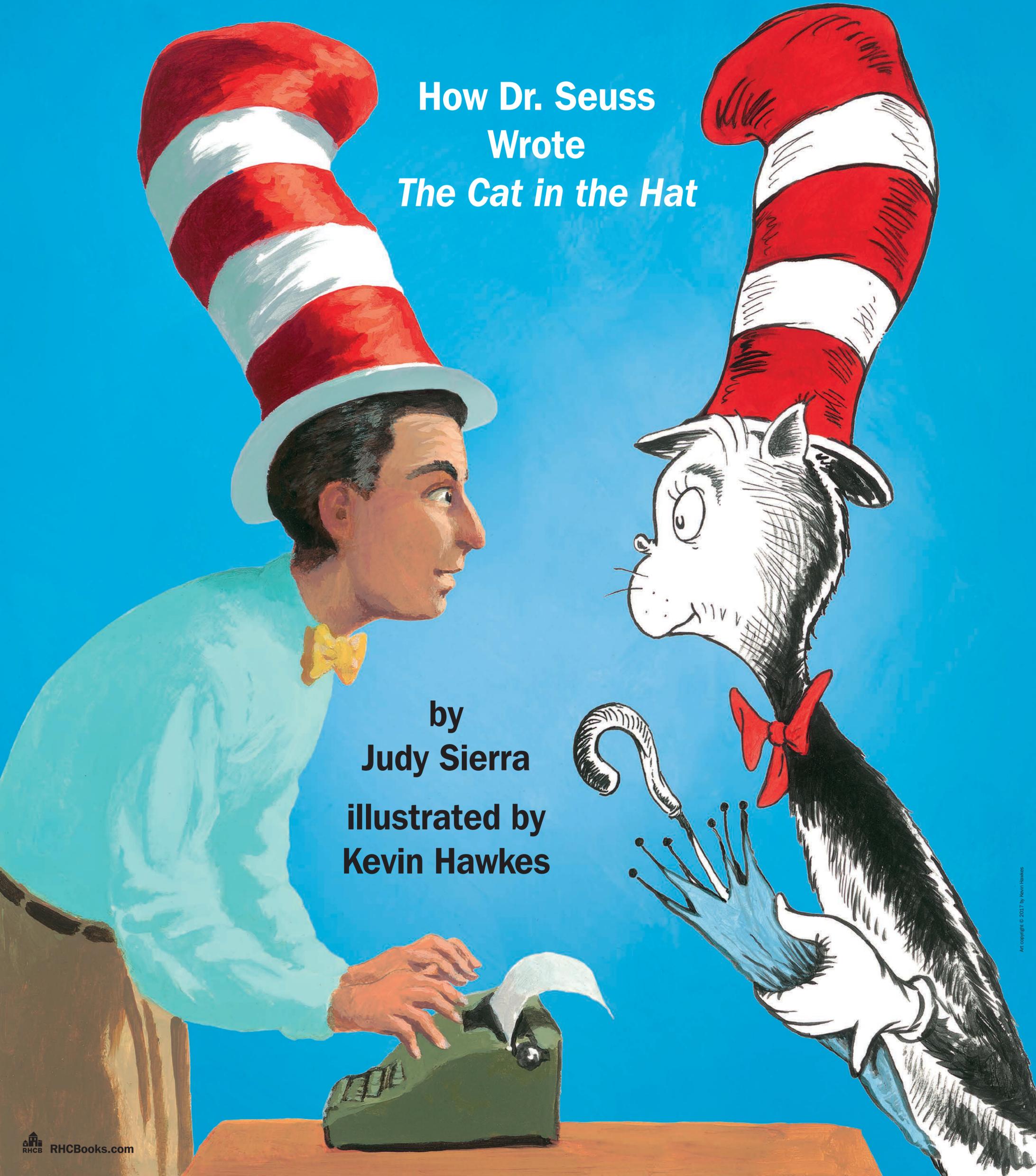


IMAGINE THAT!

