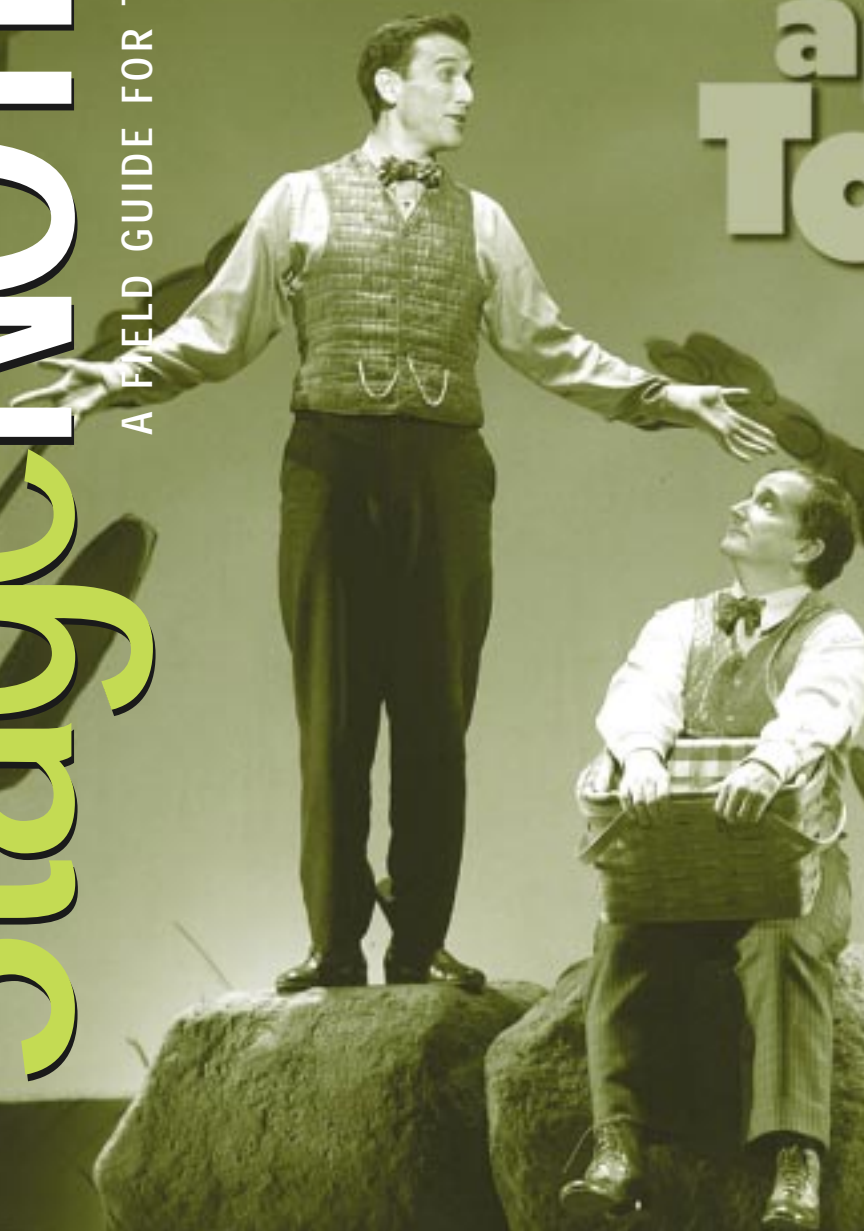


StageNOTES™

A FIELD GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

A
Year
With
**Frog
and
Toad**



A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD

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This publication is based on the work of *A Year With Frog and Toad* with book and lyrics by Willie Reale and music by Robert Reale, based on the *Frog and Toad* books by Arnold Lobel. The content of the *A Year With Frog and Toad* edition of StageNOTES™: A Field Guide for Teachers is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all other countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights regarding publishing, reprint permissions, public readings, and mechanical or electronic reproduction, including but not limited to, CD-ROM, information storage and retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

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Look for the Original Cast Recording produced by the Children's Theatre Company,
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A
Letter
from

the Producer of **Frog and Toad**

A
Year
With

Welcome to the world of Frog and Toad! Based on Arnold Lobel's beloved books, *A Year With Frog and Toad* is a lively and exciting new musical for children of all ages. We're thrilled to be able to bring these charming amphibians to New York audiences.

