

**A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD  
CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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***Applause! Series***  
**CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES**  
**February 19, 2010**

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR, ARNOLD LOBEL**

During his distinguished career, **Arnold Lobel** wrote and/or illustrated over 70 books for children. Mr. Lobel's notable achievements in illustration include *Fables* (1981), for which he was awarded the Caldecott Medal, and two Caldecott Honor Books—his own *Frog and Toad Are Friends* (1971) and *Hildilid's Night* by Cheli Duran Ryan (1972). Mr. Lobel also received recognition for his writing; his book *Frog and Toad Together* (1973) was selected as a Newberry Honor Book.



Photo courtesy of worklightproductions.com

In addition to the *Frog and Toad* books, *Owl at Home*, *Mouse Tales*, *The Book of Pigericks*, and many other popular books he created, Mr. Lobel also illustrated other writers' texts that captured his fancy. He viewed this as "something different and challenging." In 1977 Mr. Lobel and his wife, Anita, a distinguished children's book author and artist in her own right, collaborated on their first book, *How the Rooster Saved the Day*, chosen by School Library Journal as one of the Best Books of the Year in 1977. They collaborated on three more books—*A Treeful of Pigs*, a 1979 ALA Notable Book; *On Market Street*, a 1982 Caldecott Honor Book; and *The Rose in My Garden*, a 1984 Boston Globe/Horn Book Honor Book. Arnold Lobel died in 1987.

## **THE CREATORS OF THE MUSICAL**

*A Year With Frog and Toad* was developed for the stage by Arnold Lobel's daughter, **Adrienne Lobel**. A scenery designer for theater, opera, and dance, Ms. Lobel's Broadway credits include *A Year with Frog and Toad*, *On the Town*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *Passion*. Ms. Lobel has also designed for The American Repertory Theater, Arena Stage, The Guthrie Theater, The Mitzi Newhouse Theater at Lincoln Center, The New York Shakespeare Festival, and The Second Stage Company.

The book and lyrics for *A Year With Frog and Toad* were created by **Willie Reale**. A freelance writer, Willie has written such musicals as *Once Around the City* and *Quark Victory* and has worked on television dramas including *Homicide: Life on the Streets* and *Deadline*. In 1981, Willie founded the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Project, an organization that connects inner-city children with professional theater artists to create theater. During his 18 years as the Project's artistic director, Willie produced hundreds of plays and created *The Kid Theater Kit*, a how-to manual of the Project's programs that includes many plays and song lyrics.

**Robert Reale** has composed for musicals, plays, film, and television. Robert collaborated with his brother on *A Year With Frog and Toad*, *Once Around the City*, and *Quark Victory*, and his other theater credits include *Richard Dressing's Rounding Third*, *Diva*, and *Salvation Moon*. His film credits include *Ten-13*, *Wigstock*, and *The Victim*, and he has written music for television shows such as *Inside Edition*, *20/20*, and *Out There*.

*A Year With Frog and Toad* premiered at the Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis, MN and then at the New Victory Theatre in New York, and the Cort Theater on Broadway. Willie Reale received two Tony nominations for the musical's book and lyrics, and Robert Reale received a Tony nomination for the music.

## **ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE**

Each of the songs and scenes in *A Year With Frog and Toad* corresponds to a story from the *Frog and Toad* books. The stories are connected to fill the year that passes during the show. The following is a synopsis of the musical, including song titles in parentheses:

The Birds have come back at the end of winter, ready for spring (“A Year With Frog and Toad”). Frog and Toad are still in hibernation. In their dreams, they sing about their friendship and the new year ahead. Frog then wakes and decides to get his friend out of hibernation. Once convinced it is spring (“Spring”), Toad decides that he wants to plant a garden but is very impatient for the seeds to grow. He tries many things to make them grow (“Seeds”) before falling asleep. By morning, the seeds have begun to grow.

Now that it’s morning, Toad is sad because he knows that is when the mail is delivered and he never receives any. Frog decides to write Toad a letter to cheer him up. He asks Snail to deliver it for him (“The Letter #1”).

Frog and Toad go to the pond for a swim. Toad doesn’t want anyone to see him in his bathing suit because he thinks he looks funny. However, Turtle calls Mouse and Lizard over to look at Toad (“Getta Loada Toad”). Freezing, Toad must eventually leave the water, and everyone gets a good look at Toad in his bathing suit.

