WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

By Maurice Sendak
Originally adapted for the stage
by Carol Heals and TAG Theatre, Glasgow
Produced by Presentation House Theatre
Directed by Kim Selody

Study Guide

WRITTEN BY STEPHANIE LONG, ADAPTED FROM THE CAROUSEL PLAYERS STUDY GUIDE WRITTEN BY BEV HASKINS
DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY JAN BORKOWSKI | SEASON DESIGN BY KEY GORDON
Theatre is a Two-Way Exchange

We’re so glad you’re coming to visit us here at the theatre. We want you to feel safe and welcome whenever you come to YPT. Whether you’ve come to the theatre before or this is your first time at YPT, this guide will help prepare you for your visit.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR CLASS THE ROLE OF AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

You play a vital part in the success of a theatrical performance. In the way that the actors have a responsibility to the audience, as audience members, you have a responsibility to each other and to the actors on stage.

Actors are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the theatre. At the same time, please remember to be considerate. Talking, whispering and excessive movement during a live performance is distracting for the actors and disruptive for other audience members.

Watching a play can often make you think about things in a new way. The Q&A after the show is the perfect time for you to ask questions you might have. As you watch the play, prepare one question to ask the actors.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER IN THE THEATRE

Within the theatre, electronic devices are not permitted, as they affect our sound system. Photography, audio and video recording during a performance are prohibited by the Canadian Theatre Agreement. This is important, as it ensures the protection of the work of the artists.

We ask that you enjoy any food, drinks, candy and gum before entering the theatre. YPT is a nut-free zone, as many people have severe, life-threatening allergies, so no peanuts or nut products are permitted in the theatre.

THINKING ABOUT THE WHOLE PRODUCTION

During the show, look at different aspects of the production together. Before the show, identify tasks for your class. For instance, have one group focusing on the set, another listening for the music and sound effects, a third watching the lighting and a fourth, the costumes. Compare notes after the show about what you observe. You will be more informed and you’ll be surprised by how much you noticed.

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The Study Guide

STUDY GUIDE NOTE FROM STEPHANIE LONG

This unique and whimsical production creatively explores YPT’s 2013-2014 season’s focus on the resourcefulness of youth. The play looks at the ways in which children can use the power of imagination to create and explore new landscapes, particularly in the face of unpleasant realities. Simultaneously, it underlines the importance of young people recognizing and taking ownership for their emotional responses. Both underlying messages are acknowledged by the author of the original story:

Certainly we want to protect our children from new and painful experiences that are beyond their emotional comprehension and that intensify anxiety; and to a point we can prevent premature exposure to such experiences. That is obvious. But what is just as obvious —and what is too often overlooked— is the fact that from their earliest years children live on familiar terms with disrupting emotions, that fear and anxiety are an intrinsic part of their everyday lives, that they continually cope with frustration as best they can. And it is through fantasy that children achieve catharsis. It is the best means they have for taming Wild Things.

It is my involvement with this inescapable fact of childhood — the awful vulnerability of children and their struggle to make themselves King of all Wild Things—that gives my work whatever truth and passion it may have.
- Maurice Sendak

In Ontario’s Kindergarten curriculum, the importance of teaching children self-regulation techniques is highlighted. In line with Sendak’s view of the complexity and depth of children’s emotional experiences, the curriculum document includes this important note:

Self-regulation is not about compliance with external authorities – it is about establishing one’s own internal motivation for adapting to, and understanding emotional and social demands. In fact, for many children, requiring compliance undermines their own abilities to self-regulate.
-Charles Pascal, Every Child, p. 4

It is hoped this production illuminates the importance of both self-regulation and imagination to the emotional lives of young people in an inspiring and interactive way.

THEMATIC OVERVIEW

Max, the play’s protagonist, must survive in a wilderness-- a wilderness he has created through the power of his own imagination. He has dreamed a whole landscape and its monsters to life through his rage and frustration. He then learns to manage his emotions, so that he may return from a wild place of chaos and strangeness to one of family, calm, and his much-anticipated dinner.