Frog and Toad are great friends. They remind us how friendship can enrich our lives in many, many ways. Frog and Toad do nice things for each other, lend each other support, and have a great time when they're together. But things aren't always sunny. Like any friends, Frog and Toad have some bumpy times, too. These rough spots only serve to strengthen their relationship. They — and we — have a lot to learn from both the fun stuff and the hard stuff that is part of every friendship.

A Year With Frog and Toad provides many opportunities for extended learning in the classroom. This musical serves as a touchstone for various lessons that can be integrated into the curriculum of students of any age. Our show touches on social themes, such as friendship, but can also be used to teach about the science of amphibians, the environment, weather, music, and of course, the magic of theater itself. This study guide will help you tease out the various themes from the show and will add to your students' enjoyment.

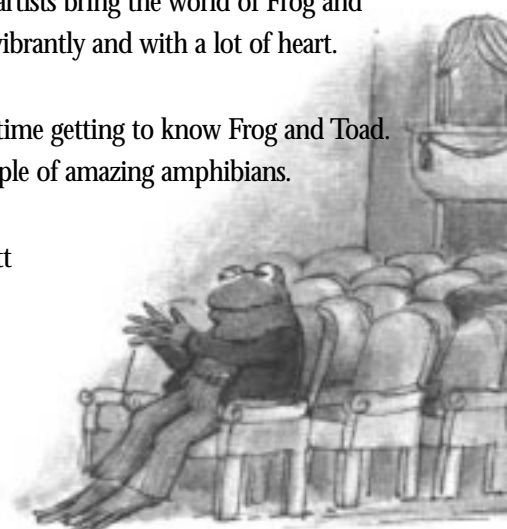
We're particularly proud that *A Year With Frog and Toad* is a family affair. Adrienne Lobel, the show's set designer and co producer, is the daughter of Arnold Lobel, author of the original *Frog and Toad* books (and many other wonderful books for children). She has brought her deep knowledge and love of Frog and Toad to this musical, and it shows. We all think Arnold Lobel would be very pleased with the results. Adding to the familial atmosphere, Lobel's husband, Mark Linn-Baker, is playing the role of Toad. As Adrienne has said, her father always loved her husband's work as an actor, and would have been very happy to see him bringing one of his characters to life.

A Year With Frog and Toad celebrates friendship in all its forms. The lovely book and lyrics by Willie Reale and the toe-tapping music by Robert Reale bring a vital theatricality to Lobel's stories, while David Petrarca's direction, Daniel Pelzig's choreography, Adrienne Lobel's sets and Martin Pakledinaz's costumes envelope us in a truly visual world. Together, with our incredibly talented cast, these theater artists bring the world of Frog and Toad to life, vibrantly and with a lot of heart.

Have a great time getting to know Frog and Toad. They're a couple of amazing amphibians.

— Bob Boyett

Set design sketch by Adrienne Lobel





Mark Linn-Baker and company in "Getta Loada Toad."

A Chat with the Reales

StageNOTES™ spoke with the writer and composer of *A Year With Frog and Toad* about the process of creating the musical, the magic of Lobel's books, and why Frog and Toad are such memorable characters. Willie Reale wrote the book and lyrics, and his brother, Robert Reale, wrote the music.

StageNOTES: *What was the inspiration for creating a musical from the Frog and Toad series?*

ROBERT REALE: Adrienne Lobel (Arnold's daughter) had worked with my brother, Willie, and myself on a musical a couple of years back and approached us about writing a musical based upon her father's books. So she initiated the process.

WILLIE REALE: The inspiration lay within the stories themselves, which we love.

SN: *How did you decide on the musical style for the piece?*

RR: Stylistically, Willie and I first started on our own and wrote a couple of numbers. When we played them for Adrienne, she felt that they didn't remind her of the feeling she got when she was a little girl sitting in the den as her father wrote and drew the Frog and Toad books. Apparently he had on some thirties music and that felt right to her. So we scrapped what we had and I started to write somewhere in between the Hal Roach Orchestra and Fred Astaire.

