

# Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

Recommended Year Group: **Year 1**  
Recommended Term: **Spring 1 / Spring 2**  
Recommended Edition: **9780099408390**



## Unit overview

This three-week unit of work teaches many aspects of the Year 1 English curriculum through exploration of the magical, prize-winning, classic picture book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. The text is used to develop reading comprehension skills, including inference and vocabulary generation, as well as word-reading skills. Spelling and grammar will be rehearsed within the context of the text – comparing the characters and practising the use of suffixes. Children will work on their writing skills by discreet handwriting, story mapping and sequencing. They will also have the opportunity to re-enact through drama and music. This leads to the writing of a response to a letter and their own innovated versions of the story in a final piece of narrative writing which incorporates the prior learning from the unit and the creation of a class anthology of the children's original work. **All resources, session planning and teaching slides are included within this unit.**

## Themes and cross-curricular links

- **Music** – musical accompaniment to enhance storytelling and communicate mood
- **Geography** – making maps of story setting
- **Computing** – algorithms, instructions for travelling from *Where the Wild Things Are* to Max's bedroom
- **Maths** – co-ordinates
- **Art** – making props and masks for storytelling and drawing, painting characters for description
- **Drama** – role playing scenes, sequencing/retelling the story, hot seating, reading aloud
- **SMSC** – exploring themes of friendship, loneliness and love, responsibility and respect, kindness and fairness, British value of democracy

## Writing outcomes

- **Annotated story maps** (session 2) – familiarising, sequencing and planning
- **Character description** (session 6) – describing and then comparing their own wild things (to entertain), vocabulary generation and use of comparative language (-er, -est suffixes)
- **Missing poster** (session 8) – vocabulary generation and application of comparative language learned (to inform/explain)
- **A letter to the Wild Things** (session 9) – persuasive writing
- **Retelling the story with innovation** (session 12) – narrative writing (to entertain), an original version of the story, and creation of a class anthology of original work

## Curriculum coverage

### Spoken language:

- participate actively in discussions, role play and presentations, speaking audibly and fluently
- listen and respond appropriately to adults and peers
- ask relevant questions to extend understanding and knowledge
- use spoken language to articulate and justify answers and opinions
- use spoken language to give well-structured descriptions and explore narratives for different purposes
- use relevant strategies to build vocabulary
- use spoken language to develop understanding through imagination and exploration of ideas
- discuss what they have written with the teacher or other pupils
- read writing aloud, clearly enough to be heard by peers and the teacher

### Reading:

- become very familiar with a key story, retelling and identifying its particular characteristics and genre
- discuss the significance of the title of the book and the events
- use phonic knowledge and skills, supported by the accompanying slides, as the route to decode words when accessing the text independently
- identify and join in with the predictable phrases of the text in oral retellings
- discuss themes from the text, such as love, friendship, respect and responsibility, making links to own experiences
- identify and explain the sequence of events in the text
- develop vocabulary by discussing word meanings, linking new meanings to those already known
- demonstrate understanding of the text, drawing on prior knowledge, background information and vocabulary provided by the teacher to support understanding
- draw inferences, such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives, on the basis of what is being said and done
- predict what might happen next on the basis of what has been read so far

### Grammar, punctuation and spelling:

- use the capital letter and full stop to punctuate statements
- use capital letters for proper nouns, including the names of characters, titles and the pronoun 'I'
- use the exclamation mark, and being encouraging to use voices to express its use in role play and performance
- use the question mark to punctuate questions after question words such as 'what', 'who', 'where', 'why' and 'when'

- use the apostrophe for omission in contractions such as 'we'll'
- use the coordinating conjunction 'and' to join phrases and extend sentences
- identify nouns, verbs, adjectives and noun phrases in texts
- use adjectives and expanded noun phrases to describe character
- use commas to separate lists of adjectives and to punctuate noun phrases
- use commas in the letter format
- understand spelling rules, such as -ll in words such as pull
- add the suffixes -ed, -s and -ing with no change to the root word, use -ed to form verbs in the simple past tense, use -ing when forming verbs in the progressive form, use -s to indicate plural nouns
- add the suffixes -er and -est with no change to the root word, use the comparative and superlative forms when describing and comparing characters from the text
- add the prefix -un to verbs and adjectives
- learn Year 1 common exception words: when, where, here, there, love, one, push, pull, full, come, some, once, ask, school, friend, put, our, house
- learn phonics alternative graphemes: ai/ay/a-e, ur/ir/er, or/au/aw, air/air/ear

