Encyclopedia > Dr. Seuss

Dr. Seuss

At work on a drawing of The Grinch for How the Grinch Stole Christmas in 1957.

Theodor Seuss Geisel

Theodor Seuss Geisel (pronounced /ˈsʊs ˈɡeɪzəl/; March 2, 1904 – September 24, 1991) was an American writer and cartoonist, better known by his pen name, Dr. Seuss (often pronounced /ˈsuːs/, but he himself said /ˈsʊs/). He published over 48 children's books, which were often characterized by his imaginative characters, rhyme, and frequent use of trimetrical meter. His most notable books include the bestselling classics Green Eggs and Ham, The Cat in the Hat, and One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish. His work has been adapted numerous times, including eleven television specials, three feature films, and a Broadway musical.

Geisel also worked as an illustrator for advertising campaigns, most notably for Flit and Standard Oil, and as a political cartoonist for PM, a New York magazine. During World War II, he joined the Army to work in an animation department of the Air Force, where he wrote Design for Death, a film that later won the 1947 Academy Award for Documentary Feature.

Contents

1 Life and career
2 Political views
3 Poetic meters
4 Artwork
4.1 Recurring images
5 Publications
5.1 As Dr. Seuss
5.2 As Theo. LeSieg
5.3 As Rosetta Stone
6 Adaptations
7 References
8 Further reading
9 External links

Life and career

Theodor Seuss Geisel was born on March 2, 1904 in Springfield, Massachusetts to Henrietta Seuss.
and Theodor Robert Geisel, both of German descent. He had two sisters, Marnie and Henrietta. Henrietta died of pneumonia at 18 months old. He attended Fremont Intermediate School from age 12 to age 14. His father was a parks superintendent in charge of Forest Park (Springfield), a large park that included a zoo and was located three blocks from a library. Both Geisel's father and grandfather were brewers in Springfield, which may have influenced his views on Prohibition. As a freshman member of the Dartmouth College class of 1925, he became a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon. He also joined the Dartmouth Jack-O-Lantern, eventually rising to the rank of editor-in-chief (he took over the post from his close friend, author Norman MacLean). However, after Geisel was caught throwing a drinking party (and thereby violating Prohibition laws), the school insisted that he resign from all extracurricular activities. In order to continue his work on the Jack-O-Lantern without the administration's knowledge, Geisel began signing his work with the pen name "Seuss" (which was both his middle name and his mother's maiden name). His first work signed as "Dr. Seuss" appeared after he graduated, six months into his work for humor magazine The Judge where his weekly feature Birdies and Beasites appeared.

The Seuss family pronounced their family name as Soice, to rhyme with voice, in line with the German pronunciation of eu (Geisel's maternal grandparents had emigrated from Germany). Alexander Liang, who served with Geisel on the staff of the Jack-O-Lantern and was later a professor at Dartmouth, illustrated this point. However, though Geisel himself has been quoted as saying that Seuss rhymes with voice, the name is often pronounced with an initial "s" sound and rhyming with "juice". Geisel also used the pen name "Theo. LeSieg" (Geisel spelled backwards) for books he wrote but others illustrated.

He entered Lincoln College, Oxford, intending to earn a D Phil in literature. At Oxford he met his future wife Helen Palmer; he married her in 1927, and returned to the United States without earning the degree. The "Dr." in his pen name is an acknowledgment of his father's unfulfilled hopes that Geisel would earn a doctorate at Oxford.

He began submitting humorous articles and illustrations to Judge, The Saturday Evening Post, Life, Vanity Fair, and Liberty. One notable "Technocracy Number" made fun of the Technocracy movement and featured satirical rhymes at the expense of Frederick Soddy. He became nationally famous from his advertisements for Flit, a common insecticide at the time. His slogan, "Quick, Henry, the Flit!" became a popular catchphrase. Geisel supported himself and his wife through the Great Depression by drawing advertisements for General Electric, NBC, Standard Oil, and many other companies. He also wrote and drew a short-lived comic strip called Heji in 1935.

In 1937, while Geisel was returning from an ocean voyage to Europe, the rhythm of the ship's engines inspired the poem that became his first book, And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street. Geisel wrote three more children's books before World War II (see list of works below), two of which are, atypically for him, in prose.