WR: Frog and Toad are old-fashioned guys so we all felt the music in the show should be of an earlier time. We settled on a musical style from the thirties (except for one song which is more forties). That led us to the vaudeville-style presentation.

SN: *What was the biggest challenge in adapting the books to the stage?*

WR: The trick was to find things that glued the whole evening together. I knew early on that the snail could be a running character. Later, we found the broken clock.

SN: *What part did Adrienne Lobel play in the development of the show?*

WR: Adrienne has been dreaming about this for a long time. She approached us with the books and we all discussed how this might become a stage piece. Once we wrote the first song, I believe it was "Cookies," we knew we were on to something. We saw that stories could be sung, and we were off to the races.

RR: Adrienne technically has a "developed by" credit, but she not only initiated from the start, she guided throughout. It was a real labor of love for her. I think she wanted to honor her father in the best way possible and, therefore, did her best to put together her "dream team" of designers to make that happen.

SN: *How did the visual element factor into the writing of the book and music?*

WR: I think we all benefited enormously from Arnold's work. His drawings are so cozy and evocative, they can take you to the Frog and Toad world in your imagination. All you need to do is go there and write a musical.



Costume sketch by Martin Pakledinaz

Warts *and all!*

A *Year With Frog and Toad* is about two animals that have a lot in common and few differences. Real frogs and toads have the same basic shape and many of the same habits. For example, they both like to lay their eggs in or near water.

Both frogs and toads are amphibians, which means that they can live on land or in water. All amphibians have a backbone and moist skin. An amphibian's backbone supports its body and helps it to move, just like our backbones support our bodies. All amphibians take in oxygen from the air through their thin skin and the lining of their mouths and throats. Some breathe through lungs like humans do. Most amphibians produce a thick, slippery liquid called mucus, which helps to keep their skin moist.

Amphibians are cold-blooded, unlike people, who are warm-blooded. Our bodies work hard to keep our body temperature around 98.6 degrees. Amphibians don't stay at a constant body temperature. When

an amphibian needs to warm up, it sits in the sun. When it needs to cool down, it moves to a shady area.

The word amphibian comes from two Greek words — amphi means double and bios means life. In a way, amphibians do have a double life. They spend the first part of their life in the water and the second part of their life on land. They hatch from eggs laid in the water or on wet ground, and breathe air underwater through gills, just like fish. When they get older, they grow legs and come out of the water, where they live on land as adults.

There are over three thousand types of amphibians on this planet, including all sorts of frogs, toads, newts, and salamanders. Most are less than six inches long. The smallest frog in the world is smaller than a human thumbnail. The largest amphibian, the Chinese giant salamander, weighs sixty pounds and can be as long as six feet.

So if frogs and toads are both amphibians, and have all these things in common, what makes them different?

What do frogs and toads eat?

In *A Year With Frog and Toad*, Frog and Toad love cookies. What do real frogs and toads like to eat?

When they are young tadpoles living in the water, frogs and toads eat plants and weeds. When they grow up and come to live on land, they mostly eat insects, such as flies, grasshoppers, and beetles. Scientists believe that frogs and toads recognize their meals by movement. If something is hopping, wriggling, or flying, they know it will make a good dinner. Small frogs and toads eat small insects, while bigger creatures eat worms, small fish, and snakes. The largest frogs and toads sometimes eat mice.



Mark Linn-Baker (Toad)...



Seasons of Life

In *A Year With Frog and Toad*, we join Frog and Toad as they pass through the seasons of a year: spring, summer, fall, and winter. They often do activities related to the season. For example, in the summer, they go swimming and in the fall, they rake leaves. When it gets really cold, they go to sleep and hibernate for the winter. What do real frogs and toads do during each of the four seasons?

Spring

In the spring, most frogs and toads are active. As the temperature warms up, they come out of hibernation. Frogs spend their time in or near the water, and toads hang out in the woods and forests. They look for food wherever they can find it, and try to avoid being eaten by predators, such as otters, raccoons, rats, owls, herons, and many other types of birds.

