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Dr. Seuss: The Man, the War, and the Work

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Appendix D - UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

Name: ____________ Katy Rice ________________________________
College: ______ Arts & Sciences ___ Department: ______ English ______
Faculty Mentor: ____________ Richard Kelly ________________________
PROJECT TITLE: ____________ Dr. Seuss: The Man, the ______
____ War, and the Work ________________________________

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify
that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this
field.

Signed: ____________ Richard Kelly ________________________________, Faculty Mentor
Date: ____________ 4/27/00 __________________

Comments (Optional):

My comments are on file in English Dept. -
Should you need to read them.
DR. SEUSS:
THE MAN, THE WAR, AND THE WORK

By: Katy Rice
Advisor: Dr. Richard Kelly
For My Great Friend,

Alison.

I can't thank you enough.
From there to here,
from here to there,
funny things
are everywhere.
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On an ordinary Sunday afternoon, sitting on my grandfather’s lap with my little bother and younger cousin, we asked Granddaddy to read us a story. He asked what story, and we pulled out the same book we read every week. It was Dr. Seuss’s *The Butter Battle Book*. Granddaddy started with the first page, reading first the title, then the publisher and dedication. We whined as he started with the copyright information, so he skipped to the story. Grandmother sat in her chair listening and watching us all as he told the story one more time. We hung on every word, getting lost in Seuss’s hypnotic rhythm, rooting for the underdog Yooks. “Why would anyone butter their bread underneath, anyway?” we would ask. Granddaddy would just say that wasn’t the point. Every time the book ended, we wanted more. Open endings were not something we were used to, and we needed reassurance that the good guys would win.

The routine was always the same, but I remember one particularly rainy Sunday. We couldn’t go outside, and after the story we started talking. I asked Granddaddy how he
thought the story ended. He said he didn’t know, but then he asked what we thought should happen. After much deliberation we decided that what side of the bread you buttered your bread on, even though it could make you weird, wasn’t worth living underground for. We decided their war was stupid. They should simply put down their Big-Boy Boomeroos, go home, and eat whatever they wanted. After all, they really weren’t that different.

All of our conversation that Sunday was no accident. The *Butter Battle Book* is more than just a simple children’s story, and Dr. Seuss intended it that way. Issues such as war, environmentalism, and diversity are important in adult lives. Seuss believed them to be just as important for children, after all, these are the future adults. And if children can be taught tolerance, perhaps it will survive their adolescence and extend into their adult lives. “Dr. Seuss is not simply trying to make children aware of these important issues; he is also positing models for children to follow. He wants to empower children, rather than drive them to despair. He also implies that children are smart enough to understand these issues,” (MacDonald 165). Dr. Seuss does not sugarcoat his messages either. He deals with war in metaphorical but direct terms in *The Butter Battle Book*. *Yertle the Turtle* criticizes Hitler. And in *The Lorax* Seuss
explores the concepts of environmentalism in contrast to the materialism of the day. *Horton Hears a Who* comments on the intrinsic value of people, and *The Star-Bellied Sneetches* offers an insightful narrative on racism. Although the stories are told in terms that children can understand in Seuss's distinctive rhyme, style, and nonsensical characters, he does not hide the issues.

Seuss's direct communication with children in the guise of fantasy enabled him to share his criticism of the conservative majority and teach children lessons in tolerance. Dr. Seuss wrote many of his most successful works in the aftermath of World War II. During the war, Seuss put his pen aside and worked as a filmmaker for the army. What he learned from his experiences in "Fort Fox" in Hollywood under Frank Capra, shaped many of his later works. Some stories, like that of Yertle, are obvious reactions to the war. *Horton Hears a Who* offers a harsh criticism of the United States' bombing of Hiroshima. The war and the years following it brought much change into the world, and Dr. Seuss did not want to hide children from this. War is not pretty, and people get hurt. Seuss believed children deserved to know the truth without frightening them into paralysis.

Although Seuss is primarily known for his contributions to children's literature, he also produced countless political
cartoons, primarily for New York's *PM* magazine. These cartoons, some of which will be shown later, inarguably reveal Seuss's political mindset before and during World War II. By examining these and looking at other events in Seuss's life, one can begin to extract some of the deeper themes of Dr. Seuss's stories. Seuss was not a man who would sit quietly while the world exploded around him. He enlisted in the army and wound up stranded behind enemy lines during the Battle of the Bulge for three days, (Morgan 114). His life experiences had a great impact on his political views, and these views would sometimes slip into his work via the illustrations and moral lessons intended for children.

Seuss took an active role in history and shared his life and mind with the public through his books. Many of Seuss's initial reactions to events during the war are recorded in his cartoons. These reactions are reconstructed and developed into meaningful stories for children in years following. This essay will attempt to extract these messages from Seuss's fiction and uncover his motivation for introducing them to the world. Seuss did more than introduce readers to his magical world filled with a myriad of indescribable creatures. He taught children to value life even in its smallest forms and to treat one another with respect. Seuss's works may be fun, but they are not nonsense.
Theodore Seuss Geisel, whom the family called Ted, was born March 2, 1904 to Theodor and Henrietta Geisel, a German-American couple living in Springfield, Massachusetts. He was the second child and only son in one of the more prosperous families in Springfield, (Minear 9). His life in Springfield was of great importance to his work. The parades on Main Street and the families of Wickersham, Terwilliger, and McElligot are obvious examples of Springfield's and his childhood's lasting influence in Seuss's life. Theodore and Henrietta were both natives of Springfield but were deeply involved in their mutual German heritage. German was, in fact, the language of the household, (Minear 9). The family was not the wealthiest in Springfield, but they were quite successful. Grandfather Geisel, along with a family friend, founded the town's brewery, Kalmbach and Geisel, which came to be known as "Come Back and Guzzle," (Morgan 6). Ted's middle name came from his mother's family. With Prohibition gaining momentum, Henrietta Seuss, pronounced Zoice, lost much of her family's respectability by marrying the town brewer, (Morgan 6).
Regardless of the town’s opinion, Henrietta and Theodor had a happy marriage. Denied a college education herself, Henrietta had great dreams for both of her children. Ted and Marnie, his older sister, would go to college and would be successful (Morgan 6). “From the start this tall, skinny, dark-haired boy showed a love of the absurd and a penchant for exaggeration, elevating ordinary neighborhood happenings into events of excitement and intrigue,” (Morgan 4). His imagination, love of words and rhythms were evident from the start. As a child, Ted was not a typical boy, winning contests for ear wiggling but not for chin-ups. He himself says that he “viewed the world through the wrong end of a telescope,” (Morgan 10).

