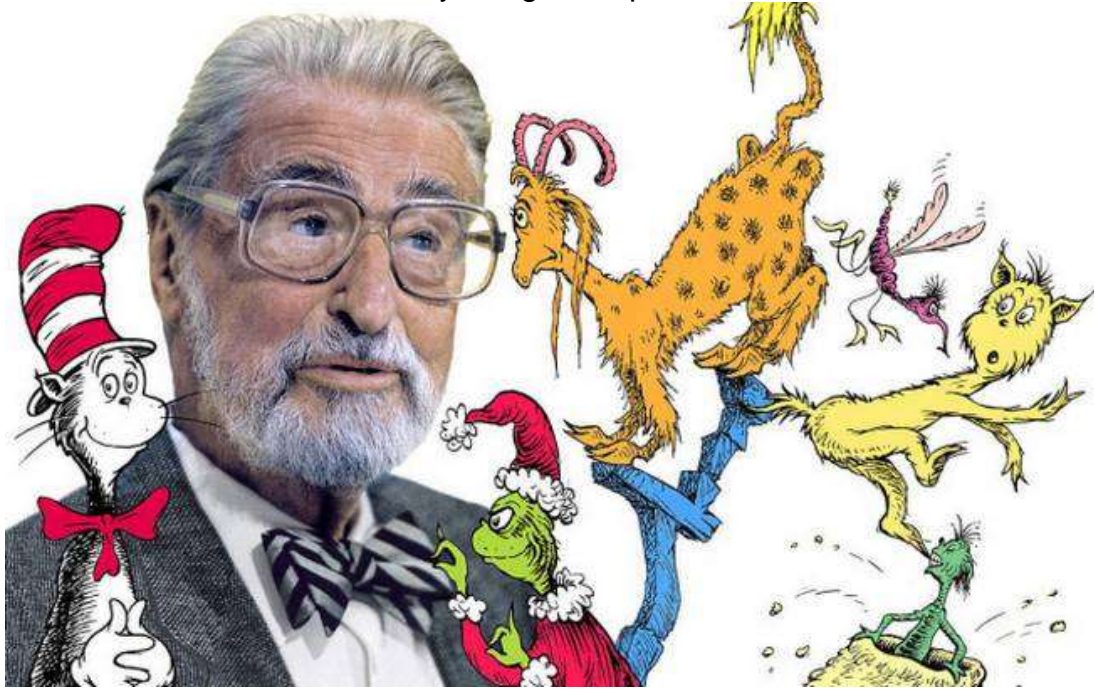


THEODOR DR. SEUSS GEISEL & CLONY

by Bridget Simpson



This image appeared on US Postage stamps in 2004 to commemorate the centenary of Theodor Seuss Geisel's birth.

Three generations of the Geisel family lived in Springfield, Massachusetts, USA. Grandfather Theodor, a German immigrant, established the dynasty by marrying local girl Christine Schmaelzle and raising five children. Theodor partnered with brewer Christian Kalmbach in 1876 to establish the Kalmbach & Geisel Brewery nicknamed the "Come Back and Guzzle" by the locals. By the turn of the century the brewery had expanded to become the Springfield Breweries Company. ...

The family home stood adjacent to the Kalmbach & Geisel brewery where Theodor and Christine's son, Theodor Robert grew up and was employed as assistant Treasurer eventually becoming President of the Springfield Breweries after his father's death. He married Henriette (Nettie) Seuss in 1901 and they lived near Forest Park where he held a honorary position on the Springfield' Park Board, later becoming its Superintendent. Theo Robert would take his young son to visit the Park and Zoo, where Theodor Strauss (called Ted) would sketch the animals, often combining their different features into strange new beasts.

Ted was educated at the local junior school and the Central High School in close proximity to Mulberry Street, Springfield. It was there aged 14 that Ted's first written work was published in the school's newspaper The Central Recorder - a clever piece entitled 'O Latin' about his difficulty and dread of Latin classes. It was during his high school days that he began using the pseudonym T.S. Le Sieg (Geisel spelt backwards) which he used later in life when writing children's books which he did not illustrate

One of his High School teachers Edwin “Red” Smith recognized Ted’s talents as a writer and artist and encouraged him to enroll at Dartmouth College where he was editor of the collage’s humorous magazine. Caught drinking gin in the company of friends, which violated the US Alcohol Prohibition Laws of the time, the Dean insisted Ted resign from all extramural activities, but surreptitiously Ted continued to contributed to the magazine using the pen name Seuss,

In the summer of 1925 he worked as temporary columnist for the Springfield Union Newspaper before attending Oxford University (UK), where he met American classmate Helen Palmer, but feeling he was not destined for academia he dropped his English Literature studies after two years and returned to America.