As World War II began, Geisel turned to political cartoons, drawing over 400 in two years as editorial cartoonist for the left-wing New York City daily newspaper, PM, Geisel's political cartoons, later published in Dr. Seuss Goes to War, opposed the viciousness of Hitler and Mussolini and were highly critical of isolationists, most notably Charles Lindbergh, who opposed American entry into the war. One cartoon[2] depicted all Japanese Americans as latent traitors or fifth columnists, while at the same time other cartoons deplored the racism at home against Jews and blacks that harmed the war effort. His cartoons were strongly supportive of President Roosevelt's conduct of the war, combining the usual exhortations to ration and contribute to the war effort with frequent attacks on Congress (especially the Republican Party), parts of the press (such as the New York Daily News and Chicago Tribune), and others for criticism of Roosevelt, criticism of aid to the Soviet Union, investigation of suspected Communists, and other offenses that he depicted as leading to disunity and helping the Nazis, intentionally or inadvertently. In 1942, Geisel turned his energies to direct support of the U.S. war effort. First, he worked drawing posters for the Treasury Department and the War Production Board. Then, in 1943, he joined the Army and was commander of the Animation Dept of the First Motion Picture Unit of the United States Army Air Forces, where he wrote films that included Your Job in Germany, a 1945 propaganda film about peace in Europe after World War II, Design for Death, a study of Japanese culture that won the Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1947, and the Private Snafu series of adult army training films. While in the Army, he was awarded the Legion of Merit.

Geisel's non-military films from around this time were also well-received; Gerald McBoing-Boing won the Academy Award for Best Short Subject (Animated) in 1950.

Despite his numerous awards, Geisel never won the Caldecott Medal nor the Newbery. Three of his titles were chosen as Caldecott runners-up (now referred to as Caldecott Honor books): McElliot's Pool (1947), Bartholomew and the Oobleck (1949), and If I Ran the Zoo (1950).

After the war, Geisel and his wife moved to La Jolla, California. Returning to children's books, he wrote what many consider to be his finest works, including such favorites as If I Ran the Zoo. (1950), Scrambled Eggs Super! (1953), On Beyond Zebra! (1955), If I Ran the Circus (1956), and How the Grinch Stole Christmas (1957).

At the same time, an important development occurred that influenced much of Geisel's later work. In May 1954, Life magazine published a report on illiteracy among school children, which concluded that children were not learning to read because their books were boring. Accordingly, Geisel's publisher made a list of 400 words he felt were important and asked Geisel to cut the list to 250 words and write a book using only those words. Nine months later, Geisel, using 220 of the words given to him, completed The Cat in the Hat. This book was a tour de force—it retained the drawing style, verse rhythms, and all the imaginative power of Geisel's earlier works, but because of its simplified vocabulary could be read by beginning readers. A rumor exists, that in 1960, Bennett Cerf bet Geisel $50 that he couldn't write an entire book using only fifty words. The result was supposedly Green Eggs and Ham. The additional rumor that Cerf never paid Geisel the $50 has never been proven and is most likely untrue. These books achieved significant international success and remain very popular.

Geisel went on to write many other children's books, both in his new simplified-vocabulary manner
Many of Geisel's books express his views on a myriad of social and political issues: The Seven Lady Godivas Oh, The Places You'll Go! and You're Only Old Once.

On October 23, 1967, during a very difficult illness, Geisel's wife, Helen Palmer Geisel, committed suicide. Geisel married Audrey Stone Dimond on June 21, 1968. Geisel himself died, following several years of illness, in La Jolla, California on September 24, 1991.

On December 1, 1995 UCSD's University Library Building was renamed Geisel Library in honor of Geisel and Audrey for the generous contributions they have made to the library and their devotion to improving literacy.

Geisel was frequently confused, by the US Postal Service among others, with Dr. Suess (Hans Suess), his contemporary living in the same locality La Jolla. Their names have been linked together posthumously: the personal papers of Hans Suess are housed in the Geisel Library at UC San Diego.