Seuss’s distinctive style and flair with words and drawings showed their roots at an early age. Ted’s mother would read bedtime stories to her children and recite old chants from her days at the bakery as they fell asleep: “Apple, mince, lemon... peach, apricot, pineapple... blueberry, coconut, custard, and SQUASH!” (Morgan 7). According to Ted, his mother was greatly “responsible for the rhythms in which I write and the urgency with which I do it,” (Morgan 7). Ted’s first experiment with rhyme and rhythm may have been his listing of the books of the Old Testament. “The great Jehovah speaks to us / In Genesis and Exodus; / Leviticus and Numbers, three, / Followed by Deuteronomy,” (Morgan 11). The Seuss cadence is evident and so
is his nonsense. In addition to Ted’s love and playfulness with words, Ted was a doodler. Cartoon-like sketches in notebooks and on school notes were common occurrences. Although Ted was not the marksman or athlete that his father envisioned, he encouraged his son’s drawing talents and his mother encouraged his gift with words (Morgan 15). In the summer of 1912, Ted wrote the following in reaction to a Fourth of July float that marked the sinking of the Titanic:

Dragged by two teams of sweating stallions
Down Main Street the cardboard iceberg lurched
And on the top deck of the sinking Titanic
A brave string quartet precariously was perched. (Morgan 15)

The seeds were there for Seuss’s later fantastical works.

Ted had the support of his family, but his childhood was clouded by World War I and the families’ ties to their homeland of Germany. In 1915 the English Lusitania was torpedoed by a German submarine, and 128 Americans were killed. “Long before the United States entered World War I, German-Americans were encountering hostile stares on the streets of Springfield,” (Morgan 15). Germany became the common enemy of every American and prejudices arose. Ted and his sister dealt with taunts on playgrounds, all because of their German heritage, (Morgan 18). At the same time the Geisel family was coming to the realization that war with their homeland was inevitable, there was a growing
fear that Prohibition would threaten the family's livelihood, (Morgan 19). Ted's father took over the brewery in 1915 and sustained a salary of over $100 a week, but the Eighteenth Amendment would mean economic ruin for the family (Morgan 16).

On April 16, 1917, one of the family's fears materialized when America entered the war against Germany. "There were reports of German-Americans being stoned in some East Coast cities; books in German disappeared from Springfield libraries and book burnings were rumored," (Morgan 20). The Committee on Public Information was formed by Congress in an attempt to control public opinion. They declared sauerkraut would be henceforth "liberty cabbage" and frankfurters, "hot dogs." But moreover, German-Americans were no longer such. They were Americans and should adhere to American culture, not that of Germany. In the midst of this redefining of the Geisel family's culture and identity, Ted began high school, (Morgan 20).

Ted wanted to show his support of the war and his country, and his opportunity came in the form of war bonds. Ted's Boy Scout troop, No. 13, of Faith Methodist Church, began a contest selling Liberty Bonds. With a little help from his grandfather, Ted ranked among the top ten sellers, (Morgan 21). On May 2, 1918, Ted and nine other Boy Scout top sellers lined up on a stage at Springfield's Municipal Auditorium to receive a medal from Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. Ted was the last in line and
when Roosevelt got to him, he was out of medals. "What's this little boy doing here?' Roosevelt bellowed at the scoutmaster, who frowned and scuttled Ted offstage," (Morgan 22). The mortification Ted felt because of his scoutmaster's inability to count and the embarrassment of an ex-President, Ted dealt with a debilitating fear of public appearances and stage fright. "Within a few years his fear of public platforms bordered on the neurotic and he began devising complex excuses to avoid them," (Morgan 22). Regardless of the consequences of his efforts, Ted did succeed in distracting himself from the anti-German sentiment growing in Springfield. The war ended in 1918, much to the relief of every American. But in January of 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment was ratified and a year later Prohibition became law. "This meant the Geisel brewery was doomed," (Morgan 24).

In 1921, Ted graduated from high school, the class artist and class wit of Central High, (Morgan 24). He entered Dartmouth that September. Once again, Ted found himself to be an atypical Dartmouth student. No one in his family had attended Dartmouth; he was not an aristocrat; and he had graduated from a public school. "But he was a lively and handsome chap, well liked, sociable, entertaining, with decent grades," (Morgan 26). While all of his friends were busy with fraternities during rush week, Ted became interested in the
school's humor magazine, *Jack-O-Lantern*, (Morgan 27), and soon became a contributor. Ted made a commitment his freshman year. He "intended to become editor of *Jacko* in his senior year," (Morgan 30), and on May 15, 1924, he did, indeed, become editor-in-chief, (Morgan 33). But his dream did not last for long. In April of 1925, an incident involving drunken friends and seltzer water squirted onto a tin roof led to his probation, (Morgan 36). As part of the probation, Ted was forbidden to serve as editor of *Jacko*. But he fooled the system and continued to contribute under a pseudonym. "Ted turned to his own middle name and for the first time signed his cartoons as Seuss,\)" (Morgan 36). Here began the legacy.

As graduation approached, Ted did not know what he wanted to do with his life. When his father asked him, Ted responded by telling him that he had received a fellowship and was going to Oxford. In actuality, Ted had applied for the fellowship, but a decision had not yet been made when he told his father. When the current recipient applied for an extended stay, the fellowship was once again given to him. In order to save the reputation of the family, Ted's father was determined to get him to Oxford. Ted spent the summer working for the *Springfield Union* and saving money. Then on August 24, 1925, Ted set sail for England. (Morgan 36-8)
In Oxford Ted was again an average student, content with other outsiders. He shared a class with another student named Helen, and she soon won him over with compliments on his doodling. "That's a very fine flying cow!" (Morgan 45). Ted was hooked. The two spent all of their spare time together, and Ted found his first true supporter of his creative efforts. Helen encouraged Ted in his drawing and was the first to see the possibilities of a career in his creativity.

During a two-hour lecture focusing on the punctuation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Ted decided academia was not for him. He listened for a little while, then went home and packed, (Morgan 47). While Oxford may not have transformed Ted into the English scholar he set out to become, he made a lot of influential friends that would prove useful later in his life. He continued to stay in Europe and travel, but Helen had since sailed back to the U.S. In February of 1927, he set out to join her, (Morgan 55).

Once back in the United States, Ted still did not know what he wanted to do with his life. But in July Ted received a check for $25 in the mail from *The Saturday Evening Post* for a cartoon he had produced and signed Seuss, (Morgan 59). Ted and Helen moved to Manhattan, and Ted found a job at *Judge* as a writer and artist making $75 a week, (Morgan 60). On November 29th of that year, Ted and Helen married officially, although there was a
rumor that they were secretly married while in Europe, (Morgan 61). While working at Judge, Ted began adding Dr. to his pseudonym, "explaining that the honorific compensated for the doctorate he never won at Oxford," (Morgan 62). "Dr. Seuss never did earn a Ph.D., but when he became successful his alma mater conferred on him an honorary doctorate," (Minear 9). His cartoon drew much attention, and soon he was being offered advertising deals. It was the campaign for Flit, a pesticide, that made him nationally known, (Morgan 65). This advertising contract, along with a few others, gave Ted and Helen the stability that they needed to endure the upcoming years.

