

MR. FROGS DREAM

Ages 5-9

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about and identify the roles different animals play in wetlands and their ecosystems.

Summary: Traditional story of a frog wanting to fly like a duck

Subject Areas: Language arts, Science.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials

- Copy of Story
- Puppets for reenactment while story telling (optional)
- Printed copies of the story to supply to students (optional)

Procedure

1. Read the story to the class. You can tell them the tale or have them participate by role-playing the different creatures in the tale.
2. List key science words (what students remember).

Background: This story has been adapted from a Central American tale told by the Nicarao people of Nicaragua, and depicts what happens one springtime to the talkative, self-centered Mr. Frog. You can set it in any mangrove or other wetland near your own school. (If you give Mr. Frog a strong local or regional accent, the story works even better!)

References

- Mangrove Action Project, Marvellous Mangroves - A Wetlands Education Resource Book for the West Indies



Story - Mr. Frog's Dream

(This story has been adapted from a Central American tale told by the Nicarao people of Nicaragua, and depicts what happens one springtime to the talkative, self-centered Mr. Frog. You can set it in any mangrove or other wetland near your own school. If you give Mr. Frog a strong local or regional accent, the story works even better!)

JUST DOWN THE ROAD, in a pond at the edge of the Central Mangrove swamp, lived a handsome young frog who had many talents. His name was Mr. Frog. Now, Mr. Frog wasn't just any old frog; he could jump further [have the students practice jumping], swim faster [have the students practice swimming], and sing louder [have the students practice "ribbetting"] than any other frog in the whole wetland. He was so highly admired that all the other frogs and the creatures who inhabited the pond called him **MISTER** Frog.

Now, Mr. Frog could also talk. Well, all frogs can talk a little, of course, but Mr. Frog talked all the time, loudly and unceasingly. And do you know what he talked about? Himself, and, of course, his own accomplishments, which he considered most spectacular.

"I am such an incredible creature," he boasted. "I can jump higher, swim faster, and sing louder than any other frog in the whole world."

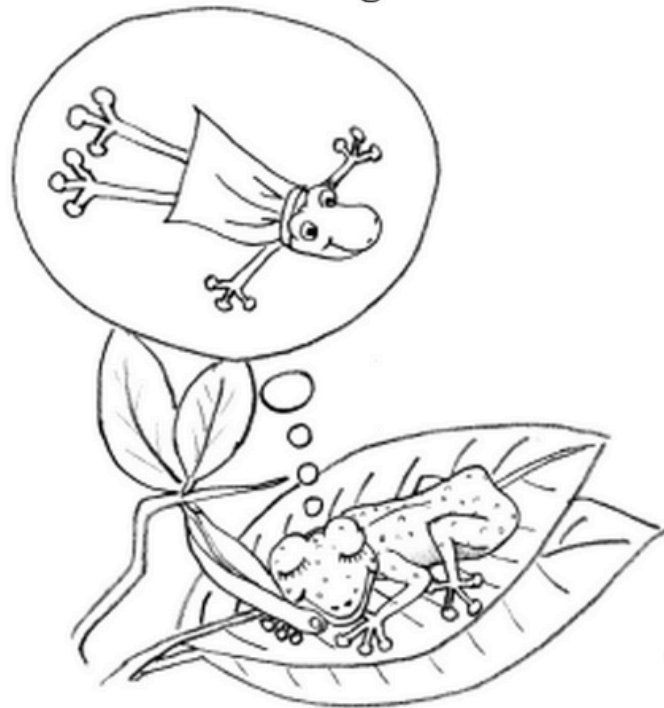
Pretty soon all the rest of the creatures in the pond got pretty bored with Mr. Frog's constant boasting, and whenever they saw him coming, they would pretend they had something very important to do. They would dive to the bottom of the pond to look for something to eat, or hide behind a mangrove tree. They would do everything they could to avoid him.

But Mr. Frog didn't care, because he had the birds to talk to. Every spring and fall, when the migrating birds stopped off at the mangrove pond for refreshments, they would be entertained with Mr. Frog's stories of his marvellous prowess and general brilliance. In fact, they encouraged his noisy boastings. Of course, they didn't have to listen for very long—just for a few days. while they ate lots of food to get them ready for the next portion of their flight. They thought Mr. Frog was a very amusing fellow.



Summer ended, and the coolness of winter began. The birds had all made it to their warm wintering grounds—some even stayed in the Central Mangrove for the season. Mr. Frog, however, had slowed down, and was spending a lot of time dozing in the shade of the mangroves. He'd wake now and then for an occasional nibble when it rained, but most of the time he just snoozed. And as he snoozed, he had a wonderful dream: he dreamed that he could fly!