In Springfield Ted set up his drawing board and typewriter on this father’s desk and began writing humorous pieces and drawing cartoons. These he sent in packages to New York editors hoping for sales. The Saturday Evening Post was the first to purchase a cartoon signed “Seuss” of two American ladies on a camel which they published on July 16th 1927. Encouraged by these sales he moved to New York. He added Dr. before his pen name Seuss in deference to his father who wanted him to become a Professor. The title was eventually validated in 1956 when Dartmouth College bestowed on him a Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

When Helen Palmer completed her degree at Oxford she returned to the States. As they rode Ted’s motorbike he proposed marriage, Exhilarated by Helen’s agreement, he lost control of the vehicle and drove into a ditch. No harm was done and they married in 1927



Helen & Ted Geisel

An advert for Flit insect repellent brought him recognition and popularity in the commercial field.



Flit Advert by Seuss

As a sculpture Ted experimented with a series of mixed materials to create what he called "Unorthodox Taxidermy", which mimicked his childhood drawings of strange animals. His first successful effort was named the Mulberry Street Unicorn and others followed. These he later used in displays to advertise his books. Life Magazine dubbed him "The World's most eminent authority on unheard of animals"



The Mulberry Unicorn



The Goo Goo Eyed Tasmanian Wolghast

During the 1930s Great Depression life was financially difficult. After 27 publishers rejected his first children's book he planned to burn it, but on the street he bumped into old friend, Mike McClintock, who had just been appointed editor of Vanguard Press children's section. Within an hour a contract was signed and the first Dr. Seuss book, *And To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street*, appeared on the shelves in 1937. As Ted said "If I had been going down the other side of Madison Avenue I'd be in the dry cleaning business today".

Three published books for children followed, but by 1940 Ted was increasingly concerned about the war in Europe and turned his attention to political cartoons. With the entry of America into World War II he joined the Army creating war bond posters and writing scripts.

Deployed to Fox Studios in Hollywood dubbed "Fort Fox" the First Motion Picture Unit, he worked with eminent director Frank Capra of the Signal Corp Unit and Warner Bros. animator Chuck Jones (creator of Bugs Bunny and Duffy Duck) to make the Private Snafu training films to educate servicemen. He was also responsible for documentaries like *Your Job in Germany* and *Our Job in Japan*. As the war ended he was awarded the American Legion of Merit with the citation "for exceptionally meritorious service in planning and producing films, particularly those utilizing animated cartoons for training, informing and enhancing the morale of the troops."

After the war in 1948 Ted won an Academy Award for the film *Design for Death* co-authored by his wife, Helen. It was a study of Japanese culture based on a short US Army training film. *The Daily Variety* characterized the film as 'a documentary of fabulous proportions, one of the most interesting screen presentations of the year'.