Later Toad brings lunch to Frog, but Frog is not home. He’s left a note that he wants to be alone on the island. Toad worries that Frog is sad and goes to see him on the island. He finds out that Frog is happy and he wanted some time alone (“Alone”). Meanwhile, Snail is still on his way to deliver Frog’s letter to Toad (“The Letter #2”).

Frog & Toad are preparing dinner. They make cookies, intended for dessert, but cannot stop eating them (“Cookies”). After eating all the cookies, Frog and Toad go out to fly a kite, which proves to be troublesome at first, but soon the kite flies (“The Kite”).

The summer has ended and leaves cover the ground (“Leaves: A Year With Frog and Toad”). Both Frog and Toad plan a surprise by secretly raking the other’s yard (“He’ll Never Know”). They clean one another’s yard, but as soon as they leave, the Squirrels come and mess up their neat piles of leaves. Later Frog decides to tell Toad a scary story about a Young Frog who escapes the clutches of a large and terrible frog before he is eaten (“Shivers”). Meanwhile, Snail is still on the way to deliver Frog’s letter to Toad (“The Letter #3”).

It’s now winter. Frog and Toad are on top of a hill and are prepared to sled down it despite Toad’s fear (“Down the Hill”). On the way down, Frog accidentally falls off the sled and Toad ends up on a dangerous and bumpy path. When Toad reaches the bottom of the hill, he is so mad that Frog made him sled that he says he will never talk to Frog again. Snail arrives with Frog’s letter to Toad. After reading the letter, Toad decided to talk to Frog again. Snail, having delivered his first letter, is very proud (“I’m Coming Out of my Shell”).

On Christmas Eve, Toad is in his kitchen worried because Frog is late. He imagines all the terrible things that could have happened (“Toad to the Rescue”) until finally Frog arrives with a present (“Merry Almost Christmas”). With the return of winter, Frog & Toad are back in hibernation. The Birds return to let us know that it’s almost spring again, as Frog and Toad get ready for another fun-filled year (“Finale: A Year With Frog and Toad”).

## PAGE TO STAGE CONNECTIONS

Below are the *Frog and Toad* stories, sorted by book, featured in the musical *A Year With Frog and Toad*:

### **Frog and Toad Are Friends**

- Spring
- A Swim
- The Letter

### **Frog and Toad Together**

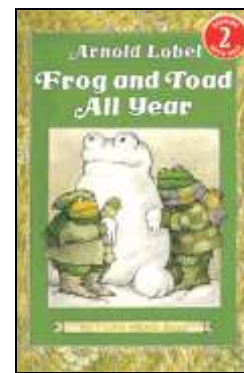
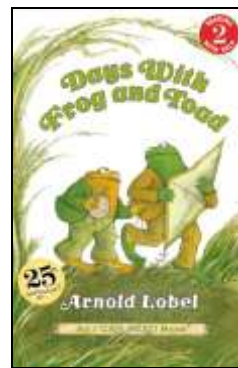
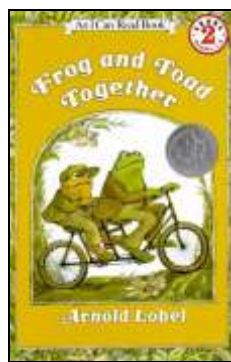
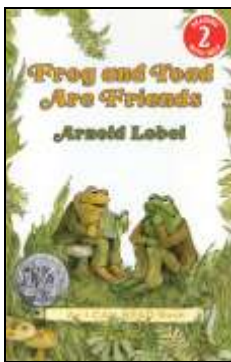
- The Garden
- Cookies

### **Frog and Toad All Year**

- Down the Hill
- The Surprise
- Christmas Eve

### **Days With Frog and Toad**

- The Kite
- Shivers
- Alone



Below is a list of songs from the show and the stories that they represent. Use this list to select stories to read with your class before coming to the show.