In 2002, the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden opened in his birthplace of Springfield, Massachusetts; it features sculptures of Geisel and of many of his characters.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and First Lady Maria Shriver announced on May 28, 2008 that Geisel will be inducted into the California Hall of Fame, located at The California Museum for History, Women and the Arts. The induction ceremony will take place December 10th and his widow, Audrey will accept the honor in his place.

Though he devoted most of his life to writing children's books, he never had any children himself.

Political views

Geisel's early political cartoons show a passionate opposition to fascism, and he urged Americans to oppose it, both before and after the entry of the United States into World War II. In contrast, his cartoons tended to regard the fear of communism as overstated, finding the greater threat in the Dies Committee and those who threatened to cut America's "life line" to Stalin and Soviet Russia, the ones carrying "our war load."[8] On the issue of the Japanese he is quoted as saying:

"But right now, when the Japs are planting their hatchets in our skulls, it seems like a hell of a time for us to smile and warble: "Brothers!" It is a rather flabby battle cry. If we want to win, we've got to kill Japs, whether it depresses John Haynes Holmes or not. We can get palsy-walsy afterward with those that are left."

— Theodor Geisel, quoted in Dr. Seuss Went to War, by Dr. Richard H. Minear

After the war, though, Seuss was able to end his feelings of animosity, using his book Horton Hears a Who as a parable for the American post-war occupation of Japan, as well as dedicating the book to a Japanese friend.[9]

In 1948, after living and working in Hollywood for years, Geisel moved to La Jolla, California. It is said that when he went to register to vote in La Jolla, some Republican friends called him over to where they were registering voters, but Geisel said, "You my friends are over there but I am going over here to the Democratic registration." Geisel had since been a lifelong Democrat.[10]

Many of Geisel's books express his views on a myriad of social and political issues:

- The Lorax (1971) strikes many readers as fundamentally an environmentalist tract. It is the tale of a ruthless and greedy industrialist (the "Once-ler") who so thoroughly destroys the local environment that he ultimately puts his own company out of business. The book is striking for being told from the viewpoint (generally bitter, self-hating, and remorseful) of the Once-ler himself. In 1989, an effort was made by lumbering interests in Laytonville, California, to have the book banned from local school libraries, on the grounds that it was unfair to the lumber industry.[citation needed]
- The Sneetches (1961) is commonly seen as a satire of racial discrimination[citation needed]
- The Butter Battle Book (1984) written in Geisel's old age, is both a parody and denunciation of the nuclear arms race. It was attacked by conservatives as endorsing moral relativism by implying that the difference between the sides in the Cold War were no more than the choice between how to butter one's bread.[10]
- The Zax can be seen as a parody of all political hardliners[citation needed]
- Yertle the Turtle (1958) is often interpreted as an allegory of tyranny. It also encourages political activism, suggesting that a single act of resistance by an individual can topple a corrupt system[citation needed]
- Shortly before the end of the Watergate scandal in which President Nixon resigned, Geisel converted one of his famous children's books into a polemic. Richard M. Nixon, Will You Please Go Now? was published in major newspapers through the columns of his friend Art Buchwald[citation needed]

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Poetic meters

Geisel wrote most of his books in anapestic tetrameter, a poetic meter also employed by many poets of the English literary canon. This characteristic style of writing, which draws and pulls the reader into the text, is often suggested as one of the reasons that Geisel’s writing was so well-received.[12][13]

Anapestic tetrameter consists of four rhythmic units, anapests, each composed of two weak beats followed by one strong beat; often, the first weak syllable is omitted, or an additional weak syllable is added at the end. An example of this meter can be found in Geisel’s “Yertle the Turtle,” from Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories:

“And today the Great Yertle, that Marvelous he
Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see.”[14]

Geisel generally maintained this meter quite strictly, until late in his career, when he no longer maintained strict rhythm in all lines. The consistency of his meter was one of his hallmarks; the many imitators and parodists of Geisel are often unable to write in strict anapestic tetrameter, or are unaware that they should, and thus sound clumsy in comparison.

Some books by Geisel that are written mainly in anapestic tetrameter also contain many lines written in amphibrachic tetrameter, such as these from If I Ran the Circus:

“All ready to put up the tents for my circus.
I think I will call it the Circus McGurkus.

