

Santa Ana High School Article of the Week #12

Dr. Seuss Biography (1280L)

Instructions: READ and ANNOTATE using CLOSE reading strategies.

Step 1: Skim the article using these symbols as you read:

(+) agree, (-) disagree, (*) important, (!) surprising, (?) wondering

Step 2: Number the paragraphs. **Read** the article **carefully** and **make notes in the margin**.

Notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer's strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Step 3: A reread noting anything you may have missed during the first read.

Student _____ Class Period _____

Dr. Seuss Biography

Synopsis

Theodor Seuss Geisel was born on March 2, 1904, in Springfield, Massachusetts. He published his first children's book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, under the name of Dr. Seuss in 1937. Next, came a string of best sellers, including *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham*. His rhymes and characters are beloved by generations.

Early Life

Theodor Seuss Geisel was born on March 2, 1904, in Springfield, Massachusetts to Theodor Robert Geisel, a successful brew master, and Henrietta Seuss Geisel. At age 18, Geisel left home to attend Dartmouth College, where he became the editor in chief of its humor magazine, Jack-O-Lantern. When Geisel and his friends were caught drinking in his dorm room one night, in violation of Prohibition law, he was kicked off the magazine staff, but continued to contribute to it using the pseudonym "Seuss." After graduating from Dartmouth, Geisel attended Oxford University in England, with plans to eventually become a professor. While at Oxford, he met his future wife, Helen Palmer, whom he married in 1927. That same year, he dropped out of Oxford, and the couple moved back to the United States.

Early Career

Upon returning to America, Geisel decided to pursue cartooning full-time, and his articles and illustrations were published in numerous magazines, including *Life* and *Vanity Fair*. A cartoon that he published in the July 1927 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, his first time using the pen name "Seuss," landed him a staff position at the New York weekly *Judge*. He then worked for Standard Oil in the advertising

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department, where he spent the next 15 years. His ad for Flit, a common insecticide, became nationally famous.

Around this time, Viking Press offered him a contract to illustrate a children's collection called *Boners*. The book sold poorly, but it gave him a break into children's literature. Geisel's first book, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, was rejected 27 times before it was finally published by Vanguard Press in 1937.

At the start of World War II, Geisel began contributing weekly political cartoons to the liberal publication *PM Magazine*. In 1942, too old for the World War II draft, Geisel served with Frank Capra's Signal Corps, making animated training films and drawing propaganda posters for the Treasury Department and the War Production Board.

Commercial Success

Following the war, Geisel and Helen purchased an old observation tower in La Jolla, California, where he would write for at least eight hours a day, taking breaks to tend his garden. He wrote and published several children's books in the coming years, including *If I Ran the Zoo* and *Horton Hears a Who!*

A major turning point in Geisel's career came when, in response to a 1954 *Life* magazine article that criticized children's reading levels, Houghton Mifflin and Random House asked him to write a children's primer using 220 vocabulary words.

The resulting book, *The Cat in the Hat*, was published in 1957 and was described by one critic as a "tour de force." The success of *The Cat in the Hat* cemented Geisel's place in children's literature.

In the years that followed, Geisel authored many more books, both in his new simplified-vocabulary style and using his older, more elaborate technique, and including such favorites as *Green Eggs and Ham* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. In 1966, with the help of eminent cartoonist Chuck Jones, *The Grinch* was adapted into an animated film.

Personal Life and Later Years

In October of 1967, Helen, who was suffering from both cancer and the emotional pain caused by an affair Geisel had with their longtime friend Audrey Stone Diamond, committed suicide. Geisel married Audrey the following year.

On September 24, 1991, Geisel passed away at the age of 87. In 1997, the Art of Dr. Seuss project was launched. Today, limited-edition prints and sculptures of Geisel's artworks can be found at galleries alongside the works of Rembrandt, Picasso and Miro. Sixteen of his books are on *Publishers Weekly's* list of the "100 Top-Selling Hardcover Children's Books of All-Time."

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Comprehension questions – answers may be in phrases.

1. *What was Dr. Seuss' father's profession?*
2. *On what date was Dr. Seuss born? On what date did he pass on?*
3. *Name Seuss' first book and the number of times it was rejected before being published.*

Answer each question in one or more complete sentences.

4. *For what reason was Theodore Geisel not drafted into World War II?*
5. *Define pseudonym. What was Theodore Geisel's pseudonym?*

6. *In reference to *The Cat in the Hat*, the author states Dr. Seuss wrote several more books in "both in his new simplified-vocabulary style and using his older, more elaborate technique." Which style, in your opinion, would be the most difficult to write in? Use a quality example to support your answer.*