

# STUDY GUIDE

a  
year  
with

# Frog and Toad

by Robert & Willie Reale

Adapted from the children's stories of Arnold Lobel

COMPANY OF FOOLS

Company of Fools  
P.O. Box 656, Sun Valley, Idaho 83353  
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The information and classroom activities in this study guide support Idaho State Department of Education Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy for grades 3-8.

# WELCOME TO THE LIBERTY

Dear Educator,

We're delighted to welcome you and your students to Company of Fools' (a proud part of the Sun Valley Center for the Arts) production of ***A Year with Frog and Toad***. Working with local schools is a fundamental part of Company of Fools' and The Sun Valley Center for the Arts' mission.

We hope this study guide will serve as a useful resource for you as educators and parents. It is designed to enhance student learning both before and after the performance, to support your classroom lesson plans and deepen the educational value of your students' experience. The information and classroom activities in this study guide support Idaho State Department of Education Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy for grades 3-8.

Thank you for sharing the magic of live theatre with your students!

- Company of Fools



# HOW TO BE A GREAT AUDIENCE

Live theatre productions are exciting and vibrant. Actors, audience, and backstage technicians are all part of the experience. As audience members, your students will play an important role in the overall atmosphere of the performance.

To ensure that everyone has a great time at the theatre, please share the following expectations with your students:

- Please remain seated throughout the entire performance.
- Try not to rock back and forth in your seats. They can—and sometimes do—break.
- Restroom visits are best made before leaving school. The theatre's restroom facilities are very limited. **A Year with Frog and Toad** is 95 minutes in length with one short intermission (a 10 -minute Q&A session will follow the performance).
- Lights Out = Quiet Time! When the lights in the theatre dim to blackout, this is the signal that the performance is about to begin.
- Please do not talk or whisper during the performance. You might think whispering during the show is okay. But if everyone in the audience whispers, it will be disruptive to the performers.
- Do not drink, eat, or chew gum during the performance.
- Turn cell phones to the “silent” setting. And **absolutely** no texting.
- Keep your feet on the floor, not on the seat in front of you.

We hope you and your students will enjoy your visit to the Liberty Theatre!

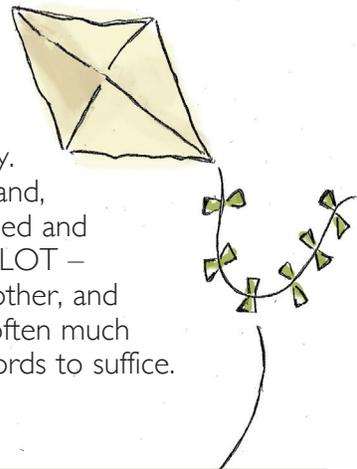
**Teacher Tip:** Spark conversation with your students by asking them to remember a time when they were in an audience. Was it a great audience or were there distractions? Have students make their own criteria for what a GREAT audience is and have them share their thoughts.

# A QUICK HOP

**A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD** is about friendship. It emphasizes an important reality we all live with: people who are different can make very good friends. Before they see the show, ask students to talk or even write about their own friends, exploring how they are alike, how they are different, and which brings them the most joy.

**A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD** is made up of a combination of adventures gleaned from four of Arnold Lobel's prize-winning Frog and Toad books: **Frog and Toad Are Friends**, **Frog and Toad Together**, **Days with Frog and Toad**, and **Frog and Toad all Year**. Have your class read some or all of the books ahead of time so they can recognize where the events come from.

**A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD** is filled with music! There are many moods, as there are several seasons in the world, and in friendship. By turns, the music is light and jazzy, sweet and soothing, and absolutely spunky. Sometimes it is ragtime, Dixieland, hoedown...it is delightfully varied and feels good. The actors sing A LOT – to one another, about one another, and together. Their emotions are often much too large for simple spoken words to suffice.



An interview with Adrienne Lobel, taken from the StageNOTES study guide who produced *A Year With Frog and Toad* on Broadway. Adrienne Lobel is the set designer of *A Year With Frog and Toad*. She is also the daughter of Arnold Lobel, the author of the original *Frog and Toad* books. Here she speaks about her relationship to the characters and her role in developing the show.

**StageNOTES:** It's been said that you were partly responsible for inspiring your father to write the *Frog and Toad* books. What happened?

**ADRIANNE LOBEL:** It was sometime in the mid-sixties. My family and I were summering by a lake in Vermont. One day I came in from the woods with a small animal in the palm of my hand. "What a nice frog you have there," said my father. "This is not a frog," I replied. "This is a toad." And I explained all of the differences in appearance and life style between these two amphibians. Not long after that the first *Frog and Toad* book was born! I like to think I planted the seed of their creation in my father's head.