In the exercises in this study guide aim to help students to discuss and explore the main themes of Where the Wild Things Are through play. The pre-show exercises focus on exploring imaginary worlds and on taming inner Wild Things, while the post-show exercises look at the play’s story more specifically and ask students to reflect on Max’s incredible transformation and what he has learned through this experience. By participating in these exercises, not only will students better understand the play’s central themes, but also their own capacity for initiative and imagination.

Strands and Curriculum Connections

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:
• The Arts (Drama, Visual Arts)
• The Kindergarten Program: Personal and Social Development
• Language

CHARACTER EDUCATION CONNECTIONS:
• Responsibility
• Perseverance
• Kindness and Caring
• Empathy

THEMES:
• Power of Imagination
• Managing Emotions
• Interactive Storytelling

The Company

THE CAST
Max
Raes Calvert
Mom/Narrator
Linda A. Carson

CREATIVE TEAM
Director
Kim Selody
Set, Props & Costume Designer
Linda Leon
Composer/Sound Designer
Cathy Nosaty
Lighting Designer
Bradley A. Trenaman
Stage Manager
Giselle Clarke-Trenaman
**Synopsis**

This is an interactive version of the Maurice Sendak classic in which the incorrigible Max, sent to bed without his supper, travels to a land of wild animals and becomes their King. The audience sits on the floor and, along with the Storyteller and an actor playing Max, enacts the story, eventually creating the Wild Rumpus together.

**Glossary**

*All definitions are derived from the Oxford English Dictionary.*

- **Imagination**: the ability of the mind to be creative or resourceful
- **Self-management**: the taking of responsibility for one’s own behavior, actions and well-being
- **Wild**: lacking discipline or restraint

**Director’s Note from Kim Selody**

During our play some of your students will be using masks as the Wild Things. Although we supply the masks used in the play by the children, you can also choose to make and use your own. We suggest that you make them out of paper plates, cut in half and held on with an elastic band stapled to the plate. It is important that the child have both hands free while wearing the mask. That way, the child’s hands will be free to make claws. We also ask that the child’s mouth be exposed, so they can gnash their teeth and roar. Mask drawings by the designer Linda Leon can be found in this guide, which you are free to photocopy and use as a template. Students can decorate the mask any way they wish. During the performance, we suggest that the teacher collect all the masks and keep them until the Narrator asks for them. That way, they are less likely to get damaged before they are needed.

*Please note:*
This is a participation play, so there will be times when the students are asked to make noises and perform actions. Prior to attending the performance, discuss your class the difference between moments of participation and times when they need to be quiet and listen to the actors.

**Units Of Study**

Through these exercises students will:
- demonstrate independence, self-regulation, and a willingness to take responsibility in learning and other activities;
- demonstrate an awareness of their surroundings;
- communicate in writing, using strategies that are appropriate for beginners;
- apply the critical analysis process to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences.

**Pre-Show Questions**

- What makes you frustrated and angry?
- How do you deal with these emotions?
- How can your imagination help you to escape scary or unpleasant experiences?
- What turns you into a Wild Thing?
- Can happy events also turn you into a Wild Thing? Explain.

**Pre-Show Exercises**

**PRE-SHOW EXERCISE #1: A WALK THROUGH DIFFERENT WORLDS**

**Objective:**
Through this exercise, students will use their imaginations to create and explore new landscapes.

**Materials:**
- Space in which to move
Directions:
1. Ask students to form a line and to slowly begin walking around the classroom on an appointed route (a circle may be the easiest path with which to work).
2. Ask students to imagine the following locations, one at a time, and to explore the given landscape in silence. Encourage them to walk slowly and purposefully, as if on a slightly scary adventure into new territory.
   
   Possible Locations:
   - a foggy swamp
   - a frozen iceberg
   - the desert
   - a dark forest

3. After each location has been introduced and explored, ask students how they feel physically, what sorts of things they see, what other “characters” they might encounter, and what emotions they might be feeling.

Debriefing Questions:
- Where was your favourite place to visit?
- How were the locations different from one another?
- In what ways were they similar?
- Would changing a few things in our classroom help you to better imagine one of the locations? Be specific and give examples.
- Is it easier to imagine different worlds when we are alone or when we are in a group? Explain why.

Extension:
Based on students’ suggestions, try moving five things in the classroom to better reflect one of the imaginary spaces and repeat the exercise in this new environment.

