



EDUCATOR GUIDE



A Year with Frog and Toad

This guide is geared toward teachers of grades K - 3

Supported by:



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About This Guide

Use this guide to help your students anticipate, investigate, and reflect upon your live performance experience. This guide is geared toward teachers of grades K - 3.

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The great thing about the arts is that they can often evolve to meet their context. That means that many of the activities shared are flexible to a lot of different contexts depending on how you choose to frame them in your class. We know you all are experts on your classroom and students, so we invite you to use these lessons and activities as guideposts and adapt them to fit your classroom management style, range of student ability, and time constraints.

LEARNING CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts: parts of a story, identifying and analyzing key plot moments.
Social and Emotional Learning: Social Awareness-taking other's perspective

LEARNING STANDARDS ICON KEY



ART



ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARTS



SCIENCE



THEATER



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
LEARNING

Educators, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production. You can email eschildkret@portlandovations.org or reach us via [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

We want to hear and see what great learning is happening in your classrooms.

Introducing the Performance

It is often helpful to share some context with your students before they attend a live performance. Read below for more information on the performance you're coming to see.

About the Performance

A Year with Frog and Toad follows two fantastic friends—cheerful, popular Frog and serious, slightly grumpy Toad—through four seasons. Waking from hibernation in the Spring, Frog and Toad plant gardens, swim, rake leaves, go sledding, and learn life lessons along the way. The two best friends celebrate their differences that make them unique and special.

A joyful musical, *A Year with Frog and Toad* is based on four books by well-loved author and illustrator, Arnold Lobel. Each of the songs and scenes in the play corresponds to a story from Lobel's books. Below are the Frog and Toad stories you'll see and hear in the musical, along with the songs that bring those stories to life.

Frog and Toad are Friends

- Spring
- A Swim
- The Letter

Frog and Toad Together

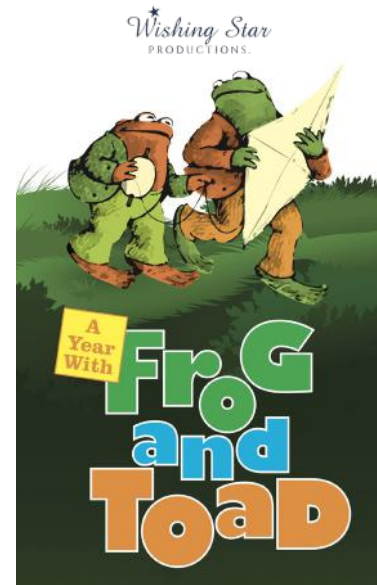
- The Garden
- Cookies

Frog and Toad All Year

- Down the Hill
- The Surprise
- Christmas Eve

Days with Frog and Toad

- The Kite
- Shivers **
- Alone



♪ [CLICK HERE](#) ♪
To listen to these songs, and other songs
in the musical in the original cast
recording of the musical on Spotify!

**Shivers features a character called Large and Terrible Frog, who is mean and awful. In the original version of the story this song is based on, the character is called the Old Dark Frog. This original name perpetuates a harmful stereotype where “dark” is used to mean “bad” or “scary.” The play uses different language to avoid continuing this stereotype. As you prepare for the play, consider discussing with students how names carry power and meaning—when are names harmful and when are they uplifting?

Meet the Characters

Throughout the play, Frog and Toad meet lots of other animals, all played by the same five actors in different costumes. Here is a list of the characters you'll see in *A Year with Frog and Toad*:

Frog: Optimistic, eager, and independent. Best friend to Toad.

Toad: Serious and a bit uptight. Best friend to Frog.

Man Bird and Lady Birds: Quirky, bright-eyed birds who travel together and join Frog and Toad in their adventures—including eating discarded cookies.

Mouse: Fun and intelligent and quick-witted. Mouse laughs with Turtle about Toad's bathing suit in "Getta Load of Toad."

Snail: Slow, steady, and determined. Snail spends a year diligently working to deliver a letter.

Turtle: A gossip. Turtle is the first to spread the news that Toad looks funny in a bathing suit.

Lizard: Gets caught up in the rumor mill about Toad's bathing suit.

Squirrels: Fast-talking and mischievous, the squirrels play in the leaves and make a mess of Frog and Toad's raking.

Father Frog: The adventurous and well-intentioned father of Frog has trouble with directions in a walk through the woods.

Mother Frog: Worries what young Frog may discover lurking in the woods.

