

Story Drama Lesson Plan for Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

by Lauren Lipman

Objective: To stimulate the imagination and aid in story comprehension; to engage all senses in learning

Materials: book: Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
big bowl of oatmeal
cups (1 per child)
parachute or other large piece of fabric
cd player
recording of “Wild Thing”
other music for the ocean

Introduction: To set the mood for the story, as the children come in, tell them that they must go to bed and cannot have any porridge tonight because they have been mischievous. Have the children take off their shoes and sit down. Read them “just one bedtime story.” The bedtime story, of course, will be Where the Wild Things Are. You may choose to read the story ahead of time.

Story Exploration:

- 1) Sleep/Dreaming: Tell the children to lie down and go to sleep and think about the mischief they have created. While they are sleeping, take out the parachute and have it set up in the middle of the room. Explain that they are starting to have a dream.
- 2) Ocean: Put on music and tell children to help create the ocean by grabbing the edges of the parachute and shaking it. Have children take turns crossing the ocean (the parachute) one at a time. Once everyone has let go, tell the children, “just by letting go, the parachute disappeared.” Have them let go of the parachute and pull it away.
- 3) Land of the Wild Things: Inform the children that they have just entered the land of the wild things. Ask them to explore what it is like to be a wild thing. You can side coach at this point with questions like, “What kinds of steps does your wild thing take?”
- 4) Wild Things Forest: Tell children (the wild things) that there is a stranger in their midst. Have them disguise themselves as trees and try to scare Max as he passes. Let each child take a turn being Max and going through the trees. Ask some of the Maxes to share inner monologues as they go through the forest.

- 5) Taming the Wild Things: Have children get into pairs. One will be Max, and the other will be a wild thing. Explain that Max is going to try to scare the wild thing, but the wild thing does not get scared. Then tell them that eventually, Max learns that the only way to tame a wild thing is by looking him straight in the eye. Invite the Maxes to try this. Switch roles, so everyone has a chance to tame and be tamed.
- 6) King Max: Announce that Max has done so well at taming the wild things that he has been named “King of the Wild Things.” Tell the children to step forward and make a frozen pose to show what they look like as kings. Go around and tap each child. When a child is tapped, have him say one word or phrase about how he or she is feeling in that moment.
- 7) Rumpus: Play “Wild Thing” and have all the children dance as wild things. If time, put the children in groups and have each group come up with one “wild thing dance move” to share with the group. Join in a big circle and have each group share their dance move while everyone copies it.
- 8) Sleep/Loneliness: Explain that Max sends the wild things to bed without supper. Have everyone lie down and go to sleep. As everyone is lying with their eyes closed, tell them that Max begins to feel lonely and homesick and begins to smell the porridge from far off. Walk around holding the porridge bowl close to each child’s nose.
- 9) Returning Home: Have children create the ocean with the parachute again and take turns crossing it. End by having everyone raise the parachute over their heads, run in and sit on it, creating a giant bubble around everyone. This aims to create a nice homey feeling for the end, as Max comes home.

Porridge/Reflection: As a closing activity, serve each child a cup of oatmeal (porridge) which they can eat as they reflect on the experience they’ve just had. They can reflect in character or out of character. Questions for reflection can include:

How does being home feel different now than it did at the beginning?

How were the two times crossing the ocean different?

How did it feel to be a wild thing?

What parts stood out to you? Why?