<b>Song</b>	<b>Story</b>	<b>Book</b>
"Spring"	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Frog and Toad Are Friends</i>
"Seeds"	<i>The Garden</i>	<i>Frog and Toad Together</i>
"The Letter #1"	<i>The Letter</i>	<i>Frog and Toad are Friends</i>
"Getta Loada Toad"	<i>A Swim</i>	<i>Frog and Toad are Friends</i>
"Alone"	<i>Alone</i>	<i>Days With Frog and Toad</i>
"Cookies"	<i>Cookies</i>	<i>Frog and Toad Together</i>
"The Kite"	<i>The Kite</i>	<i>Days With Frog and Toad</i>
"He'll Never Know"	<i>The Surprise</i>	<i>Frog and Toad All Year</i>
"Shivers"	<i>Shivers</i>	<i>Days With Frog and Toad</i>
"Down the Hill"	<i>Down the Hill</i>	<i>Frog and Toad All Year</i>
"Toad to the Rescue"	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	<i>Frog and Toad All Year</i>
"Merry Almost Christmas"	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	<i>Frog and Toad All Year</i>

There are two songs in the show that do not correspond directly to a specific story in one of the *Frog and Toad* books. The song "A Year With Frog and Toad" serves as a narrative device for the musical and is sung by the Birds. It prepares the audience for what they are about to see and introduces the main characters of Frog and Toad. The song returns twice, accompanying the migration of the Birds and showing the passing of seasons. The second song not directly tied to the books is "I'm Coming Out of My Shell," sung by Snail. The song expresses Snail's pride in delivering Frog's letter to Toad.

## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION

1. Get a copy of each of the *Frog and Toad* books: *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, *Frog and Toad Together*, *Frog and Toad All Year*, and *Days with Frog and Toad*. Read the stories aloud in class or have students read them to become familiar with the characters and the events in the show.

2. *A Year With Frog and Toad* takes place over the course of one year in the lives of Frog and Toad. Discuss the four seasons of the year and their characteristics, including the weather and outdoor activities associated with each season. Have students compare the seasons in your region to those in other parts of the country.

3. Although there are no human characters in *A Year With Frog and Toad*, human actors and actresses play the roles of the animals. Have students brainstorm the ways in which the actors will represent the animals. Encourage your students to consider all aspects of theatrical performances, including costumes, vocal quality, gestures, movements, etc.



Frog and Toad in *A Year With Frog & Toad*.

4. The Birds open the show with the line, “We flew south for the winter.” Discuss the migration of birds, including why and how it occurs.

5. After Snail finally delivers Frog’s letter to Toad, he is very happy and proud of himself. He sings a song called, “I’m Coming Out of My Shell,” announcing how outgoing he has become. Explain this expression to your students and ask them to share times when they have “come out of their shells.”



The cast of *A Year With Frog and Toad*.



## ***POST-SHOW CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS***

### **Science**

1. Toad decides that he wants to plant a garden in the spring. He is very impatient with his seed and tries many things to make them grow. They finally begin to grow but not because of his crazy techniques. Collect potting soil, paper cups, and seeds that can be grown in your classroom. Have each student plant his or her own seeds in a cup and care for them with daily watering. Once the plants have grown, let the students replant them into larger pots in the classroom or take them home.

National Standards for Science: Content Standards 3 & 4

2. All of the characters in *A Year With Frog and Toad* are animals, but they were portrayed by human actors and actresses on the stage. Have your students brainstorm the human characteristics that were given to the animals for the show. Then help your students research the actual characteristics of the animals (frogs, toads, birds, turtles, mice, lizards, moles, squirrels, and snails) in the musical and the stories. Focus on the behaviors that the students saw in the show (eating habits, habitat, migration, hibernation, movement, etc.). Compare and contrast between the animals' fictitious characteristics and their actual characteristics.

National Standards for Science: Content Standards 1 & 3

### **Health**

Frog and Toad lose control because the cookies taste so good. However, this is not a very healthy idea. Discuss good eating habits with your students and have them create a collage of healthy foods by drawing or collecting pictures of various food items. Then have them create a collage of unhealthy snack foods that they like to eat. Make a chart of how much healthy food they should eat in relation to snack food and talk about healthy food choices and eating habits.

National Standards for Health: Content Standards 1, 3 & 6



"Cookies" in *A Year With Frog and Toad*.

### **Technology**

In the past, writing and sending letters by messenger, like Frog does by asking Snail to deliver his letter, was the only means for sending news to someone. Various inventions over the years have made it possible to send news more quickly in both written and verbal form. Have students brainstorm the different ways that people use to get information to each other.

