

The Life Cycle of a Frog

Materials:

- Green felt underlay for land
- Blue felt underlay for pond
- Seven frog life-cycle pieces

Presentation:

Don't read the title out loud. Tell this story with the drama of something unfolding. Speed up and slow down different parts of the narrative to build suspense.

Lay the green underlay on the floor.

Once upon a time there was nothing...

Lay blue piece to your right, on top of green piece.

... and then there was something. These somethings were growing inside soft jellylike coverings that were like an egg. They were growing near other somethings. They were close together in clumps. They were floating in water, in water near land. It was spring and the air smelled like fresh dirt, new grass and warm, damp sunlight.

Place eggs with orange centers to the furthest right (your right) on the pond.

One night an animal came out of the trees. This animal had a grey and black striped tail, sharp teeth and it was wearing a mask. What? What animal wears a mask? It was a raccoon.

The raccoon saw these somethings and thought – YUM! The raccoon reached into the water to scoop up the clumps to eat them and – KERSPLOOSH – the clumps slipped through the paws. The raccoon tried again and the same thing happened – KERSPLASH!! The raccoon left without eating.

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These clumps are slimy and slippery, so it's hard to eat them. It's nature's way of protecting them. But sometimes, if the clumps are small, they get eaten.

Place eggs with dark embryos inside to (your) left of the first eggs.

Now these somethings begin moving in their eggs. These somethings are getting bigger and they feed off their own egg yolks. These somethings have tails and they wiggle, wiggle, wiggle until they break free into the water.

Place tiny brown tadpoles to left of previous piece.

These somethings are tadpoles, and tadpoles become frogs. Tadpoles *transform* into frogs. It can take from three days to three weeks for the tadpoles to break out of their eggs, depending on what kind of frog they will become.

Tadpoles wiggle their tails to swim. They breathe by getting air from the water through feathery gills. Can you imagine having feathery gills, maybe on the side of your neck?

Tadpoles eat very small plants that stick to larger plants. These tiny plants are called algae.

One week later, the tadpoles look different. They are really changing! Can you imagine how strange this must be, to change so quickly? They get bigger. Their gills begin to shrink. A flap of skin slowly grows over them. Their mouths become hard with tiny teeth in the upper jaw.

Place big brown tadpole to left of previous piece.

Later their outer gills disappear, and they have gills inside that can take oxygen from the water. Their tails are wider for stronger swimming. Then something wonderful and kind of strange begins to happen: As the tadpoles are swimming and wiggling through the water, they notice bulges on either side of their tail. What are these things growing? What could they be? They are unsure and suspicious of these new things growing on them. Could this be good?

Place tadpole, with hind legs only, to left of previous piece.

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Oh my, those little bulges were hind legs. They have a tail and legs. Wouldn't this be interesting to have BOTH a tail and legs? I wonder if it would feel confusing or exciting? Maybe both.

The tadpoles dart about the pond as they eat. They are still vegetarians, so they only eat plants. They get bigger and little bulges appear behind their heads. What could those bulges be? Those bulges are their front legs.

Their tails become smaller, and the gills inside their body are now gone. The gills have changed into lungs. Do you know what that means? It means that the tadpoles now need to wiggle to the surface and breathe air.

Place tadpole with front and hind legs and tail to left of previous piece.

These tadpoles are about three months old, and they look so different. They have front legs. Their tails are even smaller. They have shed their tadpole skin and lips, and at last they have the wide mouth of a frog.

The tadpoles have now transformed into tiny frogs. They climb out of water and onto land. I wonder what this would feel like, climbing out of the only place you have ever known and going to someplace new and completely different? And you know what else is new? Now they look at a fly and think – LUNCH !! They aren't vegetarians any more. They eat insects and worms. And their tails continue to get smaller and smaller until they disappear.

Frogs are called amphibians. The word amphibian comes from a Greek word that means "two lives." An amphibian can live on land and in water. They are also cold-blooded, which means their inside body temperatures are about the same as the outside temperatures.

During the next few weeks and months, these tiny frogs will grow to be mature frogs with long sticky tongues. Why do they need such a tongue? Will they wave to one another with that tongue, because they are the friendliest frogs in the world? No; they need that tongue to catch insects.

Place adult frog and insect near mouth, to left of previous piece.

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Now these frogs will be able to make their own frog spawn, those slimy clumps of eggs from the beginning of the story, and there will be new tadpoles that will transform into frogs.

Frogs have been on the earth for a very long time. There were frogs on earth even before the dinosaurs lived.

Wondering Questions:

I wonder what part of the story you liked the best?

I wonder what part is most important?

I wonder where you are in the story?

I wonder if there is any part of the story that we can leave out and still have all the story we need?