Large and Terrible Frog: He's mean and awful, his wrinkly skin is pasty green, he eats little bunnies dipped in dirt, and he likes frog children for dessert.

Moles: Enthusiastic and playful. The moles watch Toad as he careens downhill on his sled, and point out the dangers on his path.



What To Expect

The Performance

- The performance is 60 minutes long
- Five actors play all the roles in the performance.
- Although all the actors play animals, they are dressed mostly like people, in costumes that suggest the animal they are playing in the color, shape, or texture of the clothes.
- The story of the Large and Terrible Frog has a character that may seem a little scary (though Frog and Toad are Not Afraid). The scene is portrayed in a funny, over-the-top way.

The Sound

- The music in *A Year with Frog and Toad* is upbeat and Jazzy.
- Songs are sung live by the actors along with pre-recorded music.

The Lights

- This production uses dramatic, theatrical lighting to set the mood and highlight certain scenes, suggest settings, or focus attention on parts of the stage.
- At times the theater will go fully dark.

Resources

- Plan your visit to Merrill Auditorium: portlandovations.org/about/accessibility-merrill-auditorium/
- Learn more about accessibility at Portland Ovation: portlandovations.org/about/accessibility/



Being an Audience Member

An audience member is a part of a larger community – an audience – and you all work together to create your theater experience. Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform. Sharing their hard work and joy with you is one of the best parts of being a performer. Each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and talking from the audience can be distracting. A theater is designed to magnify sound and even the smallest whispers can be heard throughout the auditorium. Wishing Star Productions highly encourages clapping and laughing at the parts of the performance that you enjoy.

As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances? How many can you name?
- What kind of responses might an audience give to different types of performances?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?

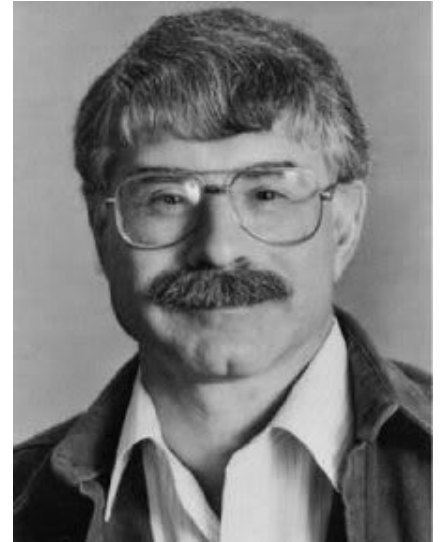


The interior of Merrill Auditorium

Essential Questions

Who was Arnold Lobel?

Arnold Lobel (1933–1987) declared he “was born a children’s book illustrator and writer.” He illustrated nearly 100 children’s books, many—like his Frog and Toad series—celebrating love, friendship, and individuality. Lobel was a young boy when he decided he wanted to be a writer and an illustrator. Born in Los Angeles, California, and raised in Schenectady, New York, Lobel began writing and illustrating children’s books in 1962. *Frog and Toad are Friends* was published in 1970 and many others followed.



The *Frog and Toad* series includes four books: *Frog and Toad are Friends*, *Frog and Toad Together*, *Frog and Toad All Year*, and *Days with Frog and Toad*. Lobel wrote the books based on stories he told his children, Adrienne and Adam. Each book contains five stories highlighting the friendship between Frog and Toad, their experiences caring for and sharing with one another while living close to nature’s wonders and challenges. Every story is simple, often humorous, yet poignantly explores a deeper lesson. Lobel used simple text, stripped of adjectives and adverbs, to reveal the personalities and quirks of the amphibian friends. Although Arnold Lobel never publicly made the connection himself, Adrienne Lobel has said that the friendship between Frog and Toad was a part of Lobel’s own coming out to his family.

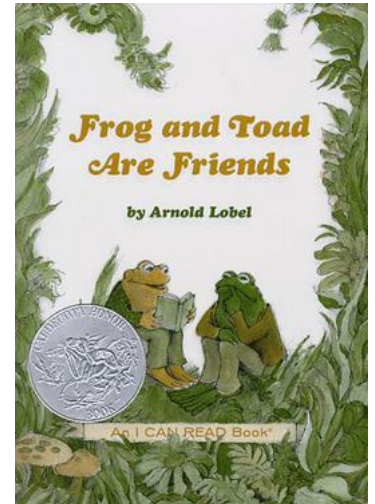
Arnold Lobel is one of few children’s book authors to receive both the Caldecott (*Fables*, *Frog and Toad are Friends*, and *Hildilid’s Night*) and the Newbery Honor Award (*Frog and Toad Together*). In addition to his own impressive body of work as both author and illustrator, Lobel provided illustrations for books penned by numerous other children’s book authors, including Jack Prelutsky.