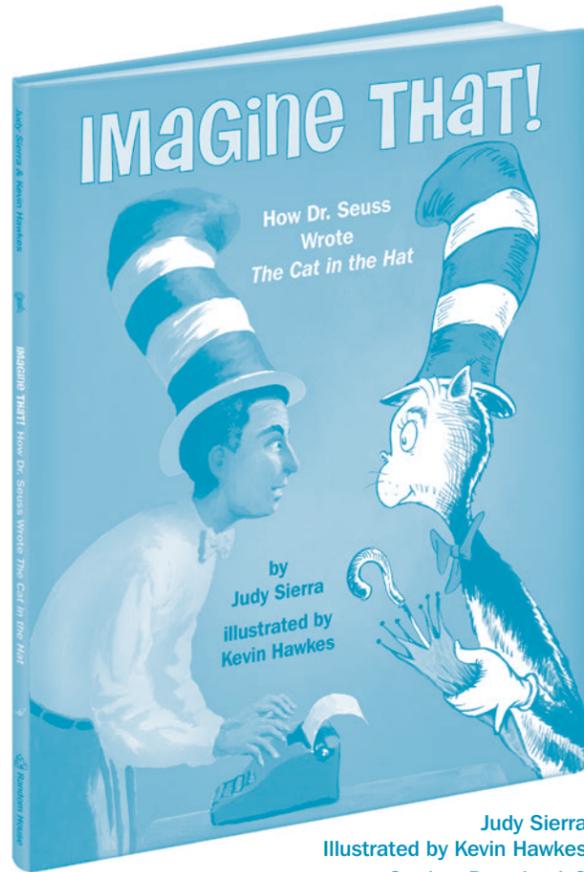
How Dr. Seuss
Wrote
The Cat in the Hat

by
Judy Sierra
illustrated by
Kevin Hawkes





Reading **IMaGine THAT!**



Judy Sierra
Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes
Grades: Preschool–2
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EL: 978-0-553-51098-0

About the Book

Have you ever wondered how the great Dr. Seuss wrote his most famous book? Did you know that he wasn't allowed to make up the fun words he was known for, like oobleck and it-kutch and hippo-no-hungus? He was only allowed to use words from a very strict list!

This bouncy account of Ted Geisel's early career offers proof that sometimes limitations can be the best inspiration of all. Kid-friendly prose (with Seussian rhyme for Ted's dialogue) and whimsical illustrations from award-winner Kevin Hawkes elevate this biography.

About the Author & Illustrator

JUDY SIERRA has written over thirty-five books for children, many of which have won awards, received glowing reviews, and made bestseller lists. Before she became a full-time writer, Judy worked as a children's librarian, a puppeteer, and a college professor. She grew up in Falls Church, Virginia, and now lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband, Bob Kaminski, and their dog, Keiko. Visit her on the Web at judysierra.net.

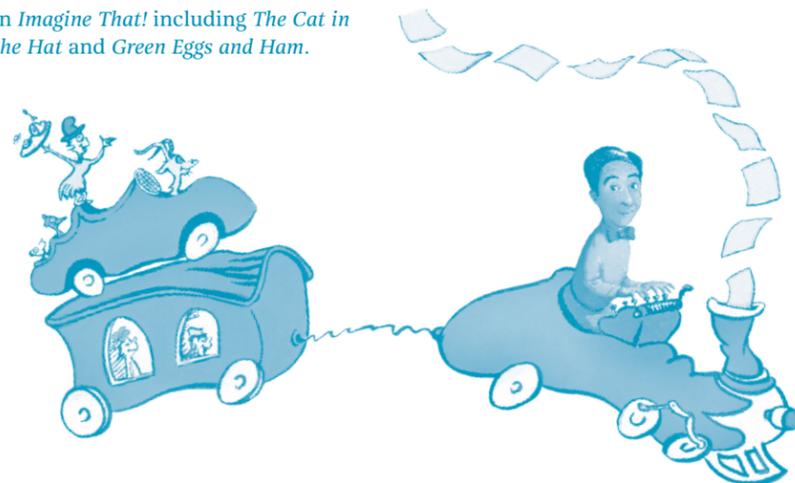
KEVIN HAWKES is the illustrator of over forty acclaimed picture books and chapter books, including *Chicken Cheeks*, *Library Lion*, *The Librarian Who Measured the Earth*, *Weslandia*, and *Sidewalk Circus*. Vibrant colors, unusual perspectives, and a dry sense of humor are hallmarks of his work. He lives with his charming wife and children in southern Maine, where he can often be found wandering aimlessly in his garden. When forced indoors, he works quite happily painting cobalt-blue skies, imaginary landscapes, and flying pianos. Visit him on the Web at kevinhawkes.com.

Pre-Reading Activity

Talk with your students about Dr. Seuss. Many children link the Cat in the Hat and Dr. Seuss so closely that they think the author and character are actually one and the same! Find out what your students know about Dr. Seuss and the books he has written and illustrated. Take some time to emphasize that Dr. Seuss was the pseudonym of Theodore Seuss Geisel and that he was a real person. Discuss what authors, illustrators, and publishers do and make clear what Dr. Seuss did in those roles.

After you read, you may want to point out that Dr. Seuss wrote and illustrated 44 books, wrote or cowrote 22 others, and launched Beginner Books, which published

fun books for kids who were learning how to read. You'll also want to read aloud some of the titles featured in *Imagine That!* including *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham*.