When the stockmarket crashed on October 28th, "Helen and Ted, like much of the literary community, were insulated from the brunt of the blow," (Morgan 70). The ability Ted had to distract and entertain the masses was in high demand. Soon Ted's artistic abilities were given a new challenge. He was offered an opportunity to illustrate Boners, a collection of children's sayings. His work received great reviews. At thirty-two years of age, Ted believed it was time to get serious about his life, and Helen encouraged him to write a children's tale, (Morgan 80). Ted went back to his love of rhythm for inspiration. He began chanting to the rhythm of an engine and came up with these words: "And that is a story that no one can
beat, and to think that I saw it on Mulberry Street," (Morgan 81).

*A Story That No One Can Beat* was rejected by twenty-seven different publishers, and Ted was on his way home to burn the manuscript when he ran into an old friend from Dartmouth, Mike McClintock (Morgan 82, Minear 10). Mike worked for a publishing company, Vanguard Press, and wanted to take a chance on his old friend. If Ted would change the title to something catchier, he would publish it, (Morgan 82). *And To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street*, the book that almost never was, was very well received. A review in *New Yorker* stated, "They say it’s for children, but better get a copy for yourself and marvel at Dr. Seuss’ impossible pictures and the moral tale of the little boy who exaggerated not wisely but too well," (Morgan 84).

The story marks the beginning of Seuss’s life as a children’s author. In the next few years, Seuss also produced *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins, The Seven Lady Godivas, The King’s Stilts,* and the timeless *Horton Hatches the Egg*. Ted had found his calling, but success did not come immediately. "In its first six years *Mulberry Street* sold 32,000 copies. *King’s Stilts* sold fewer than 5,000 copies in year one and only 400 in year three. *Horton Hatches the Egg* sold 6,000 in year one and 1,600 in year two, (Minear 10). Seuss’s breakthrough book, *The
*Cat in the Hat* was not published until 1957. Before success came the war.
In September of 1931, war broke out in Asia. Eight years later, Germany invaded Poland. The United States held onto its idea of isolationism. It did not concern Americans what happened an ocean away. This was not good enough for Dr. Seuss. "His opposition to Italian fascism led him to set pen to paper for his first editorial cartoon," (Minear 10). This cartoon shows Virginio Gayda, editor of a fascist Italian publication, suspended behind a steam-powered typewriter. Ted showed this cartoon to a friend who happened to work for New York's left-wing daily newspaper, PM. His friend loved it and showed the cartoon to his editor. Dr. Seuss's first editorial cartoon appeared in PM in late January of 1941.
Gayda wears the Italian fez and holds his chin high in arrogant poise. He bangs away at the typewriter as pieces fly off, and the banner he produces hangs overhead, being held by a winged Mussolini, also bearing the fez and that arrogant expression. Notice how Gayda does not stand on his own feet; rather, he is suspended there, being held in his position by force. "The cartoon suggests that poisoned prose comes from this captive press," (Minear 10). The deadliness of Gayda's words is shown by the dead bird in the upper right corner, apparently killed by the toxic steam from the typewriter. "Onlooking birds and other creatures play important roles in Dr. Seuss's wartime cartoons," (Minear 10).

This Gayda cartoon marked the beginning of Dr. Seuss's career at PM. In February and March he produced only three cartoons, but by late April, PM published that many or more every week, (Minear 12). Dr. Seuss stayed at PM for two full years, years which included times of peace and times of war. Before the United States actually became involved in the fighting, Dr. Seuss focused most of his cartoons on isolationists, urging Americans into action.

Charles Lindbergh was one of the most frequent topics of Seuss's cartoons. Lindbergh had made himself an American hero when he became the first person to fly across the Atlantic in
1927, but Lindbergh did not live up to his heroic status. "Lindbergh spoke in admiring tones of Hitler's regime, and in early 1941 Lindbergh joined the anti-interventionist organization America First and began speaking out against the interventionist steps of the Roosevelt administration," (Minear 17). He also gave speeches making distinctions between the Jews and Americans, and has been labeled an anti-Semite ever since, (Minear 17).

"The Lindbergh Quarter" was printed on April 28, 1941. It is a reaction to Lindbergh's and America First's isolationist stand. In President Roosevelt's 1940 State of the Union address, he states, "I hope that we shall have fewer ostriches in our midst. It is not good for the ultimate health of ostriches to bury their heads in the sand," (Minear 19). Because of Roosevelt's statement and of the ostrich's tendency to bury its head at any sign of being threatened, it became Seuss's symbol for America's isolationism. The "Lindbergh Quarter" is just one of many of Dr. Seuss's cartoons featuring ostriches in this way. Others include a cartoon in which a politician is seen handing out ostrich hats which are actually masks that cover one's entire head to a line of smiling citizens.
Here in "The Lindbergh Quarter," Seuss draws an ostrich with its head clearly submerged leaving his hind-end exposed, but we can still read his expression. His eyes are closed and he is smiling as if he hasn’t a care in the world. The words, "In God we trust (and how!)" only reiterate Seuss’s point. If Americans continue to look the other way, and bury their heads, they leave themselves open to attack. The caption, "Since when did we swap our ego for an ostrich?" shows Seuss’s pride in America.
Americans must stand up against Italian fascism and German tyranny.

In another critique of American isolationism, Seuss produces a cartoon showing "America First" and a Nazi joined at the beard.

This cartoon shows the "connections between 'isolationists' in the United States and the enemies abroad - fascism and Nazism," (Minear 21). The gentleman labeled America First holds his hands together demurely and again has his eyes closed and smiles in contentment. He does not see nor acknowledge his connection
to the sinister Nazi who stands ready to attack. The man in the foreground pointing at the "most perplexing people" could represent Uncle Sam. He wears the top hat embellished with stars and stripes and bears a beard, both typical attributes of Seuss's Uncle Sam. If this man does personify America, the implication is that America and her citizens, the chaps in top hats looking on, are amazed at the blindness of "America First." They are mystified that such a connection could form in their own land.

In another cartoon attacking the evils of isolationism, a mother labeled "America First" reads a story to her children called, "Adolf the Wolf."

... and the Wolf chewed up the children and spit out their bones... But those were Foreign Children and it really didn't matter."
The mother attempts to reassure her frightened children by saying, "But those were Foreign Children and it really didn’t matter." This is of no reassurance to the youths. The two children and the onlooking cat all stare wide-eyed at the horror of the story. The mother reads with her eyes closed and with an unassuming smile. Again isolationists are portrayed as blinded and content. Those who choose to see the horror cannot ignore it. As an added detail, Seuss shows the mother with her feet crossed, perhaps for luck. Isolationism puts fate in the hands of others. Perhaps this mother knows that she is attempting to justify an evil by saying it is happening to someone else and she is realizing her own vulnerability.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Ted was reading his newspaper when he heard about the attack on the radio. He immediately went to his drawing board, (Morgan 104). "He Never Knew What Hit Him" was the result.
The ostrich of isolationism has been blown from his comfortable perch by black war. The message is simple: he never knew what hit him because he wasn’t watching. Even here, after being blown from his seat, the ostrich keeps his eyes closed. The continuing refusal to confront reality will only result in destruction. If the isolationists don’t wake up, Seuss warns, war will bring their end.