PRE-SHOW EXERCISE #2: TAMING OUR MONSTERS

Objective:
This exercise asks students to physically embody monsters and to work on instantly transforming themselves from Wild Things to Tamed Things.

Materials:
- Space in which to move

Directions:
1. One student is appointed the Monster Tamer. This student stands at the front of the classroom with his or her back to the row of Monsters.
2. There should be several meters between the Monster Tamer and the Monsters who are standing in a row side-by-side.
3. When the Monster Tamer’s back is turned, the Monsters can begin to slowly approach them. They are encouraged to make monstrous faces and to physically embody their understanding of monsters in whatever way they see fit.
4. When the tamer turns to face the Monsters, they must freeze. Any Monsters caught moving by the Monster Tamer must return to the original row. Whenever the Monster Tamer turns away, the Monsters can begin to approach them again.
5. The first Monster to gently tap the Monster Tamer on the back wins the game and may become the new Monster Tamer.

Debriefing Questions:
- What helped you to freeze or “tame” yourself during this exercise?
- What made it difficult to freeze or “tame yourself”?
- What helps you to “tame” yourself in the rest of your life?
- Do you always need other people to help you to tame your inner monster?
- Do you act differently when people like teachers or parents are watching you? Why or why not?

PRE-SHOW CULMINATING EXERCISE: MANAGING OUR MONSTERS

Objective:
This exercise invites students to use their imaginations and also to consider the ways in which inner-monsters may be tamed through self-management.

Materials:
- Chart paper
- Markers

Directions:
1. Students are asked to work with a partner to create a monster. They should consider what their monster looks, acts, and feels like. They may choose to record this on their chart paper.
2. Then have students think about what might be a way for their monster to relax and become a bit tamer. This could be something external (the monster’s mom) or internal (deep breaths, thinking happy thoughts etc.).
3. Have students draw an outline of their monster and record these. They should write or draw external elements outside of the outline and internal ones inside.
4. The students should find a way to present their monsters to the class through movement and mime. Each pair can stand up and embody their monster for the class.
5. The other students can try to guess what characteristics the students are demonstrating.
Debriefing Questions:
- In what ways were the monsters similar? In what ways were they different?
- What are some ways we all thought of to tame the monsters? Can we think of other ideas?
- Why is it helpful to think of taming methods that don’t rely on other people?
- Can we tame our own “inner monsters” by using similar strategies?

Post-Show Questions
- How does Max feel when he is forced to go to his room without his supper?
- How might Max feel when he becomes King of the Wild Things?
- Why does Max choose to return home?
- What might Max have learned from his journey?

Post-Show Exercises

POST-SHOW EXERCISE #1: INTRODUCTION TO TABLEAU

Objective:
Through this exercise students will learn about the dramatic technique of tableau and how it can be used to tell a story or help with character development.

Materials:
- Space in which to move

Directions:
1. While sitting in a large circle ask the students to think of different ways to tell a story or communicate with each other (i.e. by using our voices, writing down a story on paper, drawing a picture, using our bodies, etc).
2. Ask students to think about how we can tell stories by only using our bodies.
3. Introduce the word tableau to the students and ask if anyone has ever heard that word before and if anyone has an idea of what it could mean.
4. Tell the students that a tableau is a technique used in drama where participants create a frozen picture or image with their bodies to represent a scene or tell a story.
5. Ask everyone to stand up and then tell them that they are going to make one big tableau together. Tell the students that you will shout out the title of the tableau that you the class will create. Students will then have to the count of three to get into a position and freeze in place.

Possible Tableau Titles:
- Playing with Friends
- Going on a Journey
- Walking in a Jungle
- King of the Wild Things
- Coming Home

6. Throughout this exercise, make sure to practice the idea of freezing and being silent when students are creating a tableau. Encourage students to think about using different levels, to try different gestures or positions and to use facial expression in each tableau.
7. When the students are frozen in the tableau you can ask one or two students to step out of the tableau to look at the picture the class has created.

Debriefing Questions:
- What did it feel like to be a part of the tableau?
- How did you think of your poses in each tableau?
- What are some other ways that we can use tableaux to help tell a story?

