



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ASSOCIATION WELCOMES ROBERT MUNSCH

WINNIPEG – Canadian author Robert Munsch will be speaking at the ChLA Conference venue at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People on Saturday, June 11, on the importance of performance to his creating of stories. Munsch, the author of more than 30 picture books, including *Thomas' Snowsuit*, *Mortimer*, *The Paper Bag Princess* and *Love you Forever*, begins the creation process not behind a desk, but in front of an audience.

The children in his audiences inspire the characters in his books. For instance, Thomas' Snowsuit was conceived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where Munsch was invited to speak to 300 kids from daycares. On his Website, www.robertmunsch.com, Munsch writes "I looked at the kids and they were all wearing snowsuits. I thought it must have been hard getting them into the snowsuits. I made up a snowsuit story about a little boy named Thomas who didn't like to put on his snowsuit. The kids liked it because every time Thomas didn't want to put on his snowsuit he yelled 'Noooooo.'" Performance is important to this piece because, when Munsch tells it to children, they all chime in and yell "Noooooo" with him.

Munsch writes that his audiences' reactions to the stories he tells help him to revise and fine-tune the stories until they can be written down on paper, a process that can take years.

The important role of the audience in Munsch's work made him a clear choice as a keynote speaker for the conference. "Because the theme of the conference was Performing Childhood, he seemed to be the obvious choice," says the University of Winnipeg's Mavis Reimer, conference chair.

Reading and hearing a story are fairly different experiences, she explains. "Munsch's stories always play with the sounds and rhythms of language. When you're reading silently, you can see how a word or a group of words looks on a page. But you won't have the pleasures of the repeated sounds--a favourite Munsch technique--and the combinations of sounds that communicate meanings through the way they make you feel when you say them." The book *Murmel, Murmel, Murmel* is one such example. "That word is nonsense, of course, but at the same time it is also very meaningful," she says.

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Munsch includes sound recordings of his books on his Website. Here, the stories are enriched by his expressive readings, although the visual clues are also an important aspect of his performances.

The ChLA is an international organization of teachers, scholars, librarians, editors, writers, illustrators and parents that encourages scholarship and research in children's literature. Its annual conference is held in a different location every year.

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To learn more about the conference or to register, visit
<http://chla.uwinnipeg.ca/conference.cfm> or contact:

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