Summer

The warm summer is a good time for these cold-blooded creatures. When the temperature changes, some frogs and toads change as well. Many

amphibians can change color according to the temperature. On a hot, dry day, an amphibian will be lighter in color than on a cool, wet day. One African tree frog can even turn white so that it isn't affected so much by extreme heat and the blazing sunshine. Other frogs and toads deal with the heat by lubricating their skin. Glands all over their bodies let out a mucus that keeps the skin moist and precious water from evaporating through their skin.

Some frogs and toads live in places where the summer is so hot and dry that they need to escape from the heat. Certain species in Africa and Australia actually go underground to find relief. Much like hibernation in the winter, this process is called estivation. Since water is such an important part of survival, especially for frogs, these species burrow underground and shut down their bodily functions until things get more moist and cool in their environment. Then they return to the surface. Some amphibians will stay underground for weeks at a time, coming out only when it's wet enough to eat or find a mate. Scientists have found that spadefoot toads will return to the surface when they hear the sound of rain on the soil above them.

Some frogs and toads will spend the whole summer underground, emerging only when the rains come.

Fall

In the fall, temperatures start to drop, and frogs and toads respond to the change. Their bodies prepare for the cold that is to come. Their

Set design sketch by Adrienne Lobel

Keeping It ^{in the} Family Adrianne Lobel and *Frog and Toad*



Adrianne 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 [theater] when it first opened, and I sat looking at the theater 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 — Babbitt 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. I know he would love that it played on 42nd Street — though he never did see the rejuvenation of the block. And he was a great fan of [actor] Mark Linn-Baker [who is also Lobel's husband] so he would have liked to see Mark as *Toad*. He was a big theater 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.

Lesson Ideas

Adaptation #1

Objective: Students adapt a favorite story into a theatrical piece.

Exercise: The creators of the musical, *A Year With Frog and Toad*, took Arnold Lobel's original books as a starting point and adapted them for the stage. They wrote songs and made alterations to the stories and the language so they would work in the theater. What do you think are some of the challenges in adapting a literary work to the stage?

Split the class into groups of 4 or 5. Each group should choose a favorite fairy tale, folk tale or story they have read in class. Working together, adapt the story into a performance. Keeping in mind what would make the story interesting to watch, not just read, write a short script. Think about times when the story can be told with visuals or movement rather than with dialogue. Perform the short adaptation in front of the class, receive feedback, revise and share your work.

Teaching Tips: What are some other adaptations you have worked on in class — such as films adapted from books? Which ones were most successful, and why? Do adaptations work best when they remain completely faithful to the source material, or can deviations from the original sometimes be useful and productive? What makes something theatrical, as opposed to literary?

Adaptation #2

Objective: Students create further adventures of Frog and Toad.

Exercise: Arnold Lobel wrote a whole series of books about Frog and Toad. Throughout the books, they go on adventures, fly a kite, bake cookies, and do nice things for each other. What are some other things that Frog and Toad might do together?

Each student should write her or his own short book about the continuing adventures of Frog and Toad. What are some activities that they might do together? Create either a picture book that tells the story of a new Frog and Toad adventure through pictures, or write out the stories and draw illustrations to go along with the words. Think about the characters of Frog and Toad, and make sure that your story is in keeping with Lobel's characters. How are they different? How are they the same? When the books are finished, the authors should present them to the class. Receive feedback, revise and share your work again with the class.

Teaching Tips: What is the process that a writer goes through when coming up with a new story? Where can you find inspiration? What makes a story engaging and interesting? How can the illustrations serve to enhance the story? How can the story be an expression of what interests you and what you believe?



Lesson Ideas

Research

Objective: Students learn about the science and biology of amphibians.

Exercise: In *A Year With Frog and Toad*, human actors portray amphibious creatures. They do many things, such as bake cookies and go sledding, that frogs and toads don't do (as far as we know!). But what about real frogs and toads? How do they spend their days?

Go to your school library and find some books about frogs and/or toads. The Internet might also be useful in your research. Take note of all the interesting facts you can find about frog and toads. Where do they live? What do they eat? What do they do all day? What are the various stages of their development as they grow up?