POST-SHOW EXERCISE #2: MAX, BEFORE AND AFTER – THOUGHT-TRACKING

Objective:
This exercise builds on the idea of the previous one and invites students to reflect on Max’s transformation and to consider what he might have learned through his adventures.

Materials:
- Space in which to move
- Chart paper or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk

Directions:
1. Speak with students about what it feels like to get in trouble by a parent or teacher. Brainstorm what kinds of feelings we have in these situations. Record these ideas.
2. Then have students imagine that they are Max when he is sent to his room without his supper. They should at first do this without moving and can then slowly stand and begin moving in their own space, without interacting with the other students.
3. Once all students are up on their feet, tell them to freeze.
4. The teacher then taps students on the shoulders, one at a time. When a student is tapped, he or she should say one thing that they are thinking as Max. (i.e. “I want my supper!” or “I’m so angry!”)
5. The exercise should then be repeated for the following scenarios:
   • When Max arrives in the forest
   • When Max becomes king
   • When Max leads the Wild Rumpus
   • When Max returns to his bedroom

Debriefing Questions:
On the chart paper, make three columns, one for “Before the Journey”, one for “During the Journey”, and one for “After the Journey”. Ask the students to think about how Max felt at each stage (they can reflect on what they heard during thought-tracking in order to do so). Record their answers.
   • What caused Max to change?
   • What did Max learn through his adventure?
   • How does traveling to new places sometimes teach us about ourselves?
   • How can we make these kinds of journeys without even leaving our rooms?
   • Could Max have calmed down without traveling to the forest? How?

POST-SHOW CULMINATING EXERCISE: DEAR DIARY

Objective:
This exercise invites students to take on the role of Max and to reflect on their journeys and learning experiences.

Materials:
• Writing utensils
• Chart paper or paper for each student
• Markers

Directions:
1. Have students imagine that they are Max and they have just returned from their journey to the forest.
2. Have them write or draw what happened and what they learned, as though in a diary or journal entry.
3. If students have worked individually, they may share a favourite sentence or picture from their journal with the class.

Debriefing Questions:
• In 5 years, when Max reads his diary, what do you think he will remember most from the experience?
• Do you think Max might choose to return to the land of Wild Things some day? Why or why not?
• Why is recording our memories of special events sometimes helpful?

Teacher Prompts:
They may do this individually or collaboratively as a group, if this is more appropriate for the age level.

Reviewing a Play

JON KAPLAN’S INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT REVIEWERS

Theatre is, for me, an art form that tells me something about myself or gets me thinking about the world in which I live.

Whether going to the theatre as a reviewer or simply an audience member, I think that watching a play is an emotional experience and not just an intellectual one. I always let a show wash over me, letting it touch my feelings, and only later, after the show, do I try to analyze those feelings.

That’s when I start to think about some of the basic questions you ask when you’re writing a review – what did I see (story, characters, themes); how did I respond to what I saw; what parts of the production (script, performances, direction, design and possibly other elements) made me feel and think what I did; why was I supposed to respond in that fashion?

When you go to the theatre to review, take a few notes during a show if you feel comfortable doing so, but don’t spend your time writing the review during the show; you’ll miss what’s happening onstage.

Writing a review doesn’t mean providing a plot summary. That’s only part of the job; you have to discuss your reaction to what you saw and try to explore some of the reasons for that reaction.

I don’t believe that there’s any such thing as a totally objective piece of criticism. We are all individuals, bringing our own back-grounds, experiences and beliefs to a production. In some fashion, every one of us sitting in the theatre is a critic, no matter whether we’re writing a review or not; we all react to and form judgments about what we see on the stage.

When I go to a production, I always keep in mind that the people involved in putting it on have worked long and hard – weeks, months, sometimes years – getting it onto the stage. Even if I have problems with the result, it’s important to respect the efforts that went into the show.

Jon Kaplan is senior theatre writer at NOW Magazine, where he’s worked for the past 33 years.
Wild Thing Creation Exercise

Objective:
This exercise encourages students to think about the design of the show and prepares them to bring their own unique masks to use in the performance.