Learn more about Arnold Lobel and explore some of his illustrations online at the Carle Museum:
<https://carlemuseum.org/explore-art/collections/featured-artists/arnold-lobel>

Who created *A Year with Frog and Toad*?

Adrienne Lobel knew for some time that she wanted to develop her father's *Frog and Toad* books into a stage musical. In reflecting on the project, Andrienne Lobel said,

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. There are also four books to pull material from. I envisioned the show as an intimate vaudeville style musical with a jazzy '30s style sound. The songs, like my father's writing, should not condescend to children but should have articulate cleverness and a sophistication that would appeal to children and their parents. I called upon many of my past friends and collaborators to help me realize this vision.



Two of those collaborators were Willie and Robert Reale who wrote the script, lyrics and the music for *A Year with Frog and Toad*. The brothers were skeptical at first because the Frog and Toad stories are brief vignettes rather than a connected narrative. However, they recognized the cleverness and sophistication of the characters and their adventures, and agreed to accept the challenge. In adapting the short stories into a full-length musical, Willie Reale said, "Along the way, we found some useful runners like the snail with the mail which helped to glue the show together." Robert Reale was quickly inspired by Adrienne Lobel's "girlhood memory of her father illustrating the beloved amphibians while records from the '30s dropped one by one from the stack on the family phonograph." He used an eight-piece band to achieve a sound similar to the Hal Roach Orchestra, which provided much of the music for the Laurel and Hardy comedies of the 1930s.

A Year with Frog and Toad was workshopped in 2000 at New York Stage and Film at Vassar before it was produced at The Childrens Theater of Minneapolis. After sold-out runs, the production moved to Broadway where it ran at The New Victory for 88 performances. It received three Tony nominations: Best Musical, Best Score, and Best Book. Following a national tour, it is now performed regularly by theatres and schools around the country.

How are real frogs and toads different?

In the play, Frog and Toad have very different personalities, but are best friends anyway. They are portrayed with human characteristics, even though they're animals. The production emphasizes this with costumes that also look human. The differences between real frogs and toads are more subtle. Although many people believe that frogs and toads are completely different creatures, the truth is a bit more complicated. Frogs and toads are both members of the same class — Amphibia — which means that they're both amphibians. Amphibians are coldblooded vertebrates that spend the early part of their lives in water, breathing with gills, and the rest of their lives on land, breathing with lungs.

Moreover, frogs and toads are also both members of the same order — Anura — which means they're closely related and share many similar characteristics. The popular distinction drawn between frogs and toads is probably best viewed as a distinction between true “frogs” (members of the Ranidae family) and true “toads” (members of the Bufonidae family). Here are some of the differences you may notice between frogs and toads:

Frogs:

- Need to live near water to survive
- Have smooth, moist skin that may look or seem slimy
- Have a narrow body with round eyes that bulge
- Have long hind legs that help them take long, high jumps.
- Have many predators.



Toads:

- Don't need to live near water to survive.
- Have rough, dry, bumpy skin.
- Have a wide body with oval eyes that don't bulge.
- Have short hind legs to take small hops rather than jumps
- Have few predators because their skin has a bitter taste and smell.



As a pre-show activity, consider investigating the similarities and differences between frogs and toads found in Maine as a class. You can find a list of Maine frogs and toads, including their characteristics, at the Inland Department of Fish and Wildlife:

maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/species-information/reptiles-amphibians/index.html

PRE-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Here are some ideas for lesson activities that expand on the essential questions, topics, and themes of *A Year with Frog and Toad*.

Glossary

Share these words and their definitions with your students before watching the play.

Adieu: French for farewell or goodbye

Aghast: Shocked or 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: Dim light

Escargot: An edible snail dish.

Fleeter: Faster

Hibernation: To spend the winter in a dormant (sleeping) state.

Hubbub: Loud noise

Indisputable: Certain to be true, without a doubt.

Magnanimous: Unselfish, generous and forgiving.

Rutabaga: A root vegetable somewhat like a turnip

Underrated: Not given enough credit.



OurShelves A Year with Frog and Toad Book List

If you love the Frog and Toad stories, check out these books that embrace diversity and follow the themes explored in the original stories, compiled by our partners, OurShelves.