**SN:** When did you decide to make the *Frog and Toad* books into a musical?

**AL:** It has been in my head for a long time. Of all my father's books, these seemed to lend themselves best to dramatization. Most of his books have one eccentric character — usually an animal of some kind who tends to live alone and has encounters with others but not long relationships. Frog and Toad have the strongest and most developed relationship. I envisioned the show as an intimate vaudeville-style musical with jazzy thirties-style sound. The songs, like my father's writing, should not condescend to children but should have an articulate cleverness and a sophistication that would appeal to children and their parents.

**SN:** Could you discuss the process of adapting *Frog and Toad* for the stage?

**AL:** Being a visual person, I think I started with what I thought the show should look like. I knew I wanted Frog and Toad to look like elegant gentlemen — that the actors would wear their own faces, not big rubber heads. Then I saw a show at the New Victory [theatre] when it first opened, and I sat looking at the theatre the whole evening thinking: "This is it! This is where we must do a musical of *Frog and Toad*." It was the old vaudeville quality of the house that helped me come up with the idea for the theatrical adaptation. If you think of it, Frog and Toad are like Fred Astaire (*Frog*) and Edward Everett Horton (*Toad*), or Bing Crosby (*Frog*) and Bob Hope (*Toad*). I thought: "a lot of soft shoe — *Babitt and the Bromide*—type stuff with old fashioned scenery, painted legs and drops." And the music could be based on the musicals my father and I loved from the thirties and forties. So when I approached [writer and composer] Willie and Rob Reale, that was what we talked about.

**SN:** What was your approach to the visual design of the show?

**AL:** I didn't want to take the book illustrations and stick them on the stage. My father's watercolors were limpid; they looked loose, but they're not easy. I studied his work very carefully, so I'd have to warm up my hand to do his work, which is very fluid and facile, in the best sense.

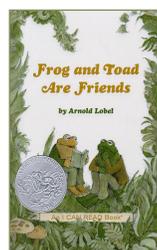
**SN:** Do you think your father would be happy with the musical?

**AL:** I certainly hope so. I think he would be tickled to know that I did it. He was a big theatre fan and somewhat of a frustrated actor himself. I was scared at first that I might be selling his soul down the river. But I really think he'd be thrilled.

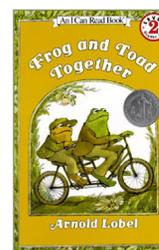
## STORIES TO READ (Sorted by Book) —

Each of the songs and scenes in *A Year With Frog and Toad* corresponds directly to a story from the Frog and Toad books. These stories are strung together to fill the year that passes during the show. Below you will find a list of the books in the *Frog and Toad* series and the stories within each book that will be enacted in the show. (All books are written by Arnold Lobel)

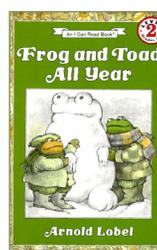
**Frog and Toad Are Friends**  
*Spring, A Swim, The Letter*



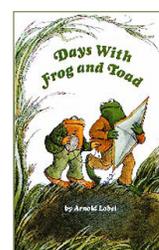
**Frog and Toad Together**  
*The Garden, Cookies*



**Frog and Toad All Year**  
*Down the Hill, The Surprise, Christmas Eve*



**Days with Frog and Toad**  
*The Kite, Shivers, Alone*



# FROGS AND TOADS IN NATURE

## What kind of Animals are They?

Both frogs and toads belong to a group of animals that can live-in water and on land. They are cold-blooded animals – that means their bodies stay at the same temperature as their environment. Frogs and Toads have been around for millions of years, and haven't changed very much since the time of the dinosaurs. They can live anywhere there is fresh water, from deserts to mountains, and on every continent except Antarctica.

## What's so Amazing about Frogs and Toads?

A lot of things! One of the many things that are fascinating about frogs and toads is how they grow up. Both frogs and toads lay their eggs in the water. When the eggs hatch, what comes out doesn't even look like a frog! It's a tadpole.

It has a head and a tail, and it breathes through gills like a fish. As the tadpole grows up, it keeps changing. First, it grows back legs, then it grows front legs, then it loses its tail. Over time, the tadpole develops lungs for breathing, so it can leave the water and go on land. This transition is called metamorphosis.

Another interesting thing about frogs and toads is how they eat. Both eat insects, earthworms, small fish and spiders. They use their long, sticky tongues to catch food and slurp it back into their mouths. Frogs and toads must swallow food whole, because frogs don't have any bottom teeth and toads don't have any teeth at all!

Frogs and toads have really clever ways of protecting themselves. Some have very brightly colored skin to convince predators that they are poisonous, and others may have skin that looks like the forest so they can hide without being seen.



# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FROG AND A TOAD?



## Frogs:

- Frogs have long powerful legs and webbed feet perfect for jumping and swimming.
- Most frogs have teeth in their upper jaws.
- Frogs have smooth wet skin.
- Frogs are most at home in the water.
- Frogs lay eggs in clusters.
- Frogs have two bulging eyes that help them to see in all directions without having to move their heads.

## Toads:

- Toads have chubbier bodies and shorter legs than frogs, better for walking and hopping on land.
- Most toads don't have any teeth at all.
- Toads are most at home on land.
- Toads lay eggs in long chains.
- Toads have poison glands on both sides of their necks, making predators think twice about eating them.

## Frogs and Toads:

- Both frogs and toads are tadpoles when they are young.
- Both frogs and toads lay eggs in water.

# FUN FACTS ABOUT FROGS AND TOADS

The largest frog is the Goliath frog of West Central Africa. It can grow to be more than 1 foot long (over 30 cm).

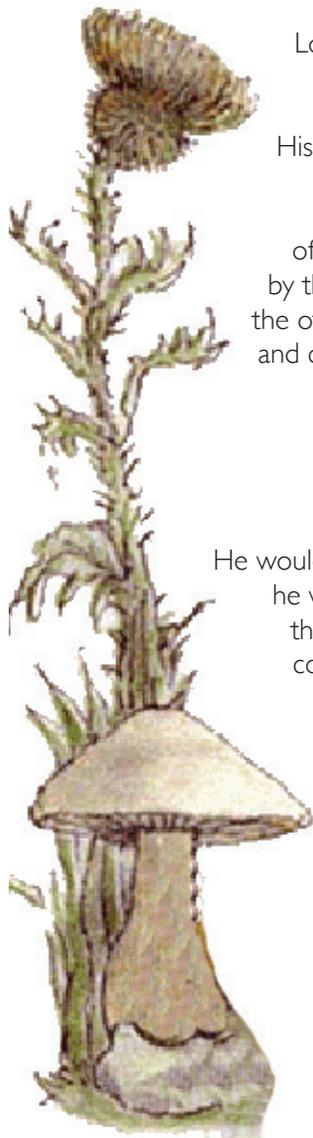
The smallest frog is the Cuban Pygmy frog, which grows to be about ½ inch (1 cm) long.

Frogs are great jumpers. Some frogs can jump up to 20 times their body length; that would be like a person jumping 100 feet! The longest jump on record was by a frog named Santjie in South Africa. Santjie's best jump was marked at 33 feet, 5.5 inches (or about 11 meters).

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR: Arnold Lobel

When Arnold Lobel was growing up in Schenectady, New York, he was out of school and sick through most of second grade. One of the ways he kept himself occupied was by drawing. Somewhat hesitant about returning to school, he used his animal drawings as a way to make friends with his classmates. It has been said that his sets of books about animal friends, such as *Frog and Toad*, were based on these experiences.

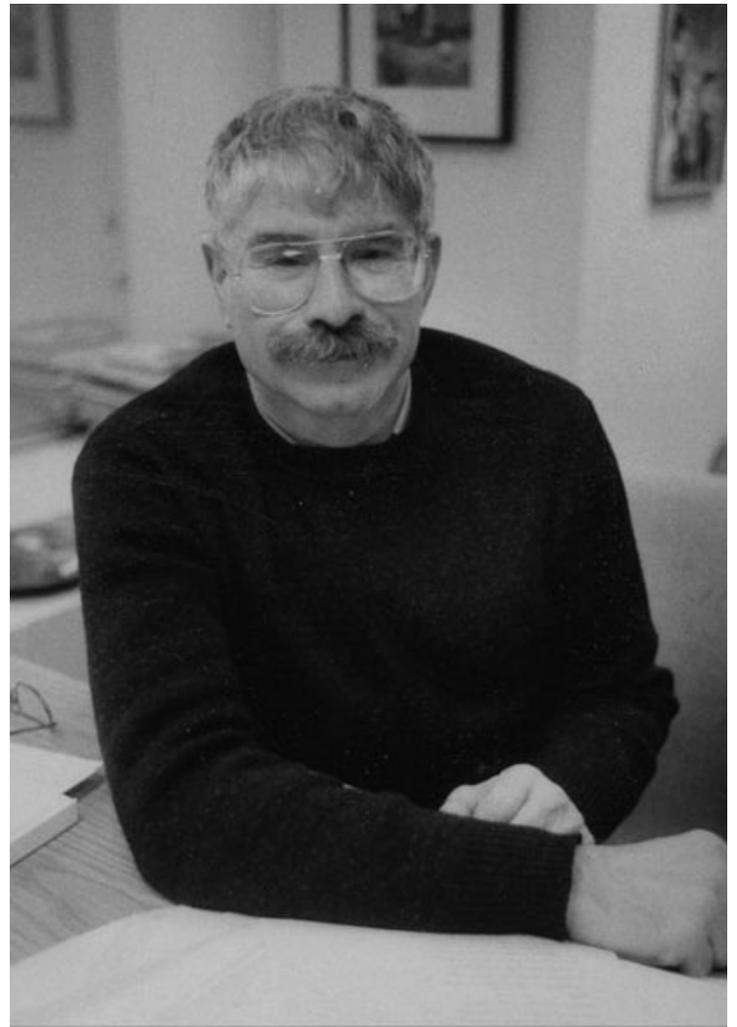
His health improved, and upon graduating high school, he decided to improve his artistic skills and attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where he focused on illustration and met his future wife Anita, a talented illustrator. They settled in Brooklyn and had two children Adrienne and Adam. The Prospect Park Zoo was right across the meadow from their apartment, and the family would go there often to observe and enjoy the animals.