Materials:
- Photocopies of Appendix A: Wild Things Mask Template
- Fabric, yarn, paper and other craft materials
- Colouring utensils
- Glue
- Elastic bands or pipe cleaners

Directions:
1. Your students can create their own Wild Thing masks to use in the play. We recommend you do this using paper plates.
2. Have students cut the paper plate in half or have these prepared in advance.
3. Have students decorate the paper plate using the template of their choice with fabric, yarn or paper to create the face of their Wild Thing.
4. Attach an elastic band or two pipe cleaners on either side of the mask so students can have their hands free while wearing them.
5. Have students experiment walking around the classroom as their monsters, using the following prompts:
   - How does your monster move? Does it move quickly or slowly? Does it take big steps or small steps?
   - What kind of claws does your monster have?
   - What kind of teeth?
   - What kind of environment does your monster live in? Is it a tropical place or a cold place? Is it a city with lots of people or rural with lots of space to move?
6. When the masks are created, students may wish to work in small groups to create plays with their Wild Things masks. Another possibility is to retell the story using their masks.

Teacher Prompts:
- Does your monster have a name?
- How old is your monster?
- What makes your monster wild?
- What is your monster’s favorite activity to do for fun?

Sources & Resources

THE TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY RECOMMENDS...

The Toronto Public Library created these supplemental reading lists to help our audience connect with and explore more deeply the themes and ideas found within each of our 2013-2014 season productions. Click on the titles below to link to the Toronto Public Library website. Happy reading!

- **And My Mean Old Mother will be Sorry, Blackboard Bear** by Martha Alexander

- **Go Away Big Green Monster** by Ed Emberley.

- **Masks** by Susie Hodge.
  Smart Apple Media, c. 2007.

- **The Owl and the Pussycat** by Edward Lear.

- **Where the Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak.

- **Where the Wild Things Are = Max et lest maximontres.**
  Village Roadshow Pictures,
  DVD 2010. (101 min.)

Sources

Ontario Curriculum- Elementary
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary
YOUNG PEOPLE’S THEATRE

YPT is the largest Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) company in Canada and a significant institution in the Canadian professional theatre community. Over our 48-year history we have produced many of the most important works that now form the canon of plays for young audiences in this country. At the heart of founder Susan Rubes’ idea for Young People’s Theatre (YPT) was a belief that children deserve a theatre of their own – with resources and standards no lesser than those for adults. She believed – as we do today – that young people deserve good theatre because theatre is good for young people.

Through the communal experience of the theatre we create for them, children can receive indications of what is important, funny, trivial; positive, negative, wrong, right, rightish, wrongish; frightening, reassuring, empowering, unavoidable; familiar, new, eternal … We strongly believe that even through the most playful of plays, we are speaking powerfully to children about the community and the world in which they live.

Therefore, at the centre of the artistic policy of YPT is a desire to have a positive and lasting impact on the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young people. We want children to be imprinted with experiences that will increase their access to the world, in order for them to grow into the unique and wonderful people they were born to be. To do this, our programming is drawn from the world classics of children’s stories, from contemporary works, from the new plays we develop, and from productions showcasing the most innovative and accomplished theatre for young audiences by other Canadian and international theatre companies.

At YPT, because we are serious about child development through theatre art, children can experience our work as either audience members or theatre creators. We extend the learning opportunities of our professional productions through our substantial Education & Participation Department. The Department’s services for teachers and students helps connect curriculum objectives and learning outcomes to the content of our professional productions; its Community Participation projects link our theatre skill with the educational aspirations of partners who are dedicated to the growth of young people; our interest-based Drama School offers young people the chance to engage deeply in the excitement of theatre art; and our Community Volunteer programme offers everyone who wants it, the opportunity to participate in the mission of YPT.

YPT is not only a professional theatre for young audiences but a vital community-based centre of arts education.

Allen MacInnis
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Subsidized Programs for Schools

YPT provides subsidized programs to qualifying schools through our Connections and Arts Impact initiatives, which offer students and teachers the ability to experience, participate and learn through live theatre. It is only with the generous support of our Education Partner, BMO Financial Group and our Arts Impact Sponsor, Great West Life, London Life & Canada Life, along with Tippet Foundation and an anonymous donor, that these programs are made possible. Please visit youngpeoplestheatre.ca for additional information.

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