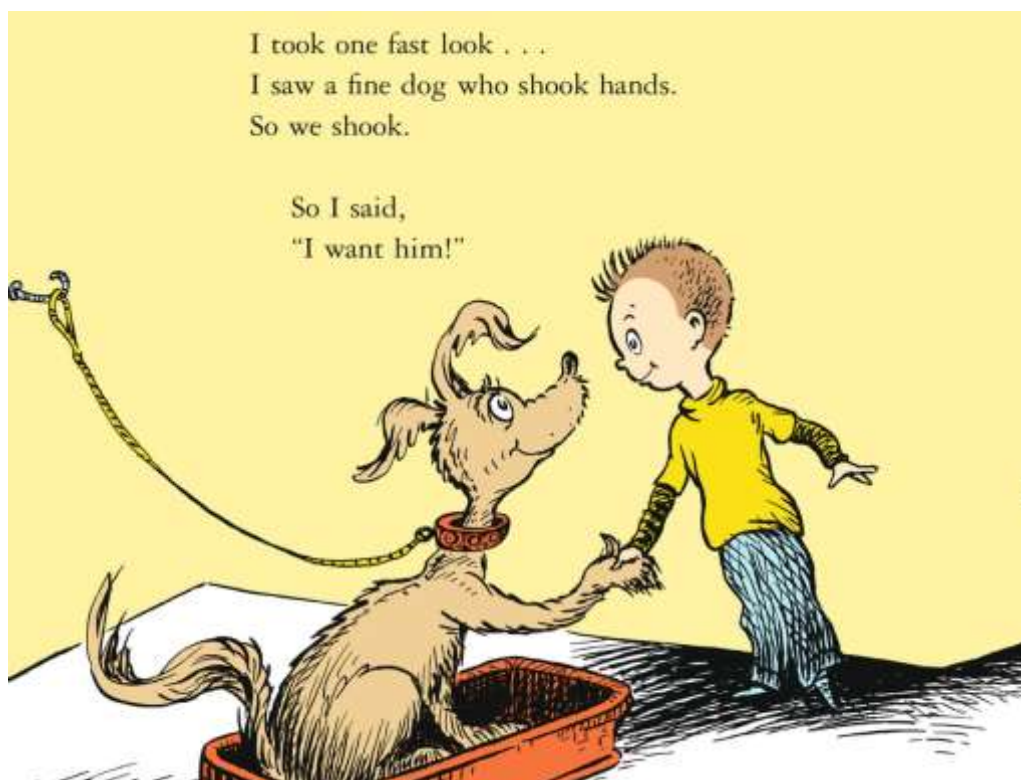
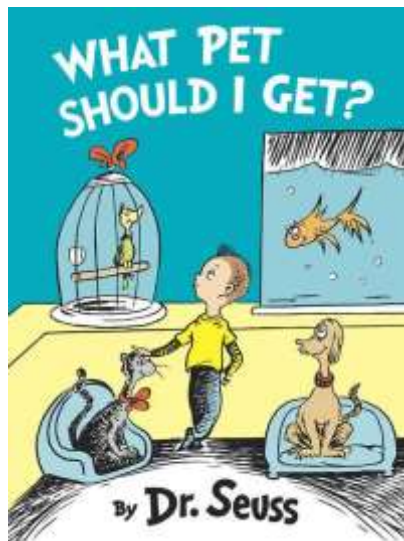
In peacetime the couple purchased an old observation tower in La Jolla, California and with, an Irish Red Setter they named Cluny it became their permanent home. Helen, an author of children's books in her own right, supported Ted artistically, editorially and administratively and for the next thirty years new Dr. Seuss children's books appeared on the bookshelves annually.



Cluny cogitating on Dr. Seuss illustrations by the poolside in La Jolla

Seuss was a perfectionist and would spend months illustrating and developing his characters often working on several projects at one time. *What Pet Should I Get* is believed to have been written and illustrated in the '50s although the manuscript and images were only discovered after his death.

Cluny obviously provided inspiration for some of the drawings and text. "I know my stuff looks like it was rattled off in 28 seconds, but every word is a struggle and every sentence is like the pangs of birth" he once said. To celebrate the publication of *What Pet Should I Get* in 2015. Random House Children's Books and Dr. Seuss Enterprises launched a campaign to raise funds for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

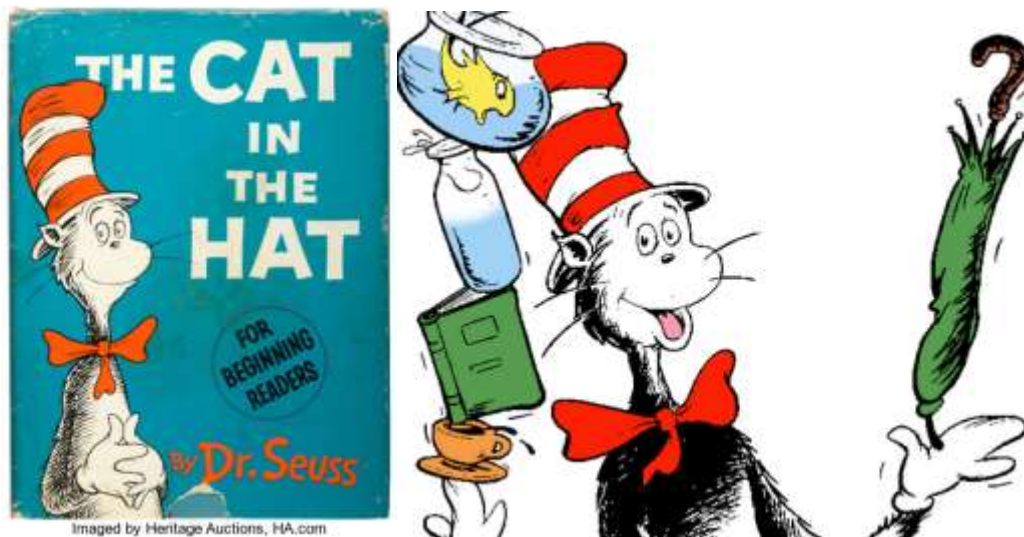


Ted's carton image of "Cluny"

