

## THEODOR GEISEL – “DOCTOR SEUSS”

By Carole L. Cooney

Theodor Geisel’s mother sold pies in her father’s bakery. Whenever she would sell a pie, she would first chant the pie names: “Apple, mince, lemon...peach, apricot, pineapple...blueberry, coconut, custard and *squash!*” She also read bedtime stories to Ted and his sister, Marnie, with the same lilting rhythm. Ted said later on that his mother was responsible “for the rhythms in which I write...”

**Setting:** The pie shop; the zoo and park

**Characters:**

Narrator

Ted Geisel

Mother Geisel

Father Geisel

**Narrator:** Theodor Geisel, otherwise know as Dr. Seuss, was not a real doctor but he gave out wonderful “prescriptions” for fun and laughter through his drawings and rhyming stories. How did it all start? When Ted was very young, his mother worked in his grandfather’s pie shop. Whenever she sold a pie, she would first sing out the names of the pies: “Apple, mince, lemon . . . peach, apricot, pineapple . . . blueberry, coconut, custard and *squash!*” One day, little Ted visited the pie shop.

**Ted:** Mother, Mother, Mother... I would like some pie. If I don’t get a little crumb, I think that I shall die.

**Mother:** Oh, Ted. You are so silly.

**Ted:** Mother, Mother, Mother...What shall it be? A crumb of pie for you and a crumb of pie for me?

**Mother:** How can I resist you, you silly boy. Here’s a little crumb of apple pie. I’ll put it over here. Now, off you go because I see your Grandpa coming near.

**Narrator:** Little Ted scampered out of the pie shop and skipped his way home. That night, Mother put Marnie, Ted’s sister, and Ted to bed with a little story which she spoke in rhythm.

**Mother:** Once upon a time, long, long ago,  
There were a little boy and girl  
Whose names no one did know.  
When they were very good,  
They were good as good could be,  
But, oh, when they were very bad,  
Everyone did flee!

**Ted:** What does flee mean? Is it the little black bug that bites my leg sometimes?

**Mother:** (laughing) No. Ted. It’s another way to say everyone ran away *very fast*. Now it’s time to tuck in your little stuffed dog and *flee* to sleep.

**Narrator:** Ted loved everything that rhymed. He also loved sketching. His father often took the family to the zoo where Ted would sketch some of the animals. His drawings were even fascinating as he replaced fur with feathers and drew larger than life features.

**Father:** Well, Mother, how about taking the family to the zoo this afternoon? It’s a splendid day and we can picnic in the park.

**Mother:** That's a wonderful idea, Father.

**Ted:** May I bring my pencils and pad to draw some animals, Father?

**Father:** Of course, Ted. I just wish you would draw what you see instead of making every animal look monstrous.

**Mother:** Now, Father, that's just Ted's imagination at work. Just let him be.

**Narrator:** The family took a horse-drawn carriage to the Zoo. In the park they unloaded their picnic and sat at a shaded table to eat. When lunch was finished, they went into the zoo.

**Father:** Ted, don't run out of our sight – and mind your p's and q's.

**Ted:** Yes, Father.

**Narrator:** Ted ran to the monkey cage and sat on a low bench. He quickly began to draw monkeys with feathers coming out of their tails and large antlers on their heads. This made him laugh as he turned the page and began another strange monkey drawing.

**Mother:** Well, Ted, what have we here? You've put hats on some of the monkey heads! That looks very funny.

**Ted:** Yes, Mother, I'm trying to make my monkeys as funny as can be. Then, *they* will make everyone happy and smiling.

**Mother:** What a wonderful idea, Ted. I hope one day, what ever you decide to do when you grow up, will always make everyone happy and smiling.

**Ted:** Thank you, Mother. I hope so too.