"Dr. Seuss saved some of his most biting cartoons for issues of anti-black racism and anti-Semitism," (Minear 23).
This cartoon shows Uncle Sam urging the War Industry to use the black keys along with the white ones on his organ. The cobwebs on the black keys illustrate that they have been neglected, (Minear 24). Uncle Sam’s expression is angry. The industrialist responds with a startled expression, but not one of guilt. He does not look as if he believes what he is doing is wrong. He is simply playing the organ like those before him. Uncle Sam wants a change. Dr. Seuss’s personification of America in Uncle Sam wants equality; it is the industry that is racist.

"Dr. Seuss’s campaign for civil rights and against anti-Semitism had one major blind spot: Americans of Japanese
descent," (Minear 25). In 1942, just months after the United States had entered the war, Roosevelt decided to incarcerate all Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Although no Japanese-American on the West Coast was ever convicted of an act of sabotage, many Americans believed this imprisonment of American citizens to be justified, (Minear 25). On February 13, just days before Roosevelt’s decision, Seuss published this cartoon:

The cartoon depicts an endless stream of almost identical Asians lining up for blocks of TNT. There is a man perched on a roof with a telescope, evidently waiting for the signal. The Asians with their closed, slanted eyes and uniform grins, look menacing to say the least. As open-minded as Seuss may have
been for his time, he clearly lacked the vision to see all Americans as equal. The fear of Japanese mutiny was prevalent throughout the United States. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and any descendant from a Japanese culture could not be trusted.

"Ted's ultimate scorn was aimed at Adolph Hitler," (Morgan 103). Seuss's depiction of Hitler is more benign than may be expected. In the series, Mein Early Kampf, Seuss drew him as a whiny baby. The baby did grow up, but he always lacked the viciousness that Mussolini and others possessed. Perhaps because Seuss's grandparents were born in Germany, he could not bring himself to portray the German leader objectively, (Minear 79). Seuss's Hitler tends to be almost comical. He is uppity and arrogant, his face frozen in a pompous snub and always, the mustache.

Seuss's "two most foreboding Hitler cartoons do not show Hitler's face," (Minear 75).
In both of these cartoons, Hitler dwarfs the people around him. In the first cartoon, a man is shining Hitler’s enormous shoes. He stoops at his feet and cowers in the presence of such stature. The second cartoon is more telling of Hitler’s power. Hitler is shown pouring some sort of ooze into the Nazi mold and creating the perfect race, all in “Heil” position. This clearly shows a relationship between a totalitarian dictator and the creation of a new race of slaves, (Minear 75). The slave notion of Hitler’s creation is evident in the small size and uniformity of the statues and in that they all lack faces. Hitler sought to wipe all aspects of humanity from his new race.
In another cartoon featuring Hitler, he is shown ordering one of his men to scout out hell. "A lot of us may be going there one of these days," he says.

This cartoon shows Hitler with his pompous expression and small stature. He is dwarfed by the size of his chair, clearly opposite of the images seen before. His scout is shown in a shoddy Devil's costume. He carries a pitchfork and has horns tied around his face but still wears his uniform boots. The onlooking dog, the only character with his eyes open, seems inquisitive, bewildered, and possibly even frightened with the sight of this devil. This is not a cartoon meant to scare
people; it is funny. Seuss is making fun of Hitler and his mission. Before Pearl Harbor, Hitler was seen as a threat, but once the U.S. entered the war, Seuss has "consigned Hitler to defeat and to hell," (Minear 75).

One of Seuss's more puzzling cartoons is this look at Hitler and Pierre Laval, Prime Minister of France singing together while being surrounded by Jews hanging from trees.

It is hard to say why Laval would be singing with Hitler. The French did send Jews to camps, but it was never on the same level as Hitler's tactics. And in July of 1942, when this
The cartoon was published, death camps were not general knowledge, and those that people did have knowledge of were in Poland, not France. The song that the two are singing is reminiscent of a poem by Alfred Joyce Kilmer entitled, "Trees." It closes with the lines, "Poems are made by fools like me / But only God can make a tree." This romantic sentiment is placed in opposition to the words of the song and the death hanging all over the page. Although there is no known record of Jews being hung in concentration camps, Seuss uses this familiar image of lynching victims in America to show the reality of the death in Europe. Seuss's message in this case is twofold. The racist lynchings in America are just as bad as the mass executions of Hitler.

Seuss tackled many more of the aspects of war in his cartoons, especially other prominent figures in the war. His constant urging of citizens into action brought much criticism from the isolationists. They charged that he pushed Americans into the war. Because he was too old for the draft, his only battles would be on paper, (Morgan 105). In answer to this criticism, Seuss applied for a commission with naval intelligence in the fall of 1942, feeling that he "could no longer justify or tolerate civilian status," (Morgan 105). But before he was approved, Seuss was offered a commission to join Frank Capra's Signal Corps in Hollywood. He accepted, and on
January 7, 1943, Ted was inducted into the army, becoming Captain Theodor Seuss Geisel.

Frank Capra was a legendary Hollywood director having already produced such films as *You Can’t Take It With You* and *Meet John Doe*. Capra saw something in Ted and was determined to make him a producer, (Morgan 107). In Capra’s unit, the men wore uniforms and had drills, but their only shooting was done at a target range, (Morgan 107). Ted actually failed even to qualify with a .45 revolver. He would “wear the weapon upside down in its holster, arguing that his best bet in an enemy action was to grab it by the barrel and throw it,” (Morgan 112). The unit was filled with creative types, including screenwriters, composers, producers, writers, and illustrators. (Morgan 107). The Capra unit was based in a Fox studio and came to be known as Fort Fox. They had no barracks and would go home at night to sleep, (Morgan 106). This may not have been a typical military service, but it did serve a purpose. The men stationed at Fort Fox produced bi-weekly newsreels and films to be shown to troops concerning conduct or morale.

Some of these films included animated cartoons with training messages which Seuss took an active role in making, (Morgan 109). One of Seuss’s better known creations in the military films was Private Snafu, a very Seussian character, whose name represents the common acronym, “Situation normal,
all... FOULED... up," (Morgan 109). Seuss's vivid imagination and flair were evident even in the grim tasks of the military films. In Gripes, Snafu rebels against his assigned kitchen duty and begins to fantasize about what the army would be like if he were in charge. The army becomes an orgy of girls and booze, but then the Germans attack, (Morgan 110). Here Seuss, as in his later books, tells fantastical stories with a metaphorical message. The message here is more than just a moral one. If the army is to kick back and the men to lose discipline, they are left open to German attack and are poised for destruction.

In March of 1944, Ted was promoted to major and assigned to produce Your Job in Germany for American occupying troops. His job was to produce the film then show it and get approval from all American generals, (Morgan 112). Ted was in Bastogne for just that purpose when the Battle of the Bulge, which has been called the "bloodiest fighting since D-day," began, (Morgan 114). Ted arrived the night before the fighting broke out and wandered off that morning. He ended up ten miles behind enemy lines and was stranded there for three days until rescued by the British, (Morgan 114). With disaster averted and Ted's mission accomplished, he returned to California in January of 1945. Your Job in Germany got its approval and would be shown to American forces that would occupy Germany. A remake of the film
by Jack Warner titled *Hitler Lives?* won an Academy Award in 1946.