National Standards for Technology: Content Stands 1 & 4

## ***POST-SHOW CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS, cont.***

### **Mathematics**

Toad never knows what time it is because his clock is broken. Have your students practice telling time on a clock with hands. Draw five blank clocks (circles with lines or the numbers 1-12 for each of the hours). Write the following times under the blank clocks (one for each): 1:00, 5:45, 8:10, 9:30, 11:20. Have your students draw the hands on each clock to represent the time. Now place the students in pairs to play a time game. Have them draw blank clocks and give each other times to draw on the clocks or draw the hands on the clocks first and then write the times.

National Standards for Mathematics: Measurement

### **Social Sciences/Geography**

Climates throughout the country vary by region. Have your students find your city and state on a map. Discuss whether or not your area has the same climate as the one Frog and Toad live in. Identify other cities, states, or regions in the United States that students think have the same climate as your city. Then select and discuss places that have climates different from yours.

National Standards for Social Sciences: Geography  
Standards 1 & 2



Frog from *A Year With Frog and Toad*.

### **English/Language Arts**

1. Frog writes a friendly letter to Toad to cheer him up. Have your students think about a friend or family member who would like to receive a letter from them. Students can then write a letter and deliver it to them or get help mailing it if the person lives far away.

National Standards for Language Arts: Content Standards 4, 5 & 12

2. Have students read other books by Arnold Lobel, especially those in the *I Can Read* series. Have them discuss how they are similar to the Frog and Toad books and how they are different.

National Standards for Language Arts: Content Standards 1 & 3

3. After your students have seen the production and all of the fun activities that Frog and Toad do together throughout the year have them create their own story about friendship. Ask them to think about a favorite activity they have participated in with a friend or sibling and write a story about the experience.

National Standards for Language Arts: Content Standards 6 & 12  
*A Year With Frog and Toad Curriculum Guide*  
Civic Center of Greater Des Moines  
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## ***POST-SHOW CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS, cont.***

### **Theater**

Collect a number of costume pieces and have your students recreate some of the characters and scenes they saw in the show or create new scenes based on other *Frog and Toad* stories not included in the musical.

National Standards for Theater: Content Standards 1 & 2

Encourage each student who saw the production to take five minutes to think about the thoughts and feelings that the show inspired in them. Have students artistically express these feelings in a poem, picture, story, or letter. Let them choose whichever form of expression they feel will best represent their individual experience. Encourage them to share these reflections with the other students in their class.

National Standards for Theater: Content Standard 8

### **Visual Arts**

*A Year With Frog and Toad* covers all four seasons of the year. Use this as the inspiration for a visual art project. Have students create a work of art that shows the four seasons. Allow them to experiment with different media (paint, drawing, collage, yarn, paper, etc.). Students can decide on a method for dividing the “canvas” and representing each season through color, texture, and/or visual elements.

National Standard for Visual Arts: Content Standards 1, 2 & 3

### **Dance**

During the song “Seeds,” Toad decides that he will perform an interpretive dance to encourage his seeds to grow. Give your students the motivation to create an interpretive dance. The objective of the dance could be to tell a story, to convince you that they can have recess, or anything else that will inspire them. Once the students understand the goal, remind them to pay attention to the composition of the dance, making sure it has a beginning, middle, and end. Individuals or small groups can create dances.

National Standards for Dance: Content Standards 1, 2 & 3



Scene from *A Year With Frog and Toad*.