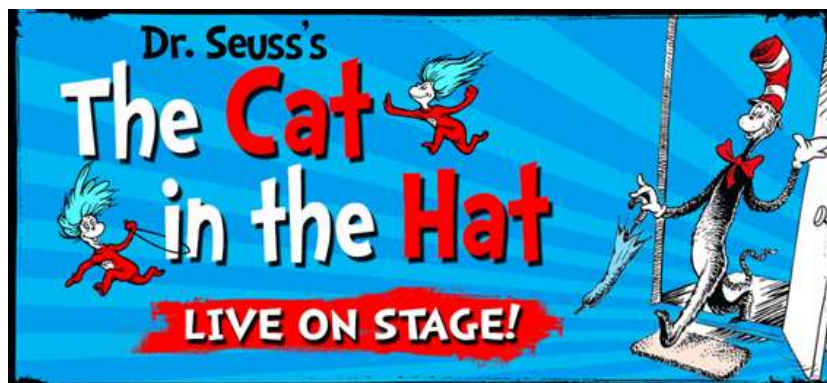
In the mid 50s Ted, Helen with Bennet and Phyllis Cerf were founding Random House Beginner Books for Children. Challenged by William Spaulding to write a children's book using only 250 words which would be fun for children to read. Ted wrote *The Cat in the Hat* with 236 words which became one of Dr. Seuss' most popular works. Published in 1957 the book was lauded for its simple writing style and cartoon like illustrations which appealed to children

The Cat in The Hat interrupts a rainy afternoon with an unexpected visit to Sally and her brother. Their pet Fish is outraged, but the cat will not be deterred as he teaches the children to play with nothing but a little imagination. "It's fun to have fun, but you have to know how" he says.

In July 1957 Bob Curtis of the Saturday Evening Post wrote a profile entitled The Wonderful World of Dr. Seuss. In the Keeping Posted column Ted responded "Everyone in the world must read the Post" and reported that he had received 200 'phone calls and telegrams, 400 letters from every US state and many foreign countries and three marriage proposals for Cluny, his Irish Setter "Thank you" Ted wrote "for a most flattering experience."



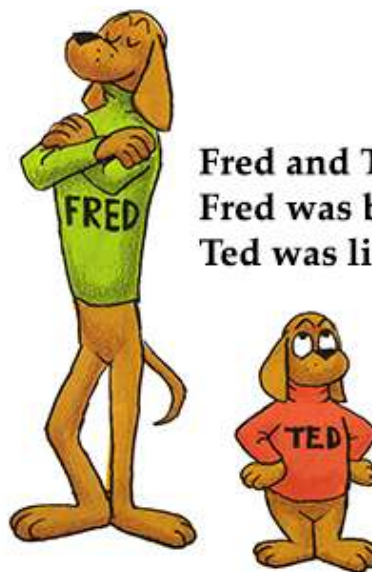
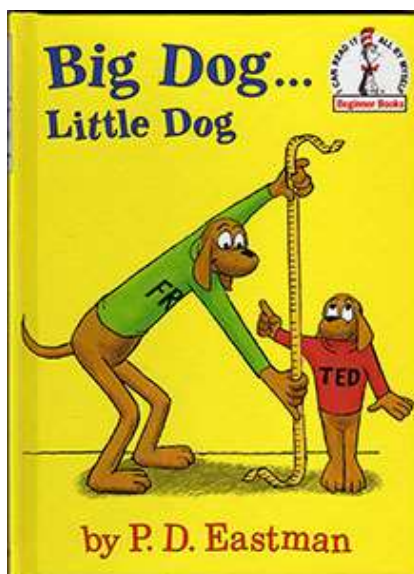
A stage production using the 2009 script of the UK Royal National Theatre has been seen by children worldwide