Ted left the army on January 13, 1946, only five months after the war ended. Although Ted’s military days were over, his film projects were not. Ted and Helen were writers for the film *Design for Death*, a documentary about Japan that won an Academy Award for best documentary in 1947, (Morgan 120). Ted’s script for *Gerald McBoing-Boing*, about a child who only speaks in sound effects, won him another Academy Award in 1951 for best cartoon. In February of 1951 he was drawn to Hollywood for one final project, *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*, (Morgan 132). *Dr. T* was a disaster in Ted’s eyes, and he wanted to abandon the project. Ted felt the picture was horrible and so did the critics, (Morgan 134-5). “Fifteen minutes into the movie the preview audience began filing out,” (Morgan 135). But with his hands in three Academy Awards, one could not call Ted’s entire film career a disaster.

The war left its mark on Dr. Seuss as well as on the world. Many of his later books resulted, if not directly then at least peripherally, from his experiences during World War II. “The military service provided a period of incubation for new ideas, both humorous and serious, which would appear in the children’s books after the war,” (MacDonald 49). His experiences with Capra and with filmmaking in general taught him much about
writing. Capra emphasized to Ted the importance of development in stories. From his guidance and Ted's general experiences he "gained a sense of what makes an interesting story - fast pacing, minor cliff-hangers within the story to lure the reader on, visual clues to help the reader interpret the story, (and) shortened length in order to not tax the reader's sometimes limited attention span." (MacDonald 167)

The war challenged Seuss's philosophies and opened his eyes to many of the important issues of the period, and these are the issues that his later books examine.
THE WORK

During World War II, Dr. Seuss put aside his writer's hat and produced numerous political cartoons and informational films for the army. Ruth MacDonald argues that "the serious nature of his military services submerged his ability to write humorous books for children," (49). This is not so. Dr. Seuss was greatly affected by personal experiences in his time of service and by events that erupted around him. He could not hide his feelings about issues that arose during the war, and these same issues which he felt so strongly about shaped many of his books.

Seuss makes his themes accessible to even the youngest readers by disguising them within a fantasy. Fantasy "is a way of looking at life through a distorted telescope, and that's what makes you laugh at the terrible realities," (Minear 260). Ted placed himself "in the realm of nonsense," along with Mother Goose, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and P. L. Travers, (Morgan 124). In fact, Seuss reveals more truth in his rhymed stories than many writers can in full-length novels. By looking beyond the fantasy elements of the stories, it is possible to extract moral lessons, political messages, and criticism of public
policy from some of Dr. Seuss's books written after World War II.

**YERTLE THE TURTLE**

*Yertle the Turtle* was first published in 1950, just three years after World War II ended. It holds perhaps Dr. Seuss' freshest reaction to the war. The story alludes to that of Hitler, and although there are clear discrepancies, Yertle does bear some similarity to the German dictator. Hitler held expansionist ideas, and in widening his power, he hurt his own people. The "greater" he became and the more power he obtained, the more the people of Europe suffered. Like Yertle, Hitler's over reaching brought his demise. If Hitler had been content to contain his attacks to Germany, other nations may not have taken notice, and there may have been no cause for war.

In *Yertle the Turtle*, Seuss tells the story of Yertle, king of the turtles and his rise to and fall from greatness. The story opens with a view of the pond. Yertle sits atop his throne, a rock at the end of the pond, with a smile on his face. Several turtles are shown swimming in the clear but green water of the pond. They too are smiling.

- A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.
- The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.
- The turtles had everything turtles might need.
And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.

(Yertle 2)

As happy and serene as the turtles all seem, the next page shows quite a change. Yertle decided he wanted more because "the kingdom he ruled was too small," (Yertle 3). Yertle rules what he sees, and from this lowly perch, all he sees is the pond. If he could find a way to sit higher, then he would be great.

Yertle finds a way. He orders the turtles to build a new throne for him out of themselves. With nine turtle stacked on one another's backs, Yertle could climb up and see out over much more land, all part of his newly claimed kingdom.
Yertle sits high on his throne smiling, but he closes his eyes to the pain he is causing to those supporting him. The other turtles, his subjects, not only support him metaphorically as a ruler, they literally hold him on their backs. Some turtles look shocked, some look angry, and still others seem afraid. But clearly, Mack, the bottom turtle, is in pain and not happy with his newfound position. Yertle is pleased with this new height and power. “I’m Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me! / For I am the ruler of all that I see!” (Yertle 8).

In the midst of Yertle’s enjoyment, Mack makes his unhappiness known. With only a faint sigh, Mack attracts the attention of his king. “Beg your pardon, King Yertle. / I’ve
pains in my back and my shoulders and knees. / How long must we stand here, Your Majesty, please?” (Yertle 9). At this point Yertle is in power, and Mack’s questioning of his actions only drives Yertle to more ambitious moves. In a frightening depiction of Yertle, he barks back at Mack, telling him he is inconsequential. As the king, Yertle can do whatever he wants, and now he wants an even higher throne.

'Turtles! More turtles!' he bellowed and brayed. And the turtles 'way down in the pond were afraid. They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed. From all over the pond, they came swimming by dozens. Whole families of turtles, with uncles and cousins.
And all of them stepped on the head of poor Mack.
One after another, they climbed up the stack.

(Yertle 14)

This illustration bears perhaps the most startling similarity to Hitler. This fearsome position is reminiscent of Hitler standing at the balcony in "heil" position. It isn't the position of Yertle, but the angle at which he is drawn and the anger on his face that shows his ferociousness. Seuss wants his readers to identify not with Mack, but with the other turtles in this instance. They are afraid of the power that Yertle has, and although they do not want to obey, they do. They hurt Mack because they fear for themselves. There is nothing special that makes these turtles capable of such disregard for their peers. Seuss gives the turtles families so children will identify with them. Children know that they too have uncles and cousins and can see the similarity between themselves and the turtles.

As the tower grows, Yertle grows from happy to ecstatic. He stands upon his wobbly tower of turtles giving what looks like a thumbs-up sign. But Yertle's elation is contrasted with the pain of his subjects. Heads down and frightened, these turtles are clearly suffering from the ambition of their ruler. At the bottom of the tower, the turtles seem to lack identity. They are less clear in the drawing, but that only illustrates
Yertle's superior view of them. He does not see these turtles as individuals, but rather as stepping-stones.

Again Mack complains, and again Yertle lets him have it.

'You hush up your mouth!' howled the mighty King Yertle.

'You've no right to talk to the world's highest turtle.

I rule from the clouds! Over land! Over sea!

There's nothing, no, NOTHING, that's higher than me!'

(Yertle 20)

Just as with the Nazis, dissent will not be tolerated. As he speaks he looks up to see the moon rising. He begins to call in
more turtles to surpass the moon when Mack burps. This powerful burp brings Yertle to the ground. He lands face first in the pond, which looks much muddier than before, perhaps having been polluted by the corruption of its ruler. All the other turtles, even lowly Mack, who still had the weight of countless turtles on his back, smiled.