“And NOW comes an act of Enormous Enormance!
No former performer’s performed this performance!”

Geisel also wrote verse in trochaic tetrameter, an arrangement of four units of a strong followed by a weak beat (for example, the title of One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish). The formula for trochaic meter permits the final weak position in the line to be omitted, which facilitates the construction of rhymes.

Geisel generally maintained trochaic meter only for brief passages, and for longer stretches typically mixed it with iambic tetrameter, which consists of a weak beat followed by a strong, and is generally considered easier to write. Thus, for example, the magicians in Bartholomew and the Oobleck make their first appearance chanting in trochees (thus resembling the witches of Shakespeare’s Macbeth):

“Shuffle, duffle, muzzle, muff”
then switch to iambes for the oobleck spell:

“Go make the Oobleck tumble down
On every street, in every town!”[15]

Artwork

Geisel’s earlier artwork often employed the shaded texture of pencil drawings or watercolors, but in children’s books of the postwar period he generally employed the starker medium of pen and ink, normally using just black, white, and one or two colors. Later books such as The Lorax used more colors.

Geisel’s figures are often rounded and somewhat droopy. This is true, for instance, of the faces of the Grinch and of the Cat in the Hat. It is also true of virtually all buildings and machinery that Geisel drew: although these objects abound in straight lines in real life, for buildings, this could be accomplished in part through choice of architecture. For machines, for example, If I Ran the Circus includes a droopy hoisting crane and a droopy steam calliope.

Geisel evidently enjoyed drawing architecturally elaborate objects. His endlessly varied (but never rectilinear) palaces, ramps, platforms, and free-standing stairways are among his most evocative creations. Geisel also drew elaborate imaginary machines, of which the Audio-Telly-O-Tally-O-Count, from Dr. Seuss’s Sleep Book, is one example. Geisel also liked drawing outlandish arrangements of feathers or fur, for example, the 500th hat of Bartholomew Cubbins, the tail of Gertrude McFuzz, and the pet for girls who like to brush and comb, in One Fish Two Fish.

Geisel's images often convey motion vividly. He was fond of a sort of "volâ" gesture, in which the hand flips outward, spreading the fingers slightly backward with the thumb up; this is done by lsh, for instance, in One Fish Two Fish when he creates fish (who perform the gesture themselves with their fins), in the introduction of the various acts of If I Ran the Circus, and in the introduction of the Little Cats in The Cat in the Hat Comes Back. He was also fond of drawing hands with interlocked fingers, which looked as though the character was twiddling their thumbs.

Geisel also follows the cartoon tradition of showing motion with lines, for instance in the sweeping lines that accompany Sneelock's final dive in If I Ran the Circus. Cartoonist's lines are also used to illustrate the action of the senses (sight, smell, and hearing) in The Big Brag and even of thought, as in the moment when the Grinch conceives his awful idea.
Recurring images
Geisel's early work in advertising and editorial cartooning produced sketches that received more perfect realization later in the children's books. Often, the expressive use to which Geisel put an image later on was quite different from the original.[16]
- An editorial cartoon of July 16, 1941[17] depicts a whale resting on the top of a mountain, as a parody of American isolationists, especially Charles Lindbergh. This was later rendered (with no apparent political content) as the Wumblus of On Beyond Zebra (1955). Seussian whales (cheerful and balloon-shaped, with long eyelashes) also occur in McElligot's Pool, If I Ran the Circus, and other books.
- Another editorial cartoon from 1941[18] shows a long cow with many legs and udders, representing the conquered nations of Europe being milked by Adolf Hitler. This later became the Umbus of On Beyond Zebra.
- The tower of turtles in a 1942 editorial cartoon[19] prefigures a similar tower in Yertle the Turtle. This theme also appeared in a Judge cartoon as one letter of a hieroglypic message, and in Geisel's short-lived comic strip Hejji. Geisel once stated that Yertle the Turtle was Adolf Hitler.[20]
- Little cats A B and C (as well as the rest of the alphabet) who spring from each other's hats appeared in a Ford ad.
- The connected beards in Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are? appear frequently in Geisel's work, most notably in Hejji, which featured two goats joined at the beard, The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T, which featured two roller-skating guards joined at the beard, and a political cartoon in which Nazism and the America First movement are portrayed as "the men with the Siamese Beard."
- Geisel's earliest elephants were for advertising and had somewhat wrinkly ears, much as real elephants do.[21] With And to Think that I Saw it on Mulberry Street (1937) and Horton Hatches the Egg (1940), the ears became more stylized, somewhat like angel wings and thus appropriate to the saintly Horton. During World War II, the elephant image appeared as an emblem for India in four editorial cartoons.[22] Horton and similar elephants appear frequently in the postwar children's books.
- While drawing advertisements for Flit, Geisel became adept at drawing insects with huge stingers[23] shaped like a gentle S-curve and with a sharp end that included a rearward-pointing barb on its lower side. Their facial expressions depict gleeful malevolence. These insects were later rendered in an editorial cartoon as a swarm of Allied aircraft[24] (1942), and again as the Sneedle of On Beyond Zebra, and yet again as the Skritz in I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew.