Decide whether you want to make a frog or a toad. Next, take a paper plate and paint it green. This will be your frog or toad's body. Use construction paper to make legs and other details, and glue them to the paper plate, leaving room in the middle. Now, in the middle of the plate write down a list of the amphibious facts that you have collected in your research. Hang your frog or toad on the wall for all to see and learn from!

Teaching Tips: What makes frogs and toads amphibians? What are some other amphibians besides frogs and toads? Have you ever seen a real frog or toad? If you were able to touch or hold one, what did it feel like? Think about all the stories you know about frogs, such as the frog who was really a prince. What do you notice about the way the frog is often portrayed in stories and fairy tales?

Diorama

Objective: Students visualize a scene from *Frog and Toad* using arts and crafts.

Exercise: Adrienne Lobel, the set designer of *A Year With Frog and Toad*, took her father's books as a starting point and then used her visual imagination to create the world of the show. How do you see the *Frog and Toad* episodes in your head?

Take a shoebox and cover it with green construction paper: place your box on the paper, trace around to measure the sides, then cut it out and glue it to the box. Then, using paper cutouts, clay, markers, and other materials, create a diorama inside the box that depicts either:

- A. A scene from one of the *Frog and Toad* books
- B. A scene from the musical *A Year With Frog and Toad*
- C. A scene from your own Frog and Toad adventure
- D. An amphibian scene based on facts about real frogs and toads

When you are finished, write a report describing your diorama.

Teaching Tips: Read a passage aloud from the books and ask the students to visualize the story. What does it mean to "think visually?" What is the first thing you do when you are drawing a picture? Where do you find the images that you create? How can different materials (such as crayons, paint, and clay) change the impact of your artwork? Which materials do you like best, and why?



Frog and Toad Resources

A Year With

Books by Arnold Lobel (Harper & Row Publishing)

A Zoo for Mister Muster, 1962
A Holiday for Mister Muster, 1963
The Book of Pigericks: Pig Limericks, 1983
Days With Frog and Toad, 1979
Fables, 1980
Frog and Toad All Year, 1976
Frog and Toad Are Friends, 1970
Frog and Toad Together, 1972
Giant John, 1964
Grasshopper on the Road, 1978
How the Rooster Saved the Day, 1977
Martha, the Movie Mouse, 1966
Ming Lo Moves the Mountain, 1982
Mouse Soup, 1977
Mouse Tales, 1972
On the Day Peter Stuyvesant Sailed Into Town, 1971
Owl at Home, 1975
Small Pig, 1969
Uncle Elephant, 1981

Books for Reference

Badger, David, and John Netherton. *Frog*. Voyageur Press, 1995.
Clarke, Barry. *Amazing Frogs and Toads*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.
Hofrichter, Robert. *Amphibians: The World of Frogs, Toads, Salamanders and Newts*. Firefly Books, 2000.
Lacey, Elizabeth A. *The Complete Frog: A Guide for the Very Young Naturalist*. Lee & Shepard Books, 1989.
Mattison, Christopher. *Frogs and Toads of the World*. Facts on File, Inc., 1987.
Stewart, Melissa. *Amphibians: A True Book*. Grolier Press, 2001.

Music

A Year With Frog and Toad: Original Cast Recording. Children's Theatre Company, 2002.

Entertainment and Educational Films

Kermit's Swamp Years: The Real Story Behind Kermit the Frog's Early Years. Columbia Tri-Star Home, 2002. Rated G.

National Geographic. Reptiles and Amphibians, 1968. Not Rated.

Websites

www.frogandtoadonbroadway.com

The official website for *A Year With Frog and Toad*

www.playbill.com

For the latest information and news on *A Year With Frog and Toad*

www.amazon.com

To purchase any of the merchandise listed

Reference Websites

www.allaboutfrogs.org/weird/general/frogtoad.html
www.athene.csu.edu.au/~clatham/frogs
www.carolhurst.com/authors/alobel.html
www.coe.west.asu.edu/students/dcorley/authors/Lobel.htm
www.edupaperback.org/authorbios/Lobel_Arnold.html
www.thefrogsite.com/
www.newvictory.org

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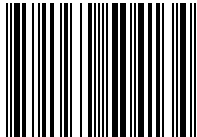
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