

## Sendak Goes to the Dogs: Maurice Sendak's Empathic View of Dogs

Dogs frequently appear in the picture books of Maurice Sendak. The best known is Jennie, the Sealyham terrier pursued down the stairs by Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963). Reflecting on the fourteen-year partnership with his dog, Sendak said, "Jennie was the love of my life." Jennie appeared in most of Sendak's books from 1954 to her death, which is memorialized in *Higglety Pigglety Pop! or There Must be More to Life* (1967). The dramatist, Tony Kushner, has written that *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* is "perhaps the most personal work of an artist who unstintingly mines his own psyche and soul for his art. *Higglety* belongs to the select library of essential art about death and grief."

This presentation will examine connections between *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*, one of Sendak's most critically acclaimed books, and *Some Swell Pup, or Are You Sure You Want a Dog?* (1976) which garnered some of the worse reviews of his career. Written by professional dog trainer, Matthew Margolis, *Some Swell Pup* functions as "a pre-training manual" for children that represents, "the socialization of the child and the animal: coming to accept the puppy's nature." While Sendak suggested that few critics have realized the significance that animals play in his work, this presentation will examine the deep empathic relationships expressed in two companion texts that simultaneously address the complex and demanding relationships of an owner to a dog and parents to children.