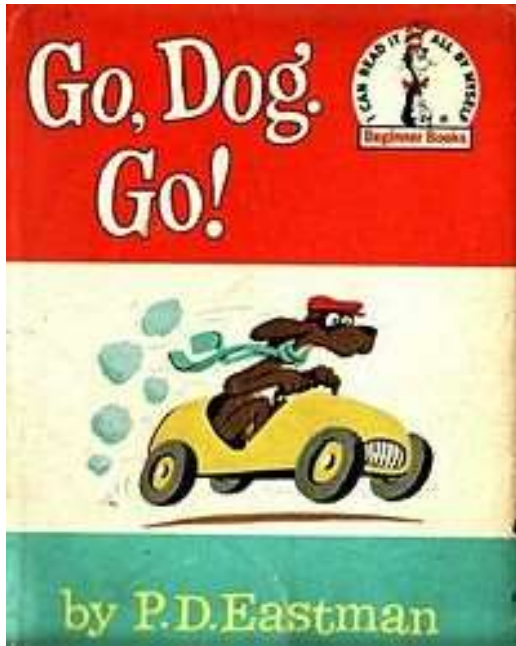
Helen and Cluny watch as Ted doodles in the wet sand on La Jolla beach California

Cluny obviously made a lasting impression on many especially Phillip Day Eastman one of Ted's wartime colleagues. Ted approached Phillip in 1952 to write for the new Beginner Book series – *Big Dog Little Dog* was the result which Ted edited. The characters "Fred" and "Ted" bare a striking resemblance to Cluny.



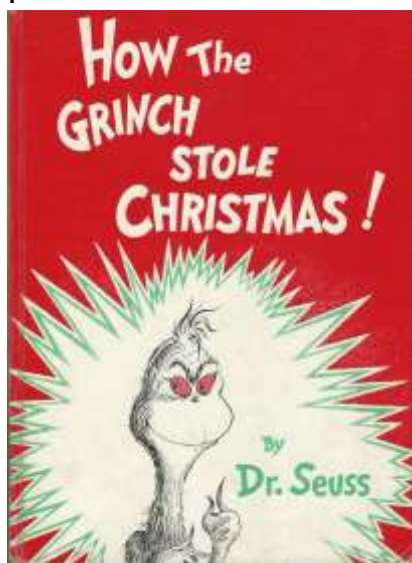
**Fred and Ted were friends.
Fred was big.
Ted was little.**

Further honor was heaped on Cluny when Philip dedicated his children's book *Go Dog Go* to him in 1961. In 2003 Alison Gregory and Steven Dietz adapted the book into a musical for Seattle Children's Theatre which has been widely staged across America



This book is dedicated to Cluny

As much as The Cat displayed the playful Dr. Seuss, The Grinch aired Ted's grouchy side. The character was born in 1955 in an illustrated poem entitled *The Hoobub and the Grinch* which raised Ted's concerns about the commercialization of Christmas. Despite Helen's ongoing health problems as a result of a stroke she edited her husband's book *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* which made the bookshelves by Christmas 1957. It was a huge success and has been adapted as a Christmas special, an animated TV film with Boris Karloff as its narrator and. In 2000 a live action feature film starring Jim Carrey.. A 3D computer animated film adaptation is schedule for release in time for Christmas 2018.



Dr. Seuss at work on the Grinch

Originally the Grinch was not green as so often portrayed later Max, the loyal and only friend of the Grinch, resembles Cluny



Original Seuss drawing of the Grinch and Max

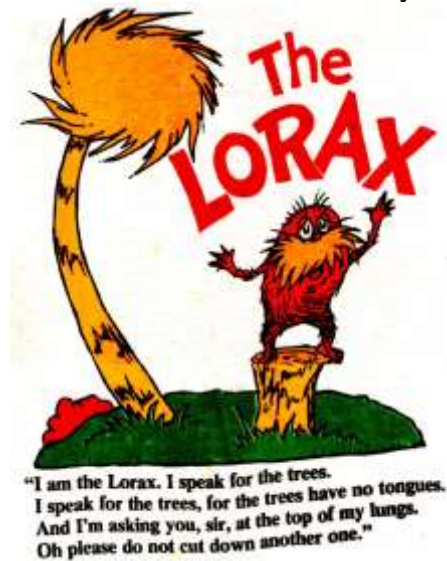
As the '60s dawned Ted wrote *Green Eggs and Ham* using only 50 words which became a best seller and *The Sneetches* which echoed Ted's own experience of prejudice as a child during World War 1 due to his German heritage. Helen's health continued to deteriorate and she suspected Ted of an affair with a family friend. In 1967, aged 68 she took her own life overdosing on barbiturates.

