

# It's joyless

**Paul George**  
*Senior Reporter*

Director Spike Jonze's adaptation of Maurice Sendak's classic children's story "Where the Wild Things Are" is a joyless and bleak film that suffocates the viewer with negative feelings.

Screenwriter David Eggers takes Sendak's 10 sentences of prose and expands it to 90 minutes of dark aggression. In the film, Max is a young boy who is out of control. He trashes his sister's room, damaging her carpet. When his mother brings home a date, Max acts out, biting his mother and running away from home.

He finds a boat in the woods, which takes him to an island populated by the Wild Things, a group of large beasts. Max declares himself king of the Wild Things and immediately begins a municipal project, building a communal hut.

Quickly it is revealed that the Wild Things all have psychological conditions requiring some sort of monster therapist. Carol was the de facto leader of the creatures until Max arrived. Carol is a manic-depressive who wants to play, but ends up destroying huts and victimizing his fellow creatures in a way that



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would send him to human prison for a very long time. The other Wild Things are needy, depressed and otherwise dysfunctional.

It is clear that the Wild Things represent Max and the troubles he is facing in the real world. However, it simply does not work in the film.

What few enjoyable scenes the film contains are quickly soured by the inability of the characters to enjoy themselves. An enjoyable dirt clod fight quickly turns into anger and abuse. The depressed tone of the film permeates it from beginning to end.

Jonze and Eggers have produced the first children's film people can slash their wrists to. Unlike Sendak's eccentric story, which portrayed a child's imagination as a wonderful and strange place, the film views the imagination as a means for escape for a near psychopathic child who clearly need professional help. I know, after watching "Where the Wild Things Are," I could use some therapy.