

Grumpy writers

By [Debra Bendis](#)

November 13, 2012

My daughter-in-law alerted me to flavorwire.com's list of "[10 Grumpiest Living Writers](#)," which includes favorite Lutheran star Garrison Keillor, and revives his [2009 defense of Christian Christmas](#). ("Don't mess with the Messiah.")

Not-to-miss in the November/December issue of *The Believer* is an [interview](#) with another winner of "grumpy": the curmudgeon-children's author Maurice Sendak. Sendak, who died in May at the age of 84, spit out acerbic lines on why he no longer liked the city ("You get pushed and harassed and people grope you."), on being old ("I've turned into a typical old man. I can't believe it. I was young just minutes ago."), and on favorite authors ("I'm re-reading Henry James; I miss him so much, rat fiend that he was.")

But the snarky comments led to reflection on a difficult life and on a passion for music and literature that helped Sendak supersede the pain and loss. He grew up with the weighted history of Polish anti-Semitism, Holocaust losses and survivors' psychological wounds. His mother fled to the U.S. at 16. "I was very happy to be an American. I loved being here. I loved not being dead when I was a kid...."

Read it for his perspective on his art, old age and things worth caring about—and a few that aren't.