Publications
Over the course of his long career, Geisel wrote over forty books; though most were published under his well-known pseudonym, Dr. Seuss, he also wrote over a dozen books as Theo. LeSieg, and one as Rosetta Stone. As one of the most popular children's authors of all time, Geisel's books have topped many bestseller lists, sold over 222 million copies, and been translated into more than 15 languages.[25] In 2000, Publishers Weekly compiled a list of the best-selling children's books of all time; of the top 100 hardcover books, 16 were written by Geisel, including Green Eggs and Ham at number 4, The Cat in the Hat, at number 9, and One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish, at number 13.[26] In various years after his death in 1991, several additional books were published based on his sketches and notes; these included Hooray for Diffendoofer Day! and Daisy-Head Mayzie. Though they were all published under the name Dr. Seuss, only My Many Colored Days originally written in 1973, was entirely by Geisel.

As Dr. Seuss
Hearted Moose

A Are You? (1973), Jones for Christmas television special co-producer, along with Jones, under his real name, "Ted Geisel". The cartoon was very faithful to a fish committing suicide and an affinity by Lazy Mayzie for a number of gags not present in the original narrative, including

The first adaptation of one of Geisel's works was a cartoon experience during the cartoons, an art form in which he himself had gained characters marketed in contexts outside of his own books.

For most of his career, Geisel was reluctant to have his Adaptations

As Rosetta Stone

Because a Little Bug Went Ka-choo (Illustrated by Michael Frith, 1975)

Adaptations

For most of his career, Geisel was reluctant to have his characters marketed in contexts outside of his own books. However, he did allow for the creation of several animated cartoons, an art form in which he himself had gained experience during the second World War, and gradually relaxed his policy as he aged.

The first adaptation of one of Geisel's works was a cartoon version of Horton Hatches the Egg animated at Warner Brothers in 1942. Directed by Robert Clampett, it was presented as part of the Looney Tunes series, and included a number of gags not present in the original narrative, including a fish committing suicide and an affinity by Lazy Mayzie for Katharine Hepburn.

In 1966, Geisel authorized the eminent cartoon artist Chuck Jones, his friend and former colleague from the war, to make a cartoon version of How the Grinch Stole Christmas! Geisel was credited as a co-producer, along with Jones, under his real name, "Ted Geisel". The cartoon was very faithful to the original book, and is considered a classic by many to this day; it is often broadcast as an annual Christmas television special. In 1970, an adaptation of Horton Hears a Who! was directed by Chuck Jones for MGM.

From 1971 to 1982, Geisel wrote seven television specials, which were produced by DePatie-Freleng Enterprises and aired on CBS; The Cat in the Hat (1971), The Lorax (1972), Dr. Seuss on the Loose (1973), The Hoobie-Bloob Highway (1975), Halloween is Grinch Night (1977), Pontoffel Pock, Where Are You? (1980), and The Grinch Grinches the Cat in the Hat (1982). Several of the specials were nominated for and won multiple Emmy Awards.

