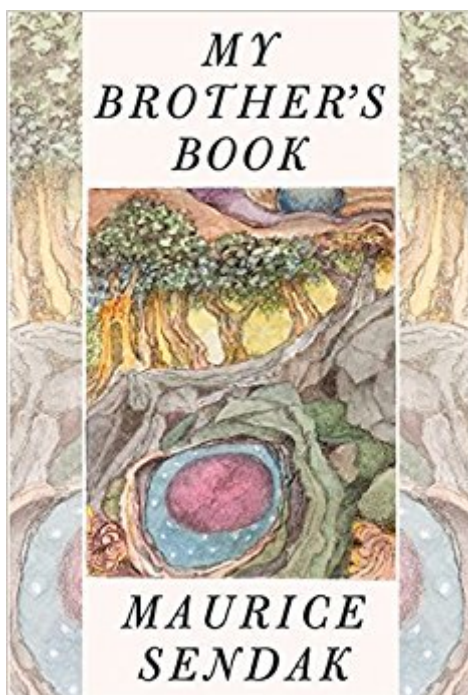


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My Brother's Book



Synopsis

Fifty years after *Where the Wild Things Are* was published comes the last book Maurice Sendak completed before his death in May 2012, *My Brother's Book*. With influences from Shakespeare and William Blake, Sendak pays homage to his late brother, Jack, whom he credited for his passion for writing and drawing. Pairing Sendak's poignant poetry with his exquisite and dramatic artwork, this book redefines what mature readers expect from Maurice Sendak while continuing the lasting legacy he created over his long, illustrious career. Sendak's tribute to his brother is an expression of both grief and love and will resonate with his lifelong fans who may have read his children's books and will be ecstatic to discover something for them now. Pulitzer Prize-winning literary critic and Shakespearean scholar Stephen Greenblatt contributes a moving introduction.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review In his foreword, Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt describes Sendak's last, posthumously published book as "something rich and strange." And so it is. Combining lushly beautiful art in the manner of Blake and Fuseli with a text reconfigured from Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, Sendak's richly imagined book offers a magical and mysterious tribute to his beloved older brother, Jack, who died in 1995. The story follows the respective plights of two brothers, Jack and Guy, who are seemingly

separated by a new star crashing into the earth. Jack is catapulted into a continent of ice and is "stuck fast in water like a stone." Guy, meanwhile, is plunged into the dangerous lair of a bear that threatens to consume him. Will the brothers survive to be reunited in love and peace? Distinguished by its pervasive sense of longing and informed by extraordinary art—some of Sendak's most beautiful—My Brother's Book is a celebration of the enduring love of two brothers. One's first impulse is to marvel at the exquisite art and then to turn to the Shakespearean text to understand how the two seemingly disparate elements harmonize. Inviting reading and rereading, Sendak's tribute to his brother is also a final tribute to his own genius. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Is there a children's author whose name has been more enduring and recognizable than the late Sendak's? Grades 10-12. --Michael Cart

The sharply felt humor and yearning that infuse both the verbal and visual narratives will kindle profound emotional responses in hearts of any age. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) Distinguished by its pervasive sense of longing and informed by extraordinary art—some of Sendak's most beautiful—My Brother's Book is a celebration of the enduring love of two brothers. Inviting reading and rereading, Sendak's tribute to his brother is also a final tribute to his own genius. (Booklist (starred review)) To read this intensely private work is to look over the artist's shoulder as he crafts his own afterworld, a place where he lies in silent embrace with those he loves forever. (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

Although this book was written not only for Sendak's brother, but also his long-time lover/partner, it is as a brother that I wish to comment. My older brother -- my only living sibling -- is locked in the cruel arms of Parkinson's Disease, like Jack in this book, he is "a snow image stuck fast in water like stone." For me, it was nearly impossible to read this beautiful book without thinking of the bond that exists between brothers -- he is the only person still living who has known me all my life and visa versa. The images in this book of the two brothers thrown apart by life with separate paths, yet uniting in the end embracing one another are so authentic. I'm not sure that this is a book that young children will warm to, although the theme of final resolution, enduring love, and safety even with adversity are comforting. But I am sure that this book will become a classic within many families as brothers age and ancient bonds assume new power. This is a book to share with your brother, then to buy another copy to read and re-read yourself.