Seuss ends the story with a punch:

And today the great Yertle, that Marvelous he,
Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see.
And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free
As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be.

(Yertle 28)
Here Seuss leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind that this is not a story just about turtles. Perhaps all creatures should be free. Seuss intended the story of Yertle and Mack to be an allegorical account of Hitler. Obviously Hitler was brought down by outside forces, not from within, and there is no mention of the Holocaust, (Minear 260). Even without these key elements, Seuss manages to make a link between the Turtle King and Hitler. According to Seuss, Yertle originally had a moustache, but he took it out because it looked silly, (Minear 260). Yertle is a dictator, plain and simple, who cares nothing for his subjects and only for his expansionist ideals, and in that way, he is just like Hitler.

In a cartoon Seuss drew during the war, he showed two similar stacks of turtles, but in the shape of a V for victory. Almost all of the turtles look happy or complacent at least.
This cartoon served as inspiration for Seuss's conception of Yertle's tower. Hitler managed to squash many of the German people, and through fear tactics had citizens hurt each other. Many of the Nazi soldiers killed other Germans because of their fear of Hitler. Seuss showed this through the turtles continuing to climb up when they knew one of their own was suffering. The bottom line of *Yertle the Turtle* is that no one should have power over many. "All the turtles are free / As turtles, and, maybe, all creatures should be."

**Horton Hears a Who**

Seuss's next book, and perhaps most telling, is *Horton Hears a Who*. The story of the tiny people in a tiny world that must prove their existence in order to save it represents the
plight of Japan in the aftermath of the war. "Though the Japanese did not have to prove their existence, they did have to justify it before the world," (Minear 264). Seuss visited Japan in 1954, just before the publication of this book and less than eight years after the bombings. He found the Japanese to be an optimistic people and worthy of the protection of the United States, (MacDonald 77). Seuss even dedicated the book to one of his friends, Mitsugi Nakamura of Kyoto, Japan. Seuss wanted readers to be aware of the symbolism he was implementing in this book and, more importantly, wanted the public to know that "a person's a person. No matter how small," (Horton 16).

The story begins with Horton alone in the middle of the jungle, on the middle day of the middle month of the year. All the emphasis on "middleness" points to the commonality of the story. This is not a special place that is set aside from the world; rather, it is the center of that world. Horton's "peaceable jungle" (36) could be linked to the "peaceable kingdom" of God where the lion will lie down with the lamb, (MacDonald 74). Interrupting the tranquility of the jungle, Horton hears a small voice, "just a very faint yelp," (Horton 3). This faint cry for help sends Horton on a mission, and his determination leads him to a tiny speck of dust.

"I say!" murmured Horton. "I've never heard tell
Of a small speck of dust that is able to yell."
So you know what I think?... Why, I think that there
must
Be someone on top of that small speck of dust!
Some sort of creature of very small size,
Too small to be seen by an elephant’s eyes... (Horton 5)
The intuitiveness of this elephant saves an entire race of
beings.

Horton begins to imagine what this tiny world must be like.
He cannot fathom what a world that exists on a speck of dust
could include, because he is unable to think outside of his own
world. He sees a barren landscape with one lonely inhabitor,
frail and terrified.

Although there may not be much of this world to save, Horton
stays true. "I'll just have to save him. Because, after all, /
A person's a person, no matter how small," (Horton 6). Horton may not be able to see the value in any world that is so small, but he does see the intrinsic value of life.

Horton begins to act as guardian of the speck of dust. He places it on a soft clover for safekeeping. Just as he does so, he is approached by two kangaroos. They not only question the existence of the dust-world, but they also doubt Horton's sanity for protecting the speck. But as Horton begins to defend the existence of the strangers, he starts to add to his perception of their world. He begins to see families and flowers, but he still cannot fathom the existence of a separate civilized society. Horton leaves with the clover in his trunk, and news spreads fast of his actions. Horton becomes the laughing stock of the jungle, and he must fight to protect what he believes in, the existence of these people and the intrinsic value of their lives.

Once alone, the dust speck begins to speak again to Horton. "You're a very fine friend.... / You've saved all our houses, our ceilings, and floors. / You've saved all our churches and grocery stores," (Horton 18). Horton is shocked at the prospect of such a world. "You have buildings there, too?" (Horton 21). Here the voice proclaims himself as the mayor Who-ville. Only now can Horton imagine a world of individuals, healthy and independent, living just as we do in this world.
Just as Horton comes to this realization, a pair of monkeys steals the speck of dust and gives it to a black-bottomed eagle named Vlad Vlad-i-koff. The eagle is the true villain of the piece, flying away with the clover and dropping it into a field. Vlad-i-koff looks more like a vulture than an eagle, but one cannot ignore the symbolism the eagle has to the United States. But the name Vlad-i-koff sounds distinctly Russian. Perhaps Seuss is trying to link the actions of the United States in the bombing to the cruelty typically attributed to Russians. The color black clearly represents a darkness and evilness of the soul of the eagle, and evil he is.
He let that small clover drop somewhere inside
Of a great patch of clovers a hundred miles wide!
‘Find THAT!’ sneered the bird. ‘But I think you will
fail.’
And he left
With a flip
Of his black-bottomed tail. (Horton 29)

Horton is then left with the task of sorting through millions of identical clovers in search of the one that is special. This test of his determination takes a lot out of Horton, but he prevails.
Horton does find the Whos, but his troubles are not yet over. Just when Horton believes all will be well, the monkeys and kangaroos approach Horton with the intent of boiling the clover. Here is where Horton calls upon the Whos to save themselves. He has done all he can to protect them. Now they must make their voices heard.

'Mr. Mayor! Mr. Mayor!' Horton called. 'Mr. Mayor! You've got to prove now that you really are there! So call a big meeting. Get everyone out. Make every Who holler! Make every Who shout! Make every Who scream! If you don't, every Who is going to end up in a Beezle-Nut stew! (Horton 39)
Horton could not take full responsibility for this civilization. They had to take care of themselves. Just as the United States could not fully support Japan, the Whos had to take responsibility for their own lives.

All the Whos gather and exclaim, "We are here!" but it is not until the smallest of all, Jo-Jo, lets out a "Yopp!" that they are heard.

Finally, at last! From that speck on the clover Their voices were heard! They rang out clear and clean.

And the elephant smiled. 'Do you see what I mean?... They’ve proved they ARE persons, no matter how small, And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of All!’ (Horton 60)

In this, Seuss gives his statement on voting. "The parallel between speaking up and voting is one that almost reaches the level of cliché, except that it is not just adults but also children who must participate here," (MacDonald 83). And because the story is directed at children, it is the small who overcome the large. "The political implication is clear, that all peoples and cultures have rights, simply because of their existence, even small, otherwise powerless people," (MacDonald 83). This tiny voice saves Who-ville, and all the animals of the jungle vow to protect it.
It seems feasible to say that the Whos, the tiny people Horton is protecting, represent the Japanese after the bombings. "The diminutive stature of the Whos resembles the Japanese at the time, not only because Orientals are physically smaller..., but also because as a world power, the Japanese were without influence of sympathy in the world community after World War II," (MacDonald 76). But if the Whos represent Japan, then Horton must represent the United States. Ruth MacDonald states that Horton "represents postwar United States in the international community of nations," (75). The United States bombed Japan many times during World War II. Before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States bombed over thirty Japanese cities, yet Horton is called a friendly guardian. The Whos say to Horton, "You're a very fine friend," (Horton 18). "For an American in 1954 to write these lines— even in an allegory—calls for willful amnesia," (Minear 264). Perhaps Horton is not a personification of what the United States actually was, but rather what Seuss wished it were.