LGBTQ+ parent-founded and Maine-based, OurShelves is a diverse children's book box service offering expert-curated diverse kids' books to families, schools, and others working to ensure that their book collections cultivate and affirm their values of equity, inclusion, social justice, joy, and fun! Learn more about this *New York Times*/Wirecutter and *Parents Magazine*-recommended book box service and its quarterly book box subscriptions, one-time Mega Boxes, and other community partnerships including book fairs at OurShelves.com.

If you enjoyed Frog and Toad stories that explore the following themes, we have some great new book suggestions for you!

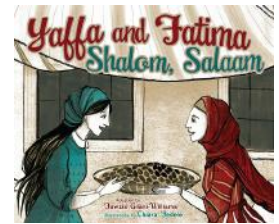
THEME: Helping a friend without that friend even knowing you helped.

We Recommend

- *Yaffa and Fatima: Shalom, Salaam*

Discussion Questions:

- How would you feel about helping a friend with something without them even knowing you helped them?
- How do you feel when you help a friend? What about when a friend helps you?



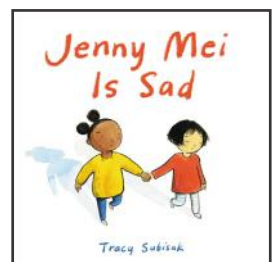
THEME: Supporting a friend who is feeling sad.

We Recommend

- *Jenny Mei is Sad*
- *Soomi's Sweater*

Discussion Questions:

- What are the different ways we can support a friend if they are sad?
- How would you like your friends to support you when you are sad?



THEME: Facing disappointment when things don't go as planned.

We Recommend

- *Soomi's Sweater*
- *Saturday*

Discussion Question

- How does it feel when you're excited for your plans for the day and then your plans start to fall apart?



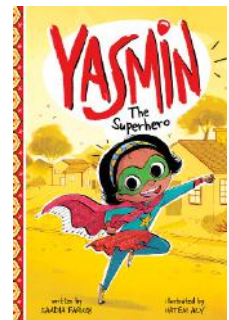
THEME: Bravery

We Recommend

- *Yasmin the Superhero*

Discussion Question

- What does it mean to be brave or to be a superhero?
- Who are the superheroes in your life?



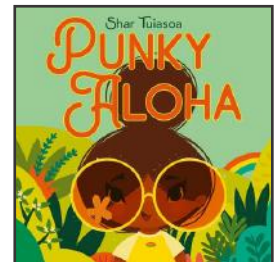
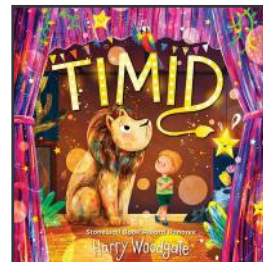
THEME: Facing Fears

We Recommend

- *Timid*
- *Punky Aloha*

Discussion Question

- Have you ever felt nervous to do something and then were glad you tried it?



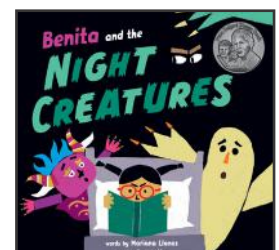
THEME: Feeling cozy with some spookiness

We Recommend

- *Benita and the Night Creatures*

Discussion Question

- How do you feel about ghosts and monsters?



THEME: Creativity and effort with STEAM

We Recommend

- *Something Great*

Discussion Question

- Have you created or built “Something Great”?



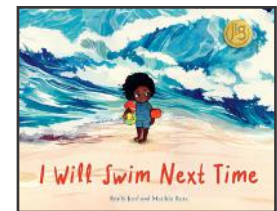
THEME: Listening to yourself / Doing something on your own time / Accepting others as they are.

We Recommend

- *I Will Swim Next Time*

Discussion Question

- Have you ever been nervous to try something? What happened?



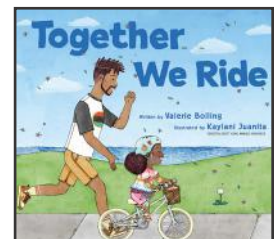
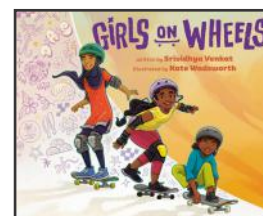
THEME: Trying again when it's hard (including when other beings saying you can't do it).