Maurice Sendak has sent us his good bye. He wrote it five years after his brother had died in 1995. He tells us so in the poem, that it is his snowghost's fifth anniversary. He knew he eventually would need to publish, as a matter of his sense of the cosmos. Closeness and separation are the human story, the continual wounding. Reunion is a mystical goal; he achieves it with his parting poem. His life, as are all of ours, was one of living love and interruption. His stories often have this separation, as does this final poem through the device of the new star cleaving the earth in two. He must have, in our finite lives, a resolution of enduring embraces. Imagination makes the mystical possible. For Sendak it is the divine touching of the by transcendent by the immanent. Or as Blake put it: "The Eternal Body of Man is The IMAGINATION...The Imagination which Liveth for Ever". The first about this little book to strike us is its art. It is, in part, his thanks and farewell to William Blake. Somehow in the bowels of Brooklyn, he encountered Blake. No wonder here. Blake would have, as a supporter of the American colonies, (he was also a trouble maker) known Brooklyn (King's County to the Crown); and he is known there. They both had the Brooklyn's response to authority: rude noises. Like Sendak, Blake was both artist and writer. He said Blake was his great and abiding love, his first teacher in all things. He shared Blake's primacy of the child. This is not some romantic notion. They believed that the child has contact to the eternal through imagination. Maurice and Jack's grandparents, Israel and Bulma, lived in Russian occupied Poland before the millennium; the one before the one we passed not long ago. They were the keepers of the mystical imagination for their children. Separation came as their children separated from Poland going to America in 1913, the same as my grandparents, all to Ellis Island. Maurice's father, Philip, was an author, (so many of the old stories told from his tongue), settled with Sadie on Livonia Avenue to raise children that have nourished us ever since. As a child, Philip was always in trouble with authority. He voiced his father's and his own changes to the bible stories, giving them a tart twist or two. Magic is ancient and evident in these rugged, non-erasable, but mildly irascible people. Just look at Chagall. Not so far from Blake, is he? Again, Blake: "The Whole Bible is fill'd with Imagination & Visions". Children of the shtetl all of them. If you nourish the imagination of the child instead of harshly taming it, the imagination is available for all of life, as it was for the Sendaks across generations. In this book, his brother Jack, is Jack. Maurice prefers to be just "Guy". Try not to read too much into all this. Sendak never forgets, but he sprinkles rather than shovels. "The Winter's Tale" inspires the sad riddle of My Brother's Book. That veteran stage-set designer, Sendak cannot resist dragging back Shakesbear's famous animal as a snapping monster of Bohemia. The two brothers Sendak, separated by death, are united in the two child princes, and doubly, because they later are reunited as kings. These are not just a set of illustrations he has drawn and painted. They are the work of art, as inseparable from

the words of the poem as is a libretto is from the music, or more directly, the sets from the opera. Sendak was a master designer of sets for the stage. Most of have seen only his books. He was a multi-media Guy, after all. Sendak was the object of relentless repression by the people of repressed imagination, forever trying to ban his books. Another Blake parallel, as his first (and treacherous) biographer, Frederick Tatham, an Irvingite, destroyed the manuscripts he inherited from Catherine Blake because they were similarly objectionable. Maurice Sendak said he aspired to a Blakian death, whom, on his final day, finished his work and drew a portrait of Catherine, burst into an extended joyful singing, and died. The worthy review posted by Wulfstan brought this book to my attention; and therefore my thanks, yet again, to his eagle eye. This small volume is printed on quality heavy shiny stock to show-off Sendak's paintings; published by HarperCollins under the imprint of Michael di Capua, famous also for Jules Feiffer and for Maurice Sendak's friend and colleague Tony Kushner (who wrote the screenplay for Lincoln recently). Thanks Maurice, for all you have given my little family. You made the world a bit better - your gifts will never stop. I recommend and point you to *The Happy Rain* and *Circus Girl*, Jack's two early books illustrated by the younger Maurice.

The preview led me to expect a more spectacular book than this turned out to be. *My Brother's Book* is a beautiful small book which sits in one's hand comfortably and it will have particular appeal to those who appreciate William Blake's poetic and artistic style. It is an intensely private and personal testament which makes it rather obscure reading and thus a tad unsatisfying in total. However, I recognize it as a classic work and a sensitive insight into the great writer that is Maurice Sendak.

A precious gift for yourself or someone else. A gem filled with lovely Sendak images that make you want to just sit and hold it. As an artist I find his paintings inspiring. As a human being, I find his words inspiring, even though some of them make absolutely no sense to me... the emotion behind them does.

I gave this book as a gift to someone who lost his brother. They had a fully engaged and active camaraderie when the one who died retired. There is an affirmation of the brother and the mystery of fraternity. I am glad I found this to give.

maurice sendak was a one of a kind artist

I was looking for something close to Where the Wild Things Are and I did not seem to get it in this book. Still the drawings were fantastic.

Sendak has captured the essence of the life turmoil with emotional disability through the heart of a loving brother.

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