Seuss's last illustration shows Horton and the kangaroos, the initial doubters, working together to protect the Whos. The baby kangaroo still lives in his mother's pouch, and is a reflection of her personality. He has no thoughts of his own throughout the story, and his only words are "me, too."
Here we see that same baby kangaroo not only helping the Whos, but thinking on his own. The umbrella is completely his idea. Part of the maturing process is thinking for one's self and protecting others. Seuss's message with this story is twofold: "each person deserves safety, no matter how small that person is; and each person has a civic duty to help insure that safety," (MacDonald 76).

**THE SNEETCHES**

Perhaps no decade in American history saw as much change as that of the sixties. World War II was over, and a new war was now being fought in Vietnam. Along with the resistance to this
war came an awakening of individuality in the United States. Rosa Parks made her stand on an Alabama bus on December 1, 1955, and the civil rights movement found its instigator. Jim Crow laws were still a reality to many Americans living in the South, and equal rights were not easy to come by. Although the fight for equality would continue for many years, Seuss made his voice heard on the subject in 1961 with *The Sneetches*.

The world is filled with different types of people, but in the world of the Sneetches, there are only two types: those with stars on their bellies and those without.

Those stars weren't so big. They were really so small. You might think such a thing wouldn't matter at all. But, because they had stars, all the Star-Belly Sneetches
Would brag, 'We're the best kind of Sneetch on the beaches.'

With their snoots in the air, they would sniff and they'd snort

'We'll have nothing to do with the Plain-Belly sort!'

(Sneetches 3-4)

It was not character, intelligence, or ability that separated the Sneetches from one other; it was only the star.

The Sneetches were divided in more than status. Children with stars would not play with those without. They did not gather together, eat together, or play together. The Sneetches without stars were confined to the far ends of the beaches while those with stars would have parties around their campfires. More than their actions, their attitudes separated them. Star-Bellies would walk with their heads held high and noses in the air. Plain bellies would look on sadly, faces drooping.
Plain-Bellies believed that the only thing they lacked was a star. For them a star represented the good life with fun, friends, and frankfurter parties. A star provided the self image and confidence the Plain-Bellied Sneetches lacked.

In true capitalist style, Sylvester McMonkey McBean, the Fix-Up Chappie, built a machine to give Plain-Bellies stars and line his wallet. He charged the Plain-Bellied Sneetches three dollars for a trip through his machine, and they came out the other end with stars. The Sneetches were spit from the machine with more than just stars on their bellies; they had smiles on their faces.

The newly-starred Sneetches went to the others, proud of their new identities. "We're exactly like you! You can't tell us
apart. / We're all just the same, now, you snooty old smarties!
/ And now we can go to your frankfurter parties," (Sneetches 12). All they want to do is be a part of the Star-Bellied way of life.

The once proud Star-Bellies are astonished. They have seen themselves above the others for so long that they cannot now see themselves on the same level. The Star-Bellies then go through a different machine to take off their stars. McBean, being the shrewd businessman that he is, soon has streams of Sneetches going in and out of machines taking off stars as soon as he can get them on.
Off again! On again!
In again! Out again!
Through the machines they raced round and about again,
Changing their stars every minute or two.
They kept paying money. They kept running through
Until neither the Plain nor the Star-Bellies knew
Whether this one was that one... or that one was this
one
Or which one was what one... or what one was who.
(Sneetches 21)

With all the switching back and forth, the Sneetches were soon
out of money. McBean leaves when his opportunity has dried up
saying, "They never will learn. / No. You can't teach a
Sneetch!" (Sneetches 22).

While the Sneetches may have been tricked out of their
money, they did learn.
...They decided that Sneetches are Sneetches
And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches.
That day, all the Sneetches forgot about stars
And whether they had one, or not, upon thars.

(Sneetches 24)

Now both types of Sneetches hold their heads high. They can play together, eat together, and live together because they are no longer focused on a superficial attribute of birth. Seuss is not talking about imaginary creatures; this is a book about racism.

In the United States, restaurants, shops, even drinking fountains were divided by race. The color of one's skin dictated much of one's life. Through no fault of one's own, one
think, the book offers clear insight into Seuss's attitude towards the growing threat of war in the United States.

The book begins "On the last day of summer, / ten hours before fall..." (Butter 1). Fall is the season that signifies the end of the life cycle, when things begin to die. These ten hours seem to represent a countdown, and in the context of the book, it is a countdown of survival. The grandfather takes his grandson out to "the Wall," which mirrors the Great Wall of China, rising high and winding across the countryside.

There is not another soul in sight, further illustrating the finality of the situation. The grandfather looks somewhat like another Seussian eagle with his protruding beak and slight
was limited in life because of the color of his or her skin, something one had no power to change. The capitalist ideology that is found in McBean links this story particularly to the United States. The fact that McBean is a monkey jibes Americans with a play on the cliche, "It's so simple even a monkey could do it." The Sneetches themselves bear an eerie resemblance to the eagle Seuss used to represent America in his earlier cartoons.

While this book is more a comment on racism in general than a specific reaction to the war, the mention of frankfurters is telling. World War I's Committee for Public Information in the height of its anti-German propaganda, declared frankfurters would from now on be referred to as hot dogs (Morgan 20). This
obvious German reference reflects Seuss’s desire for Germans, be they Jew or not, to be seen as equal as well. Also during World War II, Nazis forced Jews to wear stars on their clothes so that they could be easily identified and therefore shunned. The stars on the bellies of Sneetches are similar to those worn by European Jews. Seuss is comparing America’s racism problem to that of Europe’s in the earlier twentieth century. The Sneetches offers the United States a solution: forget about outsides. The allusions Seuss makes to World War II, anti-Semitism, and even the Holocaust with the stars serve as a warning to Americans. Hate will only lead to disaster, but acceptance is possible if individuals can learn to look beyond stars.

**THE BUTTER BATTLE BOOK**

Although The Butter Battle Book was not published until 1984, its comment on war cannot be ignored. The New York Times called the book “too close to contemporary international reality for comfort,” (Fensch 159). The book gives parallels to several historical events including the Berlin Wall, Hiroshima, American war slogans, and the fallout shelters of the fifties and sixties. Many reviewers found the book to be a trivialization of the arms race, citing that reality is more complicated than butter on bread, (MacDonald 157). Regardless of what reviewers
hunch. Seuss is giving Americans a warning. This is what we are headed for.

As the two stand at the wall, Grandfather begins to tell the story of the Yoosks long-standing battle with the Zooks on the other side of the wall.

