic pace, and are full of tongue-twisters, word play, and highly inventive vocabulary. The American Heritage Dictionary in fact credits Dr. Seuss as the originator of the word *nerd*, which made its first appearance in his 1950 book, *If I Ran the Zoo*: "And then just to show them, I'll sail to Ka-Troo And Bring Back an It-Kutch a Preep and a Proo a Nerkle a Nerd and a Seersucker, too!"

Rejected by 28 Publishers

His books were originally considered too outlandish to appeal to children. His first, *And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street* (1937), was reputedly rejected by twenty-eight publishers before it finally found a home at Random House. It was one of the company's most prescient decisions: former Random House President Bennett Cerf once remarked, "I've published any number of great writers, from William Faulkner to John O'Hara, but there's only one genius on my authors list. His name is Ted Geisel."

RELATED

LINKS

The Cat in the Hat

Among his most famous books is *The Cat and the Hat* (1957), a story about two children who find themselves home alone with a roguish, hat-wearing feline who is a study in bad behavior. With only 223 vocabulary words and much repetition, it was ideally suited for beginning readers and became a lively alternative to the wooden dullness of the "See Spot run" primers.

*Green Eggs and Ham* (1960) managed with a vocabulary of just fifty words to tell the story of a Seuss creature's relentless crusade to introduce a hapless furry character to a revolting dish.

Political Cartoonist and Documentary Filmmaker

In addition to becoming one of the world's most loved children's writers, Ted Geisel worked as a political cartoonist, an advertising illustrator, and a documentary filmmaker. Geisel also wrote other books under the pseudonyms Theo LeSieg and Rosetta Stone.

He graduated from Dartmouth College, where he edited the school humor magazine, and pursued a Ph.D. in English literature at Oxford, ultimately dropping out when he decided his studies were "astonishingly irrelevant." They certainly did little to aid his phantasmagorical imagination in the creation of the environmentally conscious Loraxes and fractious Sneetches, not to mention the indescribable Zubble-wumps and ooey-gooley green Ooblecks. Dr. Seuss claimed his ideas started with doodles: "I may doodle a couple of animals; if they bite each other, it's going to be a good book."

His honors included two Academy awards, two Emmy awards, a Peabody award and the Pulitzer Prize.