Mr. Frog Dreamin'



One morning in early springtime, Mr. Frog finally emerged from his winter lassitude and swam over to his favourite lily pad. There, he basked in the sunshine and thought about his dream. Normally, he would have been very chatty, and would have leaped around enthusiastically. But this morning he just sat quietly contemplating. And every so often he would examine himself in a very peculiar manner. He twisted and turned and tried to look at his feet, his legs, his back . . . but he just couldn't figure out how he was going to fly. He knew he wanted to go with the birds, flying to faraway lands and seeing strange and wonderful things, but how was he going to do it?

However, he wasn't so deep in thought that he forgot to eat, and every so often his long, sticky tongue would dart out and zap a nice juicy insect.

Mr. Frog was so quiet that all the other creatures in the mangrove pond thought there was something wrong with him. So they gathered around and said, “Mr. Frog, Mr. Frog, what is the matter with you? You haven’t said a word since you woke up. Are you sick or what?”

Well, now Mr. Frog had an audience, and he never could resist an audience. He drew himself up regally and said, “Well, you creatures of the pond, I have to tell you that I had the most amazing dream.”

“A dream, Mr. Frog?” said the creatures. “What kind of dream?”

“I dreamed,” he said, “I dreamed . . . that I could FLY. Like a bird.”

“Yeah, right,” said the creatures in the pond, “How?”

Mr. Frog hadn’t quite figured that out. So, he thought long and very, very hard, and then suddenly he knew. “Ah yes, of course, what a genius I am! Sometimes I astound myself with my own intelligence. Such a brilliant idea, so simple, yet absolutely brilliant. Ah, I have the brainpower of a million, zillion other creatures to have come up with such an incredible scheme!”

“Tell us how, Mr. Frog! How?” all the creatures chorused.

“No, no, no,” said Mr. Frog, “That’s for me to know, and you to find out.” And with that he hopped over to the edge of the pond where Mrs. Swallow was resting in the mangrove trees.

“Hey, Mrs. Swallow, good morning. Have you seen the ducks?”

“Sorry, Mr. Frog, I haven’t seen the ducks on this trip. Why don’t you try the sandpipers over on the edge of the pond? They just flew all the way up from Colombia. Maybe they saw the ducks on their way here.”

“Okay,” said Mr. Frog, and swam over to where the sandpipers were busy pecking in the mud, looking for yummy bugs to eat. “Hey, Sandpipers, have you seen the ducks?” he asked.

“Nope—sorry, Mr. Frog,” replied all the sandpipers in unison. “Haven’t seen the ducks. And we can’t talk to you right now—too hungry. Gotta eat, eat, eat before we head north to Canada. Try some of the other pond creatures; maybe they saw the ducks.”



So Mr. Frog tried some of the creatures he hadn't asked before. But nobody had seen the ducks. And so, very disappointed, he made his way sadly back to his favourite lily pad and sat staring miserably into the water—when, all of a sudden: “Quack, quack, quack.” Down came two wild ducks and landed on the pond.

“Oh boy, oh boy,” exclaimed Mr. Frog, as he swam hurriedly over to where the ducks were quenching their thirst. “Ducks, am I ever glad to see you!”

“Mr. Frog,” said the ducks, “how nice to see you again. Did you have a good winter?”

“It was a wonderful winter,” burred Mr. Frog. “I had the most incredible dream.” And he was so rude that he forgot to ask the ducks how their winter had been. But they didn't mind, because they were used to Mr. Frog's ways.

“A dream, Mr. Frog?” they asked. “What kind of dream?”

“I dreamed . . . ,” said Mr. Frog, “I dreamed that, with your help . . . I could fly.”

“Oh, I don't think so, Mr. Frog,” said the ducks. “No, no, no. This sounds like another crazy Mr. Frog scheme to us. But, even if we could help you fly, where would you want us to fly you to?”

“I would love to fly with you to your summer home, where you make your nests.”

“Oh, I don't think so, Mr. Frog,” said the ducks. “No, no, no. That would be much too far to fly—even if you do have some crazy scheme that works. The best we could do is fly you around the pond. Okay?”

Well, Mr. Frog was really disappointed, as he'd wanted to fly to faraway lands. But he didn't dare say anything, just in case the ducks changed their minds. “Oh, no, that would be wonderful,” he chattered excitedly. “That would be absolutely marvellous. I would love to fly round the pond.”

“Okay, then, Mr. Frog, tell us about this idea of yours,” said the ducks.

“Well,” said Mr. Frog, nervously, “I will go to the edge of the pond, break off a reed, and bring it back to you. You will hold one end in each of your beaks. I will hold the middle in my mouth. Together we will flap across the pond . . . and FLY!”