### Writing:

- identify the audience for and purpose of the writing and using similar shared writing as models for their own
- plan and develop initial ideas, drawing on collaborative reading and role-play opportunities
- plan writing by saying out loud what they are going to write about and compose a sentence orally before writing it
- construct sentences using a range of vocabulary and grammatical features such as joining words and clauses using 'and'
- write short narratives by sequencing sentences
- edit and improve writing by re-reading what has been written to check that it makes sense
- accurately punctuate sentences using a range of punctuation such as capital letters at the start of a sentence (as well as for proper nouns and the personal pronoun 'I'), spaces between words, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks
- spelling and phonics: accurately spell common exception words from the Year 1 list and words containing the single letter graphemes and digraphs and trigraphs covered so far
- handwriting: form lower-case letters and capital letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place and understanding which letters belong to which handwriting families

# Planning Overview

## Key questions

- Did you enjoy the story? What did you like about it?
- What do you think about the character of Max?
- Was Max's mother right to call him "Wild Thing" and send him to bed without any supper?
- Did Max really go to Where the Wild Things Are?
- Were there any words or any language features that you enjoyed? Why?
- How do the predictable phrases contribute to the story?
- What impact do the illustrations have upon the reader?

## Essential teaching guidance

- It could be very useful to create an English 'Working Wall' to accompany the unit. Generated language and vocabulary could be added to this for future reference as the unit progresses.
- Teachers should be aware that children need to develop both skimming and scanning strategies to gain understanding and retrieve specific information from a text.
- Through close study of the text, the unit provides plenty of opportunities to teach and consolidate a range of Year 1 GAPS requirements, including phonics. Raising awareness of these is supported by the teaching slides.
- When introducing contextualised weekly spelling of Year 1 common exception words, teachers may want to encourage strategies for remembering these.
- Scanning could be encouraged and developed by initially searching for visual clues in a detailed picture before progressing to text.
- Picture books like this one are an excellent resource for developing inference skills which can be developed through good questioning, discussion and modelling.
- Organising elements of the original story into a table provides the children with a clear structure to organise their own innovative ideas.

## Week 1

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- become familiar with the story and key vocabulary, introduce and pre-read the text
- retell the story, sequencing the events in the correct order
- revisit, sequence and retell the story, joining in with predictable phrases
- develop understanding of the story, retrieve information, infer from the text, explain their understanding and predict what might happen next in SATs-style comprehension activities
- retell and perform a familiar story through drama and performance, portray character through voice and movement
- rehearse contextualised handwriting, form letters from the long ladder family correctly with the correct series of strokes and consolidate the -ll spelling rule and use of the apostrophe in 'we'll'
- learn contextualised phonics: review ai/ay/a-e, and teach ur/ir/er

### Resources provided:

- Teaching slides to aid discussion
- Pupil resource – Story language
- Pupil resource – Adverbial cards
- Pupil resource – Definition matching
- Pupil resource – Comprehension questions
- Pupil resource – Handwriting template

## Week 2

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- develop and generate descriptive vocabulary to describe Max, the wild things and their own artwork and use this in sentences (including 'and') to write a character description
- make further use of their growing vocabulary to compare the characters and learn to add and apply the suffixes -er and -est when generating comparative and superlative language
- develop a deeper understanding of character and purposes for writing through role play, hot seating and exploring the school grounds in search of a missing Max, as a hook to the creation of informative "Missing" posters to display around school to find him
- explore point of view through discussion and role play and persuade the wild things that Max needs to stay at home by writing a letter in response to the wild things' letter to the children
- have opportunities for spoken language and peer feedback as children orally present their work to the class
- rehearse contextualised handwriting: review letters from the long ladder family correctly with the correct series of strokes and consolidate the use of the capital letter for the pronoun 'I' and the apostrophe in the word, 'I'll'
- learn contextualised phonics: review ur/ir/er, teach: or/au/aw

### Resources provided:

- Teaching slides to aid discussion
- Pupil resource – Missing poster template
- Pupil resource – SATs-style questions
- Pupil resource – Handwriting template

### Related books for wider reading

- *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson
- *The Jolly Postman or Other People's Letters* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

## Week 3

### Objectives and outcomes summary:

This week the children will:

- generate ideas for changes to the original story in preparation for their own innovative versions by plotting their ideas in a table alongside elements of the original story and comparing the two
- have opportunities to experience the writing process through collaborative shared writing of a class story before attempting their own writing
- draw on their reading and role play as a model for their own writing
- write innovative stories changing characters and settings but reflecting the style of the author and the pattern and language of the story
- experience their teacher modelling the editing process, using examples from the children's work, before editing and improving their own
- design their own front covers and write their own blurbs for their own stories and a class anthology
- read their stories to an audience and reflect on feedback given

### Resources provided:

- Teaching slides to aid discussion
- Pupil resource – Story planning template
- Pupil resource – Writing template
- Pupil resource – Handwriting template