We Recommend

- *Girls on Wheels*
- *Together We Ride*

Discussion Question

- Have you experienced something challenging and then tried again, even when it was hard to do so?



ACTIVITY: Narrative Pantomime, “A Walk in the Park”

Narrative Pantomime is a drama strategy that invites students to imagine and pantomime a character’s physical and emotional journey within a story, as narrated by a teacher. In this version, students go on an imaginary walk through the four seasons, experiencing the changes in weather just like Frog and Toad.



Materials:

Open space

A Walk through the Seasons (below)

Procedure:

1. Invite students to find their own space in the room where they have enough room to move and won’t be distracted.
2. Explain to students that you’re going to go on an imaginary walk together. Invite them to imagine and act out what they hear silently, as if it is happening to them. Encourage students to consider all their senses as they act out the story.
3. Read the story slowly, giving students time to complete their actions.

Reflection

After students have had an opportunity to complete their narrative pantomimes, gather back together as a class and discuss the story and students’ interpretations. Some questions you might consider are:

- What do you remember most from the story? What did you see/smell/touch/taste/hear?
- What are some feelings the character had in the story? Why did they feel that way?
- What do you think happens next in the story? OR What could you add to the story?

A Walk Through the Seasons

As we leave our classroom to begin our walk, it’s spring. It is sunny and bright; the flowers have just started to bloom. Can you smell the flowers? Oh no, a spring rain! Do you have an umbrella? Feel the rain on your hand. Is it cold or warm? The rain is slowing down now. The clouds are rolling away and the sun is coming out. Feel the sun on your face. Now the season is changing from spring to summer. It starts to get very hot. The sun bright in the sky now. Put on your sunglasses. Find some shade and have a cool drink. As you finish your drink, look up at the tree above you. The leaves are starting to change colors, it’s becoming fall. It feels much cooler, and the leaves are dropping from trees all around you. Rake them up before the wind blows them all away. The wind is blowing harder now, winter is coming. All the leaves have fallen and the trees are bare. Pull on your coat as it gets cold. Snow is falling. It covers the ground in a thick, white layer. Catch a snowflake on your tongue. What does it taste like? The snow is perfect for building a snow creature. Gather snow in your hands and roll it into balls to build your snow creature. The sun is sinking now, it’s getting late. It’s time to end our walk. Find your way back to our classroom.

POST-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What parts of the play are sticking with you? What did you find surprising about the play?
2. How did Frog and Toad spend their year together? What are some activities you remember from each of the four seasons?
3. What were some emotions Frog and Toad experienced during the play? How did they handle their emotions? do you do when you feel that way?
4. Frog and Toad are best friends. What qualities do you think make a good friend?



ACTIVITY: Four Seasons Statues

In Statues, students use their bodies individually and independently to create frozen shapes that represent concrete or abstract ideas. The strategy is a great assessment tool, as it offers a quick, physical way to check for understanding. It can also be a helpful way to assess prior knowledge when starting a new unit. Here, we use the strategy to reflect on the seasons and activities Frog and Toad experience in the play.



Materials:

Space for students to stand

Procedure:

1. Invite students to find a space where they have some room to move and will not be distracted by other students or objects in the classroom.
2. Introduce the activity by instructing students that you will be giving a series of prompts. Students will respond to the prompts by creating a frozen statue with their bodies that represents their answer.
3. Give students the first prompt and allow a few moments to create their statue, then say “freeze.” Invite students to look around the room with their eyes to see others’ statues (or invite half the room to unfreeze and look, then the other half). Repeat this procedure for each of the prompts below. It may be helpful to remind students to use their whole bodies, including their faces, when creating their statues.
 - Prompt 1: Create a frozen statue of a character in *A Year with Frog and Toad* that you find memorable.
 - Prompt 2: Create a frozen statue of something Frog and Toad did in the Winter
 - Prompt 3: Create a frozen statue of something Frog and Toad did in the Spring.
 - Prompt 4: Create a frozen statue of something Frog and Toad did in the Summer.
 - Prompt 5: Create a frozen statue of something Frog and Toad did in the Fall.
 - Prompt 6: Create a frozen statue representing your favorite season.
 - Prompt 7: Create a frozen statue representing something you love to do with your friends.

Reflection

- What statues did you see during this activity?
- How did we use our bodies to reflect on the play we saw together?
- What did you discover about our class’s responses to *A Year with Frog and Toad* during this activity?

