

FAMILY GUIDE TO A YEAR WITH FROG & TOAD

A Synopsis of the Story 📖

To put it most succinctly, Frog and Toad are friends. They're the kind of friends that think of each other first thing when waking up in the morning - or from a long winter nap. Frog wakes up first, actually, and though Toad is none too anxious to leave his warm bed, it's not long before he's roused out and exploring the glories of Spring.

Frog is up and about planting a garden - Toad wants one too. Frog gives him seeds and instructions - Toad plants them too. BUT, Toad grows impatient and yells at his slow-poke seeds. Frog defends the seeds. They need time, he says. They need patience, he says. And he wouldn't blame them for not growing for someone who's yelling at them anyway, he says. Toad apologizes to his seeds and promises to protect them always - even from birds - which he does. He sings to his seeds, dances for them and plays his tuba through the twilight, until...at last...he falls...asleep. In the morning the seeds are smiling tender green pointed smiles; they have sprouted, and Toad is a happy toad. Except his mailbox is empty. His mailbox always is. Frog knows how to cheer up his friend. He writes him a letter and gives it to Snail to deliver A.S.A.P. The year rolls on.

In summer Frog and Toad go for a swim. Toad has a very funny bathing suit, and although Frog respectfully averts his eyes as Toad climbs into the water, the other animals that come to the lake are not so polite. There's no way Frog can keep them from laughing, and in fact, they tease Toad unmercifully. Even Frog eventually has to laugh. Finally, thank goodness, the razzing resolves into a jolly day, all at the expense of Toad and his very silly suit.

One day Toad decides to invite Frog on a picnic, but Frog isn't at home. Toad sets out to find him and worries himself into a dither all the while. Why on earth would Frog leave a note on his door saying he has gone away to be alone? Why would he want to be alone? Was it something Toad said? Was it everything Toad said? Was it Toad? By the time Toad finds Frog - on an island in the lake - he's so upset he drops their picnic in the water. He's beside himself, but Frog is not. Frog is fine. He just likes to be alone sometimes to think about how happy he is. One of the things that makes him most happy is that he has Toad for a friend.

In the Fall Frog and Toad bake cookies, fly kites, rake leaves and tell stories. One stormy night Frog decides it's the perfect night for a ghost story, and he tells Toad a tale that begins, "When I was a very small frog I went for a picnic with my parents..." Frog's family gets lost in the woods and his parents go in search of the pathway home, leaving him alone and very frightened of the large and terrible frog that lives in the wood who eats little bunnies dipped in dirt and likes frog children for dessert! Young Frog tries to be brave, and indeed he needs to be, because the giant frog appears and wants to eat him! Young Frog ties the huge frog to a tree and runs and runs and runs and runs until he finds his parents. How does the story end?

They all go home for a “hot and steamy, absolutely dreamy, finally out of trouble, bubble bath.”

Once in awhile Frog casually wonders whether or not Toad has gotten any mail. No. Evidently A.S.A.P. means something altogether different to a snail. In Winter Frog and Toad go sledding. You can guess whose idea that was! It turns out to be fun. Soon Toad is swept away in the quest for bigger hills and scarier rides. It is a rollicking good time until suddenly Frog topples off the sled and Toad is left to navigate along. Toad smashes into a snow bank and comes out furious with Frog. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, but just then - Snail arrives. At last the mail has come! Toad reads the letter from his friend and is warmed to the tips of his (presumably) webbed toes. As we've said, Frog and Toad are friends.

On Christmas Eve Toad waits for Frog to come to his house. Frog is late. Soon it becomes obvious to Toad that something terrible must have happened. There must have been some sort of horrible accident. Frog must have been set upon by wolves, why of course! Just as Toad is about to venture forth to rescue his friends from the jaws of the imagined beasts, Frog arrives. He was late because he was wrapping a present, the one he has for Toad. The year has rolled all the way round now. It's time to hibernate, and Frog and Toad settle down to their winter nap once more. Their good night is a promise to meet in the spring as they fall asleep dreaming of each other. Frog and Toad are friends.

AS YOU GET READY TO SEE THE SHOW

➡ In the play Frog and Toad are very different. Frogs and toads are different in nature, too. It would be fun to find out about the habits, habitats, and characteristics of frogs and toads in the wild at the library or online, or by asking someone who knows that sort of thing. The amphibians in our story are very human, but it can't hurt to imagine the real differences.

➡ Arnold Lobel, who wrote the original books *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, *Frog and Toad Together*, *Frog and Toad All Year*, *Days With Frog and Toad*, (and many other wonderful books on other subjects) has a daughter whose name is Adrienne. She likes to tell the story that when she was a little girl, her father came up from the garden one day saying, “Look, Adrienne, I have a frog.” When she saw what he held in his hand she replied, “Daddy, that’s a toad.” this incident prompted the stories. Now Adrienne Lobel is a grown woman, and one of the most respected set designers in the country. She is the person who commissioned this play (asked someone to write it), and she designed the sets. As you might imagine, they are gorgeous.

QUESTION

➡ Do you have a friend who is very different than you? Who? Does the difference make it easier or harder to be friends? A wise man once said: If the two of us are exactly alike, then one of us is unnecessary.

RELATED READING

➡ Arnold Lobel wrote many wonderful books, not only about Frog and Toad, but other animals as well. He also illustrated at least as many more. Any or all of them are worth a read and a look.

➡ Books about unlikely friendships abound, think of *Charlotte's Web*, by E.B. White to introduce young readers to their first chapter book.

➡ This is also a wonderful time to talk about seasons. We live in a state with four - not everyone feels them so distinctly as we do. Your library will have lots of books about seasons on the picture book level.