Ted and Helen were childless which saddened them both, but as he said to others "you have 'em I'll entertain em"...However, in 1968 he married Audrey Stone Diamond and became stepfather to 15 year old Lark and 11year old Lea.



Audrey & Ted Geisel

A visit to Springfield raised Ted's concerns about environmental conservation. In 1971 *The Lorax* was published with illustrations reflecting his childhood memories of Forest Park with the "Truffula trees" reminiscent of the flowering dogwood. The story was made into an animated film in 2012 which Audrey Geisel Produced with Danny de Vito becoming the voice of The Lorax .



..

The Lorax published in 1971

Dr. Seuss children's books continued to flow through the 70's, but Ted was experiencing problems with his vision and was treated for glaucoma. In 1978 *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut* was published and dedicated to his ophthalmologist.

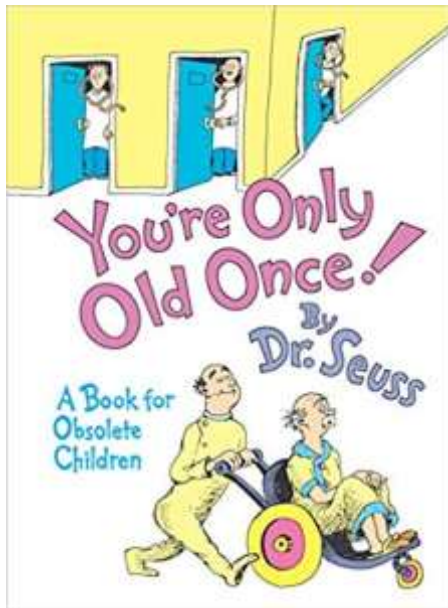
He returned to Dartmouth College for its 50th reunion celebrations where a retrospective exhibition of his work was displayed with his portrait in the Baker Library.



1975 Ted & Audrey at the 50th Dartmouth College Reunion

Ted continued to write and illustrate his books and in 1980 *The Butter Battle* was published on his 80th birthday. In 1984 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for “his contribution to half a century of education and enjoyment to American children and their parents”.

With his health deteriorating Ted was bored sitting in doctors waiting rooms and passed the time sketching the scenes around him. These were transposed into a humorous book directed at adults *You're Only Old Once! A Book for "Obsolete Children"*. In it he tells of a visit by an old man to “the Golden Years Clinic” for “Spleen Readjustment” and “Muffler Repair” while being poked, prodded, tested and ogled at by the medical profession. Frustrated he commented “I’m fed up with a social life consisting entirely of doctors!”



Lifting his spirits in 1986 the Springfield Library in conjunction with the Springfield Public Schools launched Seussamania, a celebration of Dr. Seuss creative writing. Fans greeted him on Mulberry Street in Springfield with, throngs of children waving and shouting “we love you Dr. Seuss” which moved him to tears.



Dr. Seuss talks to the children of Springfield

Dr. Seuss' final book *Oh! The Places You'll Go!* was on the bookshelves a year before his death and appeared on the New York Times best seller list for over two years. Aged 87 Ted died on 25th September 1991 of cancer which was headline news across America and prompted an outpouring of sadness from Springfield residents

In 2002 the Dr. Seuss Memorial Sculpture Garden opened on the grounds of the Springfield Museum. A larger than life bronze sculpture of Ted Geisel sitting at his desk watches over 30 statues of Dr. Seuss characters, created by his step daughter, Lark Grey Dimond-Cates



**Widow Audrey Geisel opening the Dr. Seuss Memorial Sculpture Garden
The bronze sculpture of Dr. Seuss character Horton(right) is crafted by
Audrey's daughter and Ted's step daughter Lark Grey Diamond-Cates**



**The bronze statue of Dr. Seuss
Dr. Seuss Memorial Sculpture Gardens, Springfield Museum**



**Children play on the sculptures
Dr. Seuss Memorial Sculpture Gardens, Springfield Museum**

In 2017 the Springfield Museum opened its doors to The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss in the Pynchon Building to the delight of local residents and visitors.



Inside The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum



Exhibits at The Amazing World of Dr. Seuss in Springfield Museum

During Ted's long career he wrote and illustrated 45 Dr. Seuss books and authored, but did not illustrate a further 20 under the pseudonym Theo Le Sieg. In excess of 650 million copies of Dr. Seuss books have been sold in 20 different languages in 95 countries. Generations of children, have and are growing up learning to read with Theodor Seuss Geisel.