Learn more about statues on the DBI Network:

dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/teaching-strategies/statues

ACTIVITY: Happiness Collage

In *A Year with Frog and Toad*, Frog takes some time to be alone and think of all the things that make him happy. This activity invites students to reflect on what makes them happy and create their own art to reflect their ideas.

Materials:

Sturdy construction paper

Scissors

Glue

Magazines, pictures, postcards, etc.

Markers and/or crayons and plain paper



Procedure:

1. Begin with a “think, pair, share.” Invite students to spend a few moments thinking about what makes them happy. It could be activities they love to do, places they love to visit, or people they love to spend time with. Once students have reflected silently, invite them to share a few of their ideas with a partner. After students have shared their ideas with a partner, bring the class back together to discuss what they heard and shared. Write students’ responses to what makes them happy on the board.
2. Pass out art supplies, and ask students to find images that represent a few of the things that make them happy. If they can’t find suitable images, students can draw them on paper.
3. Once students have selected or drawn their images, invite them to arrange them on paper. Students should plan out their whole collage before gluing anything down. Invite them to take a moment to look at the whole picture. What’s most visible? What’s hidden? Does this represent what makes them happy? Ask students to make any adjustments to their collage. Revision is an important part of the artistic process!
4. Once students are satisfied with their collage, glue the images down on sturdy paper.
5. Display students’ collages in the classroom. Perhaps you might invite students to “tour” their classmates’ collages like they’re visiting an art gallery.

Reflection

- What do you see in the collages we made? What makes us happy?
- How did you select the images you used in your collage?
- What did you consider when arranging the images to create your collage?
- Why do you think it’s important to reflect on what makes us happy?

ABOUT PORTLAND OVATIONS

Portland Oventions, founded in 1931, produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Oventions collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Oventions Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.

Land Acknowledgment

Portland Oventions’ programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

We encourage you to learn more and take action in support of Maine’s Indigenous communities through the following organizations

[Abbe Museum](#)

Maine’s premier museum dedicated to indigenous history and culture. Their mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.

[Maine-Wabanaki Reach](#)

A Native-led non-profit that supports the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities.

Created and written by Dr. Liz Schildkret

Designed by Katie Day

© Portland Oventions 2025

We want to know what thought about the performance. You can write your answers below or draw a picture on the back of this page. Thank you!

PERFORMANCE *A Year with Frog and Toad*

SCHOOL NAME

TEACHER NAME:

_____ May we use your n share your comments

What did you *A Year with Frog and Toad* did you like that part

t was something that you learned during the performance?

What would you like to tell other kids about *A Year with Frog and Toad*

What types of performance would you like Portland Oventions to offer in the future? (Feel free to share what type of art you are interested in (theater, dance, music), what cultures you might like to see, what topics the art might connect with, or specific artists.)

MAIL RESPONSES TO: Portland Oventions 120 Exchange St Portland, ME 04101
EMAIL SCANNED RESPONSES TO: offstage@portlandovations.org

We want to know what thought about the performance.

Draw a picture of a part of *A Year with Frog and Toad* that you liked. Thank you!



Please take a few moments to fill out this survey after you attend the performance. You can also [online here](#). Your response provides valuable insight on the impact, accessibility, and relevancy of the School Time Performance Series and will allow us to improve and strengthen the program. Thank you.

PERFORMANCE *A Year with Frog and Toad* March 24, 2025

TEACHER NAME _____ GRADE(S) OF STUDENTS _____

SCHOOL NAME: _____ CITY/TOWN: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rate *A Year with Frog and Toad*

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

. What made this a valuable experience for your students? (If it wasn't, what can we do

_____ was your primary reason for choosing to bring your students to *A Year with Frog and*

- ☐ wanted my students to experience the performing arts.
- ☐ _____ performance _____ with my curriculum goals.
- ☐ _____ date and time _____ performance fit our schedule.
- ☐ the ticket price
- ☐ other (please specify): _____

How did this live performance connect to or enhance your curriculum?

Did you use the Educators Guide provided by Portland Ovation before or after the performance ☐ ☐

Why or why not?

. How would you rate the following components of attending the School Time Performance?

Reserving & paying for tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrival at the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departure from	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What types of performances would you like to bring your students to in the future?
free to share art forms, topics/themes, specific artists, etc

A number of individuals and organizations make it possible for Portland Ovation these School Time Performance tickets at extremely discounted rates. Is there anything you'd like them to know in terms of your experiences or its impact on your students?