Lobel's books are warm, funny tales of love and friendship, most featuring animals as the main characters. His book *Frog and Toad* was a Caldecott honor book in 1971. *Frog and Toad* was just the beginning of a long list of early readers written and illustrated by this talented man. Like the first book, the others are made up of short chapters and contain lovable, though slightly wacky, characters.

Lobel called himself a daydreamer instead of an author or an artist. He would see the pictures in his mind before he would think up the words to go with them. "I cannot think of any work that could be more agreeable and fun than making books for children." Lobel has said.

He died in 1987 leaving a legacy of almost 100 books that he had written and illustrated.



## ARTISTS

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Frog	Chris Carwithen
Toad	Andrew Alburger
Snail	John Glenn
Bird/Turtle	Aly Wepplo
Bird/Mouse	Melody Taylor-Mauldin

### MUSICIANS

Conductor/Piano	R.L. Rowsey
Keyboards	Dorinda Rendahl
Bass	Brad Hershey
Drums	Beck Vontver

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Direction	John Glenn
Musical Direction	R.L. Rowsey
Choreography	Leslie Owens-Harrington
Stage Management	K.O. Ogilvie
Set Design	Dennis Rexroad
Light Design	Lynn Hartman
Costume Design	Coleen McDuffee

# ACTIVITIES

## Before You See the Play

Consider asking the following question for discussion:

1. What does friendship mean?
2. What are the characteristics of a good friend?
3. How are you a good friend?
4. What is time?  
What are some of the ways to mark the passing of time?
5. What is your favorite season and why?  
What are some animals that hibernate during the seasons?

## After You See the Play

Consider asking the following question for discussion:

1. Do you think it was okay for the Turtle, the Mouse and the Lizard to laugh at Toad?
2. Have you ever mailed a letter to anyone?
3. Do you think Frog's scary story was true, why or why not? Have you ever told someone a story that wasn't true?

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD FRIEND?

Answer the following questions about a good friend of yours.

My good friend's name is...

My good friend is...

My good friend and I like to...

My good friend and I have fun when...

My good friend and I laugh when...

My good friend and I go...

My good friend helps me with...

My friend is like me in these ways...

My friend is different from me in these ways...

Other words that describe my good friend are...

In the space below, draw a picture of your best friend:



# WRITE A REVIEW OF A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD

1. Include your name, grade and school.
2. What remains in your memory from the play that you saw?
3. How did the designers make the performance more exciting? (think about the set, lights, sounds, costumes and props)
4. Who were your favorite characters and why?
5. Compare and contrast the themes of the play to an adventure movie or the short story.
6. Give your review a headline.

**Send your review of  
A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD to:**

Company of Fools  
P.O. Box 656  
Sun Valley, Idaho 83353



# TEACHER FEEDBACK: A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD

1. What grade do you teach?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Were your students engaged during the performance?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
3. Did you use this study guide as an education material for your students?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
4. What sections of the study guide were most useful to you?
  - a. Artist Background
  - b. Play Synopsis
  - c. Pre and Post Activities
  - d. Teacher Alerts
  - e. Resources
  - f. Student Activities
  - g. I did not use the study guide
  - h. Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did preparing for the performance and/or talking about the show after impact your students?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
6. Why did you make the choice to bring your students? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is there a story or anecdote that describes the impact of this experience for your students? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE consider taking this same brief survey at  
<http://fluidsurveys.com/s/TeacherFeedbackFrogandToad/>  
or fax to 788-1053  
or Mail to Company of Fools,  
P. O. Box 656, Sun Valley, Idaho 83353