## **VOCABULARY**

**adieu:** French for farewell or goodbye

**aghast:** shocked and amazed

**agog:** eager and excited

**bamboo shoot:** the hard, woody stems of the bamboo plant—a tall tropical grass.

**chew the fat:** to chat, have a lengthy talk

**dusky:** somewhat dark

**escargot:** an edible snail dish, often served as an appetizer before a meal

**exhausting:** very tiring

**fleeter:** faster

**hibernation:** to spend the winter in a dormant (sleeping) state

**hubbub:** loud noise

**indisputable:** certain to be true, undeniable, without a doubt

**magnanimous:** unselfish, generous in forgiving

**rutabaga:** a root vegetable somewhat like a turnip

**underrated:** underestimated, rate too low, not given enough credit

## A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD WORD SEARCH

C Z Q H Z Y F L D W Q V G Y K L V U C U  
A G S V I P I M E Z P L C Z O Y I N D B  
X D V D O Z X A P D D S Y C E S P A L Q  
G M I M K R E N O L A K W Y G O U Q N I  
L B D E B E L L A F A Z L K N V K C T S  
E R R F U T N S Q K V D C M I Y E J C G  
D G K P P N Q G M V G U O H R S D R X F  
W S S B A I E L G G K S B T P Y V L T V  
C H H U L W S D R I B K C H S Y F X X I  
O I S G M E O E H W M Y T O B T G F Z W  
Z V F O O M S X N P X S R O S U D Q M K  
S E W M C U E T U R T L E S A U B Z X I  
O R N E O J L R P G K S W P N D L B F T  
Y S Y M A M F A H N W F R O B Q E L U E  
J T L T N H E L Z T T L D X H X R Y G H  
L I D J Z B C K M X N D J H U R R D D D  
G G X P C O O K I E S L G G S C I S B F  
C O P Y W K A S W U Y B P K U S U N F U  
P K R F A J U D J G D R A Z I L Q Q I W  
Y J W F G Z A A V E Q V R K D Z S Q R C

### Seasons

fall  
spring  
summer  
winter

### Characters

Birds  
Frog  
Lizard  
Mouse  
Snail  
Squirrel  
Toad  
Turtle

### Stories

Alone  
Cookies  
Shivers  
Kite

### Vocabulary

adieu  
dusky  
hubbub

## ***YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER\****

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to clap and move to the beat, while other performers may want the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you enjoy the show, consider the following questions:

- What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
  - What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
  - What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
  - Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
  - Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?
- 

## ***THEATER ETIQUETTE\****

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound, so the other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage—they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

\*as adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Artist study guide materials.

## **ABOUT THE CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES**

Opened in 1979, the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines has become a cultural landmark of central Iowa. The mission statement is the guiding philosophy in everything the organization pursues; the Civic Center is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities. A member of national organizations including The Broadway League, the Independent Presenters Network, and International Performing Arts for Youth, the Civic Center has achieved a national reputation for excellence as a performing arts center. Four performing arts series currently comprise the typical season—the Willis Broadway Series, the Prairie Meadows Temple Theater Series, the Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Family Series, and the Applause Series. The Civic Center is also the performance home for the Des Moines Symphony and Stage West.

In keeping with the vision in which the Civic Center was created, the organization is a private, nonprofit organization and is an integral part of the central Iowa's cultural community. Through the education programs, the Civic Center strives to engage our patrons in arts experiences that extend beyond the stage. Master classes bring professional and local artists together to share their art form and craft, while pre-performance lectures and post-performance Q&A sessions with company members offer ticket holders the opportunity to explore each show as a living, evolving piece of art. Through the Applause Series—curriculum-connected performances for school audiences—we encourage local students to discover the rich, diverse world of performing arts. During the 2009-2010 season, the Civic Center will welcome more than 26,000 students and educators to 11 professional productions for young audiences.



## **CLASSROOM RESOURCES**

### **Websites**

<http://allaboutfrogs.org/weird/general/frogtoad.html>

Information about the characteristics and habits of frogs and toads.

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/>

National Geographic's website about animals. Includes pages about amphibians and links to articles, photos, videos, and games.

<http://kids.yahoo.com/animals>

Information about animals on Yahoo!s Kids website. Includes general characteristics of animals groups, as well as links to particular species.

[http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-frog\\_toad.html](http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-frog_toad.html)

Excellent site with photos, links, and information about frogs and toads. Useful for student research.

### **Books**

Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and Toad All Year*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1976.

Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and Toad Are Friends*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1970.

Lobel, Arnold. *Days with Frog and Toad*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1979.

Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and Toad Together*. New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc. , 1972.

## **STUDY GUIDE RESOURCES**

Civic Center of Greater Des Moines

<http://www.civiccenter.org/>

Work Light Productions—A Year with Frog and Toad

[http://www.worklightproductions.com/curr\\_frogandtoad.htm](http://www.worklightproductions.com/curr_frogandtoad.htm)

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