Then my grandfather said,
'‘It’s high time that you knew
of the terribly horrible thing that Zooks do.
In every Zook house and in every Zook town
every Zook eats his bread
with the butter side down!' (Butter 5)

When Seuss tells his readers about the horrible thing the Zooks do, no one expects it to have anything to do with butter. By making the quarrel of the groups so nonsensical, children are not frightened by the story. It seems far removed from their world, and is thus another fantasy invented by Seuss that makes reality bearable.

When the argument begins, the only wall is low and is patrolled by Grandfather, a simple guard with a Snick-Berry Switch, a stick with prickly ends to scare away Zooks. But peace is not maintained with that Switch. "Then one terrible day / a very rude Zook by the name of VanItch / snuck up and slingshotted my Snick-Berry Switch!" (Butter 11). The peace is disrupted by a childish act, a boy and his slingshot. The name
VanItch sounds Russian, which only further reinforces Seuss's allegorical telling of the nuclear arms race between the United States and Soviet Union. Notice the abbreviations U.S. and S.U. are also mirror images like the bread and butter in the story. Seuss also contrasts the blue-uniformed Yooks, a symbol of American democracy, with the red-clad Zooks, a symbol of communism, (MacDonald 157). With his head hanging down, Grandfather returns to his chief.

Chief Yookeroo only sends him back to the wall, only now in a fancier suit and a fancier slingshot developed by the mysterious "boys in the back room." These boys are never given solid identities. For Seuss they represent the faceless developers of nuclear weapons. Government agencies in the United States know things that the public is not privy to, and that secrecy only makes their actions more suspicious. Seuss does not depict these men as evil. In fact they seem friendly, but they are all identical, lacking in personality and individuality. They maintain their half-cocked smiles until the very last episode as if they do not realize that the weapons they are developing could actually cause harm.
Grandfather manages to scare off VanItch this one time, but VanItch returns with a weapon to put the Yooks to shame. His boys in the back room developed a Jigger-Rock Snatchem that catches the rocks thrown by the Yooks' slingshots and shoot them right back. As the story goes on, the Zooks develop bigger guns and fancier machines and put their man in more elaborate uniforms. But the Yook spirit was not easily squashed. The people yelled out "Fight! Fight for the Butter Side Up! / Do or die!" (Butter 21) and "Oh, be faithful! / Believe in thy butter!" (25). The parades, songs, and slogans are reminiscent of the World War II propaganda that even Seuss himself participated in.

After the Yooks lose their third show-and-tell of weapons, the Back Room Boys develop the bomb.

You just run to the wall like a nice little man.

Drop this bomb on the Zooks just as fast as you can.
I have ordered all Yooks to stay safe underground while the Bitsy Big-Boy Boomeroo is around. (Butter 35)

The chief knows what is about to happen, which is why he stays hidden in the back room. Even the illustrious Back Room Boys look frightened now.

The bomb is a small red rock that seems to radiate. It is not clear what exactly this bomb will do, but people are afraid. The confidence that once exploded from the Yooks is now gone as they file underground with grave faces into the bomb shelter.

"They were all bravely marching, / with banners aflutter, / down a hole! For their country! / And Right-Side-Up Butter!" (Butter 37).
Just as the Yook jumps up on the wall and is about to drop his bomb, VanItch approaches with the same Big-Boy Boomeroo. And here the book ends, with both men standing on the wall or sitting on the fence if you will, poised to drop their respective bombs.

The book ends with an ellipsis signifying that the story may not be over. But the next page is blank. Could Seuss be giving us the ending? Dropping a nuclear bomb would destroy everything, not just one side of the wall. When the only option left is a bomb, that is the end of everything. Seuss claims that he cannot give an ending. That would be propaganda and unrealistic. The reality of the situation is that no one knows how it will end, (MacDonald 155).
The book's message is a need for tolerance and negotiation in American politics. "Ideally the book should elicit discussion and action, not paralyzing terror or denial," (MacDonald 156). Many of Seuss's criticisms of this book stemmed from the opinion that it is too dark for children. The book does deal with "assured self-destruction by nuclear weapons," but it is disguised in a fight over butter, (MacDonald 154). This is a story that children need to hear. "Unless a child learns otherwise, the sameness of all sorts of people is more apparent than the differences," (MacDonald 158). This story reinforces the similarities of people and the ridiculous extent to which people can take the most trivial differences. The implication for adults is clear: "they must protect children and keep the world safe for them," (MacDonald 157).

Although this book has no clear connection with World War II, its anti-nuclear war message was clearly shaped by Seuss's experiences in World War II. Seuss visited Japan years after the bomb was dropped, and he saw the value of these people as shown in his book, *Horton Hears a Who*. Seuss is very aware of the horror of war and of the evils that some people are capable of. When there are crimes committed against humanity by entire governments or by dictators like Hitler, it can be necessary to step in and defend those who cannot defend themselves. Butter, be yours the "Right-Side-Up" or not, is not a justification for
war. Seuss wants the public to realize that their loathing of people who are different than them, as in the Red Scare, is the real danger. Otherwise we are only steps away from that wall ourselves.
This analysis is by no means a complete look at the work of Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. Seuss contributed numerous books and illustrations to the body of children's literature. Children all over the world grow up hearing his hypnotic rhyme and laughing at his fantastical worlds. Although he is recognized as an entity all his own within children's literature (he tends to have his own sections in book stores), his accomplishments in poetry and thematics are not recognized in an adult sphere. In addition to his cartoonist days, Seuss produced countless other drawings, paintings, and sculptures not intended for publication. Many of these works, such as the paintings included at the end of this section, are worthy of further analysis and recognition as the work of a true artist.

Because Seuss concentrated on his work for children, he is not acknowledged in the literary world as a significant contributor. But Seuss' work is not merely child's play. As this essay has shown, Seuss managed to include very adult themes in his works that were presented in forms simple enough to be comprehended by children of all ages. While using subjects as
volatile as racism and the nuclear arms race, Dr. Seuss produced enjoyable children's books from which children and adults can learn. Even with such serious themes, Dr. Seuss never sacrificed his style, wit, or fantastical world.

One cannot live through a time of war and not be affected by it. Dr. Seuss was no different. His experiences in World War II shaped his mind and life. He was German and because of this was forced to view World War II with slightly different eyes than those of other Americans. His dedication to the United States was never questioned. He urged Americans into action against Hitler, never supported him. Dr. Seuss disclosed his overt disdain for the German dictator in Yertle the Turtle. He revealed his sympathy for the Jews later in his book The Sneetches by turning the star they were forced to wear into a symbol of pride and status. He revealed his faith in the Japanese through Horton Hears a Who. Finally many of Seuss's fears about war and the destiny of this world emerged in The Butter-Battle Book. These are not childlike themes; yet Dr. Seuss made them accessible to the smallest reader.
Intolerable Situation for a Cat
Untitled
The Joyous Leaping of Salmon
Works Cited


Seuss, Dr. *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish.*

Seuss, Dr. *The Sneetches and Other Stories.* Random House,
