

Doctor Seuss, 1904-1991: A Children's Writer for All Ages

Among his popular books are 'The Cat in the Hat,' 'Green Eggs and Ham' and 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas.'
Transcript of radio broadcast:
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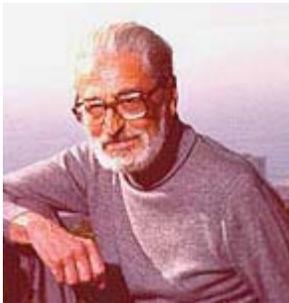
ANNOUNCER:

PEOPLE IN AMERICA, a program in Special English on the Voice of America.

Today we tell about one of the most successful writers of children's books. Sarah Long and Steve Ember tell about Doctor Seuss.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:



Theodore Seuss
Geisel

Doctor Seuss was the name used by Theodor Seuss Geisel. He was famous because of the books he wrote for children. They combine humorous words, funny pictures, and social opinion. Mister Geisel also illustrated his books with pictures of funny creatures and plants. He did not receive training in art. Yet he created the pictures for most of his books.

The Doctor Seuss books are very popular with young readers. They enjoy the invented words. And they like to look at the pictures of unusual creatures such as the Cat in the Hat, Thing One, Thing Two, Little Cindy-Lou Who, and Sam-I-Am.

(MUSIC)

VOICE TWO:

Theodor Geisel was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in nineteen-oh-four. He graduated from Dartmouth College in nineteen-twenty-five. He spent a year studying literature at Oxford University in England. Mister Geisel returned to the United States in nineteen-twenty-seven. He hoped to become a writer of serious literature.

During this time the United States was in an economic decline known as the Great Depression. This forced Mister Geisel to delay his dreams of becoming a serious writer. He found work as a creator of advertising campaigns designed to sell products. He also drew cartoons for popular magazines including Life and Vanity Fair. Cartoons are humorous pictures with words.

VOICE ONE:

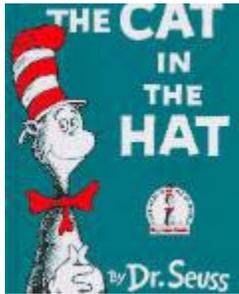
Doctor Seuss wrote his first book for children in nineteen thirty-seven. It is called "And To Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street." A number of publishers rejected it. They said it was too different. A friend finally published it. Soon other successful books followed. Over the years he wrote more than forty children's books. They were fun to read. Yet his books sometimes dealt with serious subjects including equality, responsibility and protecting the environment.

By the middle nineteen fifties, Doctor Seuss had become one of the best-loved and most successful children's book writers in the world. He had a strong desire to help children.

In nineteen fifty-four, Life magazine published a report about school children who could not read. The report said many children's books were not interesting. Doctor Seuss decided to write books that were interesting and easy to read. He used rhyming words, words with the same ending sound, like fish and wish.

In the book "Hop on Pop," he presented two words. Then he used them in simple sentences like this. Day. Play. We play all day. Night. Fight. We fight all night.

VOICE TWO:



In nineteen fifty-seven, Dr. Seuss wrote "The Cat in the Hat." He used less than two hundred twenty-five words to write the book. This was an estimate of the number of words a six-year-old should be able to read.

The story is about a cat who tries to entertain two children on a rainy day while their mother is away from home. The cat is not like normal cats. It is more like a human. It walks on two legs instead of four. It wears a tall, red and white hat. A big red bow is around its neck. And it talks. As the cat entertains the children it creates complete disorder in the house.

The book was an immediate success. It was a fun story and easy to read. Children loved it. Their parents loved it, too. Today many adults say it is still one of the stories they like best.

Listen as Ray Freeman reads from "The Cat in the Hat."

RAY FREEMAN:

The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play.

So we sat in the house all that cold, cold, wet day.

I sat there with Sally. We sat there, we two.

And I said, "How I wish we had something to do!"

Too wet to go out and too cold to play ball.

So we sat in the house. We did nothing at all.

So all we could do was to Sit! Sit! Sit! Sit!

And we did not like it. Not one little bit.

And then something went BUMP!

How that bump made us jump!

We looked!

Then we saw him step in on the mat!

We looked!

And we saw him! The Cat in the Hat!

And he said to us, "Why do you sit there like that?"

I know it is wet and the sun is not sunny.

But we can have lots of good fun that is funny!"

VOICE ONE:

Doctor Seuss was very concerned that some children were not learning to read. The success of the Cat in the Hat made him want to write more books for children. He started a series called Beginner Books. Beginner Books remain well liked among children today. The series includes such titles as "Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories," "Fox in Socks" and "The Lorax."

In nineteen sixty Doctor Seuss was urged by a book publisher to write a book using less than fifty words. And he did. The book is called "Green Eggs and Ham." It is one of Doctor Seuss's most popular books. In the book a creature named Sam-I-Am tries to get another creature to eat an unusual meal, green eggs and ham.

Here is part of the story read by seven-year-old Miko Prescott.

(SOUND)

VOICE TWO:

In nineteen sixty, Doctor Seuss wrote the story "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." It is about an extremely unkind man called the Grinch. He tries to stop Christmas from arriving in a village called Whoville. He steals all the Christmas gifts and food in the village while everyone is sleeping. Yet Christmas comes anyway. The people of Whoville are happy although they have no gifts. By the end of the story, the Grinch becomes a kind person. In this story Doctor Seuss gives the message that Christmas is about more than receiving gifts.

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas" was later produced for television. It first was shown in nineteen sixty-six. It continues to be a very popular holiday program. Here is a song from "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." It is called "You're a Mean One Mister Grinch."

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:

In nineteen eighty-four, Mister Geisel won a Pulitzer Prize for children's literature. At that time he had been writing children's books for almost fifty years. He was honored for the education and enjoyment his books provided American children and their parents.

In nineteen eighty-six, Doctor Seuss wrote "You're Only Old Once." It was his first book written for adults. It talks about getting old. His last book was written in nineteen ninety. It was called "Oh, the Places You'll Go!"

VOICE TWO:

Theodor Seuss Geisel died in nineteen ninety-one. He was eighty-seven years old. Doctor Seuss's influence remains through the books he wrote and illustrated. Millions of copies of them have been sold worldwide.

Experts say his books helped change the way American children learned to read. Yet, his books are loved by people of all ages. Doctor Seuss once said "I do not write for children. I write for people."

People continue to honor Doctor Seuss. Theodore Seuss Geisel was born on March Second. Each year on that day the National Education Association calls for every child and every community in America to celebrate reading. This program is called "Read Across America."

(MUSIC)

ANNOUNCER:

This Special English program was written by Lawan Davis. It was produced by Paul Thompson. Your announcers were Sarah Long and Steve Ember. I'm Mary Tillotson. Join us again next week for another PEOPLE IN AMERICA program on the Voice of America.