

REVIEWS

Ubi Fera Sunt. Fabula et Picturae ab Maurice Sendak. Translated by RICHARD LAFLEUR. Mundelein IL: Bolchazy Carducci Publishers, 2016. Unpaginated. Cloth. \$24.00.

Richard LaFleur has published a Latin version of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, a picture book widely praised for its resonant narrative that stirs the emotions even after repeated readings. Latin students react with surprise and fascination to translations of well-known books, and this tale of Max, who defies his mother and takes a mysterious journey to rule over the Wild Things, is instantly recognizable to many. Shorter than books such as *Cattus Petasatus (The Cat in the Hat)*, it can easily be read within one class period.¹ It is an excellent starting point both for conversations in Latin and for discussions of the choices that translators make in reworking a story.

A common source of frustration for students is that even a short children's book can contain many unfamiliar Latin words. While *Ubi Fera Sunt* is no exception, its compelling narrative carries readers forward, and Sendak's illustrations provide opportunities to expand on the text. If students need help with "*Ea nocte Maximus vestem lupinam gerebat et faciebat malum unius modi et alterius*," the teacher can use Latin to point out the picture of Max in his wolf suit and ask what bad things he is doing. Advanced students will follow the story and appreciate the playfulness in the Latin, such as the sounds of "*Fera fremebant fremitus terribiles et frendebant terribiles dentes*" ("The wild things roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth").² With less-experienced students, teachers will need to provide a bridge to LaFleur's text by retelling the story in simpler Latin and supplying unknown vocabulary.

Ubi Fera Sunt offers readers many useful expressions both old ("*Amabo te*") and new ("*Turba fera incipiat!*" for "Let the wild rumpus start!"). The Latin provides subtle lessons in usage, such as the distinction between "eating" and "eating up": Max tells his mother "*COMEDAM TE!*" ("I'll eat you up!"), whereupon "*missus est, igitur, ad lectum sine edendo quidquam*" ("so he was sent to bed without eating anything"). A few points pose special difficulties. In my high school classes, the "*missus est*" sentence confused students who associated *lectus* with reclining at dinner as well as with sleeping. At the story's emotional turning point, Max gives up dominion over the wild things to return home because "*bona quae esset olfecit*." Even strong readers had trouble making out the meaning "he smelled good things to eat," especially since the verb is easily confused with "to be." Here is an opportunity to prepare students by giving them some extra examples of the "to eat" *esse*, and perhaps to point out the very different constructions that can be required in Latin and English.

The book is printed on substantial, creamy paper, and Sendak's illustrations are as sharp as hand-colored engravings. These details make the book pleasurable to examine and easy to see in a group setting like a classroom. Useful ancillary materials are provided on the Bolchazy-Carducci website.³ Of special note are a short essay "About the Translation," which goes a long way toward gratifying readers who are curious about the translator's choices, and a delightful recording of Dr. LaFleur reading the book aloud. Brief yet evocative, *Ubi Fera Sunt* will enchant those who know the English version and provide much pleasure to new readers.

¹See the 75-page Latin translation of this Dr. Seuss favorite by J. Tunberg and T. Tunberg, Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers (2000).

²The English given here is from Sendak's original text.

³"Digital Content" available at

<http://www.bolchazy.com/Ubi-Fera-Sunt-Where-the-Wild-Things-Are-in-Latin-P3892.aspx>

SARAH K. PENSO
SAR High School, Riverdale, NY
skpenso@gmail.com

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