“Oh, I don’t think so, Mr. Frog,” said the ducks. “No, no. no. Really, where do you get these crazy ideas? A reed in our beaks? Whatever next? But, you know, we don’t have anything else to do right now, so, what the heck, why don’t we give it a try? Off you go and get your reed.”

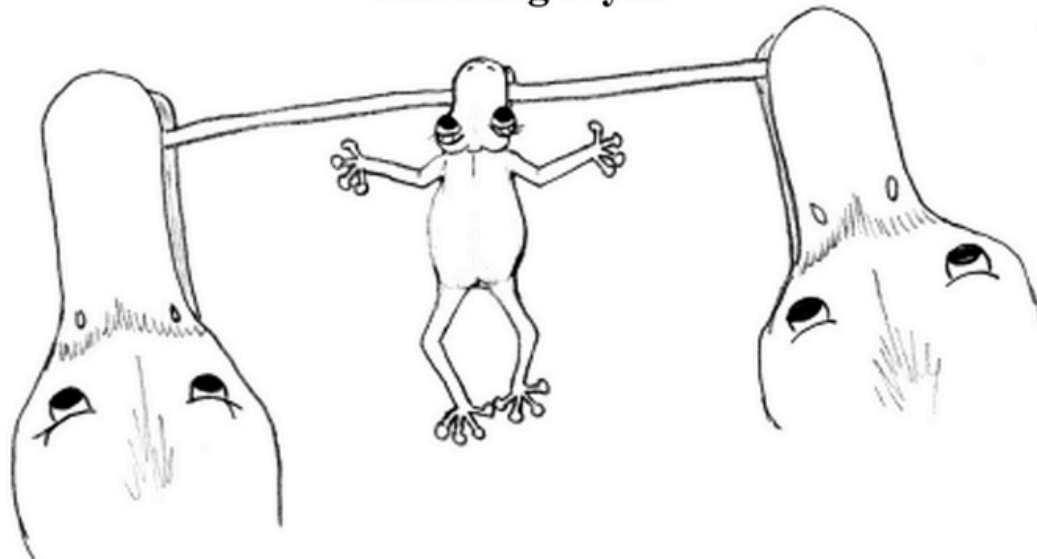
So Mr. Frog swam happily to the edge of the pond, found the perfect reed, and swam back with it in his mouth. He gave one end to each of the ducks to carry in their beaks, and was about to grab the middle in his mouth when the oldest and wisest duck said, “Now, Mr. Frog, a word of warning, and a word of advice. And we know this next bit will be very hard for you. Even supposing this crazy scheme of yours works—and we’re not convinced it will—under no circumstances must you **open . . . your . . . mouth.**”

“Moi? Open my mouth? Oh, you make a silly joke, yes? I would never do anything so stupid,” protested Mr. Frog.

“Okay, Mr. Frog,” said the ducks, “Don’t say we didn’t warn you.”

With that, the ducks grabbed the two ends of the reed in their beaks, and Mr. Frog took the middle in his mouth. Together they splashed across the pond, and pretty soon they were airborne.

Mr. Frog Flyin'



This was incredible. Mr. Frog had never been so happy. His dream had come true—he was actually flying. He looked down at the pond, and all the creatures there were looking up at him with admiration. Even the butterflies flitting by said, “Mr. Frog, Mr. Frog! You’re flying, just like us. Oooh!”

And Mr. Frog began to think that maybe the ducks would change their minds, and fly him north to Canada. But then he looked at the ducks—and, being Mr. Frog, he got a wee bit jealous because they were so pleased with their performance. But he didn't dare do anything about it.

The ducks started to really get into the whole project. They flew around the pond faster and faster. They boldly swooped lower, then higher, and then down they went. Round and round. Up and down. Faster and faster. Until they were going so fast that Mr. Frog began to get dizzy—so dizzy that he couldn't think.

“Stop!” he yelled. “Stop!”

And with that, he let go the reed and fell from the sky. A gasp of horror came from the crowd below him, and they scattered in every direction to take cover.

With a mighty splash, Mr. Frog hit the water, and sank, stunned, to the bottom.

After a little while, he made his way woozily to the surface. His ego was totally deflated. So he found his favourite lily pad and sat there, staring miserably into the water.

When the pond grew calm again, all the creatures gathered round him. And his youngest cousin, who was the bravest frog of all after Mr. Frog, timidly asked, “Mr. Frog, Mr. Frog, what happened? Tell us what happened.”

“I do not wish to speak of it,” said Mr. Frog. “Never again shall words of my dream or this event pass my lips. And I don't want any of you,” he yelled angrily at the pond creatures, “to ever, ever, ever, speak of this again. Okay?”

“Okay,” they said.

And from that day 'til this, nobody ever spoke of Mr. Frog's dream again.