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In the Classroom

Discuss and Explore

- This book is about a real person, but is this book fiction or nonfiction? Why?
- Get students to share their ideas about author Judy Sierra's purpose for writing. Have them offer evidence that supports their choice. Then read aloud and discuss the author's note at the end of *Imagine That!*
- In telling the story of how Dr. Seuss created his most celebrated work, author Judy Sierra says she "stuck mostly to the truth." Read another biographical account (see below) of the writing of *The Cat in the Hat* to your students. Then work together to compare and contrast the account with the story told in *Imagine That!* What information is the same? What is different?
 - Dr. Seuss's Biography by Philip Nel: seussville.com/#/author
 - Chapter 8: "The Cat in the Hat Arrives" in *Who Was Dr. Seuss?* by Janet B. Pascal, illustrated by Nancy Harrison (Grosset & Dunlap, 2011)
- In 1954, kids weren't learning to read because school readers were boring. Sierra writes, "A famous writer named John Hersey agreed with the kids." Are your students curious to know who John Hersey was? Why was he famous? How did he influence Dr. Seuss? Help them research and learn about this Pulitzer Prize winner and why he was worried about kids reading.
- Dr. Seuss thought it would be quick and easy to write a first-grade reader. Ask students why he would think that. What challenges did he face? How long did it take him to write and illustrate the book?
- What Dr. Seuss books have your students read and enjoyed? Ask them to discuss their favorite titles and what they like about the books.

Explore and Write

A Story No One Can Beat

John Hersey was the author of twenty-five books and a respected journalist. In 1954, he wrote a *Life* magazine article—"Why Do Students Bog Down on First R? A Local Committee Sheds Light on a National Problem: Reading"—which caught the attention of education publisher William



Spaulding. Mr. Spaulding discussed the problems kids were having learning to read with Dr. Seuss and challenged him to "write me a story that first-graders can't put down!" Dr. Seuss accepted the challenge and its parameters—he would limit his story to words that were recognizable to a first grader. Dr. Seuss used just 236 words in *The Cat in the Hat*.

Talk with your students about why they think it was or was not a good idea to limit the words used in *The Cat in the Hat*. Do they think it is important to have books to read that are fun? Challenge them to write and illustrate their own story that first graders can't put down, using only words they really know!

Doodle Duo

Make use of the "Writing and Illustrating Tips from Dr. Seuss" included in *Imagine That!* and stir up story ideas with doodling. Dr. Seuss was a doodler and saved his many doodles. He claimed that *Horton Hatches the Egg* was born from a doodle—a gust from an open window near his desk blew a picture of an elephant drawn on tracing paper on top of a tree that Geisel was doodling. This started him thinking about why an elephant would be in a tree, and he had to write Horton's story to find out the answer.

Share this story with students and ask them to doodle—and save their doodles—for a week. At the end of the week, pair up students and their doodles. Have each pair use two of their doodles to come up with a doodle combination to write about. Students can produce a joint work or each write their own ideas about the doodle combo. As some doodles will be more inspired than others, don't limit them as to what they should write—it can be a simple description, a poem, or a story.

It Is Fun to Have Fun

Up on Top

Ted Geisel loved hats. Sometimes, when he was writing, he would put on a hat to help him think. But often he put on a hat—like a Viking helmet or drum-major hat—just for a bit of nonsense and fun. Let your students do both! Have them create their own special hats to wear to signal when they are thinking, working on something important, trying a new approach, or just need a break and a moment of silliness. Have them create hats by attaching items or drawings to an old hat or by engineering a hat out of paper, cardboard, or other items destined for recycling. Students should decorate their "thinking hats" with things that inspire them. Ted Geisel also liked to have parties where all the guests wore crazy hats. Celebrate your study of Dr. Seuss with a hat-wearing party!

Hatful of Rhyme

Dr. Seuss was really good at rhyming. Talk about the rhyming words Dr. Seuss used in *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham*. Are these all real words? In *Imagine That!* you can read about some of the words Dr. Seuss invented to create rhymes in his other books. How do you make up a word? Give students a chance to do their own rhyming using both real and made-up words. Fill a large hat with words on note cards or small objects. As a word (or object) is pulled out, students come up with as many rhyming words as they can. List the words where everyone can see them in two columns—one for real words and one for made-up words. Use these words—and other words as needed—to write a class book together. Be sure to define your made-up words and give everyone an opportunity to create an illustration for the book.

Prepared by Rachael Worthington Walker, Children's Literacy Consultant

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Name: _____



Ready, Set, Rhyme!

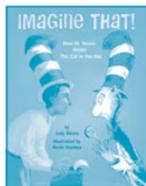
You can rhyme just like Dr. Seuss! See how many words you can think of that rhyme with “cat” and with “ball.” Draw a picture of your rhyming word if you like.

Words that rhyme with CAT:

Words that rhyme with BALL:

Pick a word of your own, and then come up with words that rhyme with it:

Write your word here.



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Pair Up!

Dr. Seuss chose “cat” and “hat” for his book because they were the first two words he saw that rhymed. Think of pairs of rhyming words and write them down. Then use your word pairs to write your own rhyming poem!

Use this space to write your pairs of rhyming words:

Use this space to work on your poem:



Copy your poem onto a new sheet of paper and illustrate it!



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