A Soviet paint-on-glass-animated short film called Welcome (an adaptation of Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose) was made in 1985. The last adaptation of Geisel's work before he died was

As Theo. LeSieg

Ten Apples Up on Top! (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1961)

I Wish That I Had Duck Feet (Illustrated by B Tobey, 1965)

Come over to My House (Illustrated by Richard Erdos, 1966)

The Eye Book (Illustrated by Joe Mathieu/Roy McKie, 1968)

I Can Write (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1971)

In a People House (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1972)

Wacky Wednesday (Illustrated by George Booth, 1974)

The Many Mice of Mr. Brice (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1974)

Would You Rather Be a Bullfrog? (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1975)

Hopper Humphrink... Not Him! (Illustrated by Charles E. Martin, 1976)

Please Try to Remember the First of October! (Illustrated by Art Cummings, 1977)


The Tooth Book (Illustrated by Joe Mathieu/Roy McKie, 1989)

Because a Little Bug Went Ka-choo (Illustrated by Michael Frith, 1975)

As Rosetta Stone

Because a Little Bug Went Ka-choo (Illustrated by Michael Frith, 1975)

As Theo. LeSieg

Ten Apples Up on Top! (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1961)

I Wish That I Had Duck Feet (Illustrated by B Tobey, 1965)

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In a People House (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1972)

Wacky Wednesday (Illustrated by George Booth, 1974)

The Many Mice of Mr. Brice (Illustrated by Roy McKie, 1974)
Further reading


- Dr. Seuss From Then to Now (New York: Random House, 1987; ISBN 0-394-89268-2) is a biographical retrospective published for the exhibit of the same title at the San Diego Museum of Art.


- Oh, the Places He Went: a story about Dr. Seuss by Maryann Weidt (Carolrhoda Books, 1995; ISBN 0-88714-627-2)


The Tough Coughs as he Ploughs the Dough: Early Writings and Cartoons by Dr. Seuss edited and with an introduction by Richard Marshall (also includes autobiographical material); ISBN 0-688-06548-1

The Boy on Fairfield Street by Kathleen Krull. It tells about the childhood of Dr. Seuss and shows the sources of many of his inspirations.

External links

Wikiquote has a collection of quotations related to:

This article has been illustrated as part of WikiProject WikiWorld.

Seussville site Random House

Dr. Seuss biography on Lambiek Comclopedia

The Register of Dr. Seuss Collection UC San Diego

The Advertising Artwork of Dr. Seuss UC San Diego

Dr. Seuss Went to War: A Catalog of Political Cartoons UC San Diego

Dr. Seuss' Commencement Speech Lake Forest College

Dr. Seuss at the Internet Movie Database

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Dr. Seuss

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Dr. Seuss, Theo LeSieg and, in one case, Rosetta Stone. He published 46 children's books, which were often characterized by imaginative characters, rhyme, and frequent use of trisyllabic meter. Foot (prosody).  

Green Eggs and Ham is a best-selling and critically acclaimed book by Dr. Seuss, first published on August 12, 1960. As of 2001, according to Publishers Weekly, it was the fourth-best-selling English-language children's book of all time. , The Cat in the Hat. The Cat in the Hat. Dr. Seuss The Unofficial Encyclopedia. Wikipedia.org Book Extract One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Dr. Seuss, The Juice and Fair Use: How the Grinch Silenced a Parody. Dr. Seuss: Dr. Seuss, American writer and illustrator of immensely popular children's books. Alternative Titles: Doctor Seuss, Theodore Seuss Geisel. Dr. Seuss, pseudonym of Theodor Seuss Geisel, (born March 2, 1904, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.—died September 24, 1991, La Jolla, California), American writer and illustrator of immensely popular children's books, which were noted for their nonsense words, playful rhymes, and unusual creatures. Early career and first Dr. Seuss books.
Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel) with models of some of the characters he created in his popular children's books, c. 1959. John Bryson—Time Life Pictures/Getty Images. Top Questions. What was Dr. Seuss’s education? Dr. Seuss earned a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College in 1925 and did some postgraduate studies in literature at Lincoln College, Oxford, and at the Sorbonne, but he did not earn a doctorate. He then became an illustrator and humorist for magazines before landing a career in advertising.