

# Diary of a Frog

## Author: Sally Sutton

## Illustrated by: Dave Gunson

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### Synopsis

The narrator of the story is a beautiful and highly talented frog (or at least she thinks so). Of course she will be perfect as the lead in the school play as the human princess, if only she can get her major competition Hazel out of the way. But then, horror of horrors, the frog's big moment comes and she is struck down with stage fright. Her dreams of being a star are shattered and she ends up being given the role of understudy, a role she considers far beneath her. Little does she know what a huge learning experience this play is going to be for her.

### Text Type

*Diary of a Frog* is a charming illustrated chapter book written by New Zealand author Sally Sutton. This series of stories gives the reader information about interesting species in New Zealand. The story is humorous with broad appeal for young readers. Written in diary form, the story tells us about a young frog's life as she pursues her dreams of becoming an actress. She suffers disappointment but then learns a great life lesson about the importance of being humble and respecting others.

### Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: pp. 5–12, pp. 13–32 and pp. 33–55.

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify words and ideas presented in the story. Have them make predictions about what will happen in the story next. Have them discuss what the conventions of diary writing are and what we learn about the lives of frogs from the story.

### Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- What is a diary? What do we expect from a story written in this form?
- What sort of impression do you get about the frog in the story from the blurb on the back?
- What role does the frog want to win? What might stand in her way?

Teacher reads pp. 5–12 aloud. Students follow along in their books.

### Comprehension pp. 5–12

- Who does the narrator hope will win the male lead in the play?
- Why is the frog so convinced she is going to be a star?
- How many brothers and sisters does the frog have?
- What does the frog's mum wish her good luck for?
- Why doesn't the frog choose Hazel to be on her swim team?
- How does the frog's mum react to her "illness"? Why do you think she reacts like this?
- Which teacher does the frog adore?
- Which of the frog's friends plan to audition for the role of human princess?
- What time does the frog tell Hazel the auditions are? Why does she do this? What does it suggest about her character?

### Discussion

- Is the frog vain? Why/why not? Why might being vain make you unpopular?
- How does the frog feel about her mother? Are her feelings justified? Why/why not?
- Is the narrator of the story very likeable? Why/why not? What qualities do you think she lacks?

Students read pp. 13–32 independently before the next shared session.

### Comprehension pp. 13–32

- Why do the boy frogs have trouble croaking?
- What does improvise mean? What happens when the frog is struck with stage fright?
- Why does Hazel glare at the frog when she arrives late? What does the teacher do?
- Whose role does Ferdinand win? Who will play the human princess? What is the frog's role?
- What does being an understudy require?
- How does the frog react to the news that she failed to win the role of human princess?
- What does Beryl tell the frog about the role of understudy that cheers her up?
- Why does the frog decide to give herself a stage name?
- Why does the frog want Jade to hide first? Why doesn't Hazel get to have a turn?
- Do you think that Beryl is right when she says that the frog is jealous of Hazel? Why/why not?

- How does the frog feel after she overhears what Beryl says about her?
- Why does the frog decide to attend practice on the 28th of August? What happens when she gets up on stage?
- What does the frog make her mother promise to do?
- What does the doctor diagnose the frog as having? What does he suggest that she do about it?
- Why does the frog storm out of practice on the 25th of September? Why does everyone else find this rehearsal funny?
- Why does the frog decide to quit the play? How does Ms Sage react to her decision? What does she ask the frog to do before the show?

### Discussion

- Have you ever been affected by stage fright? What happened? How did it make you feel? What do you think that the best way to deal with it is?
- Do you agree with Mr Fitzinger when he says that the frog is a drama queen? Why/why not?
- What evidence is there in the story to suggest that the frog can be bossy and self-centred?
- Why is the frog so disappointed with her life? What do you think she needs to do to make her life better?

Students read pp. 33–55 independently before the next shared session.

### Comprehension pp. 33–55

- What game does the frog ask Hazel to play? Why is this a dangerous idea?
- What happens to the frog when she tries to clamber up the bank? How does she know when she is safe? Why is her relief short-lived?
- Why does the frog think it's her fault that Hazel is missing? What does she begin to wish for?
- Why does Ms Sage want the frog to play the princess? Why isn't the frog very enthusiastic about this?
- What does the frog decide to learn instead of her lines?
- Why does Ms Sage announce that they are in a bit of a "pickle"?
- How does the frog feel when she learns that they are doing the German version of the play?
- What makes the frog change her mind about going on stage?
- How does the frog feel when Hazel joins the audience?

- Why does the frog end up kissing Ferdinand after all? What does she do that steals the show?
- What injury does Ferdinand suffer during the show?
- How does the frog know that her mother missed the whole show? How does this make the frog feel? In what way can the frog relate to her mother?
- Why does the frog give Beryl the bunch of spiders?
- How does the frog make it up to Hazel?

### Discussion

- Why do you think the frog has trouble apologising to Hazel at first?
- What lessons do you think the frog's experiences have taught her? Do you think she will change? Why/why not?
- What does the frog learn about acceptance?

### Activities

**Vocabulary** – Find 10 words in the story that you are unsure about the meaning of. Use a dictionary to define them and then use them in a sentence.

**Character** – Devise 5 questions with answers for the young frog.

**Theme** – Identify an important theme in the story and design a static image that depicts it. Include quotes and images from the story to back up your ideas.

**Static Image** – Design an alternative front cover for *Diary of a Frog*. The front cover needs the book's title, and the name of the author and illustrator. Include an exciting illustration about the book. Write the name of the book long ways on the spine. The back cover needs a summary of the story to encourage the reader.

**Flow Diagram** – Choose 10 important events from the story and make them into a flow diagram.

**Poetic Writing** – Write a poem based on events that occur in this story. Try to create imagery by incorporating figurative language features into your writing.

**Research** – Conduct a research assignment about Hochstetter's frogs. Formulate focussing questions to guide your research. Use a range of sources to gather your information. Present your findings as a poster or a pamphlet.

**Poster** – Design a poster advertising *Diary of a Frog* that would be suitable for display in your school library.

Notes written by Vicki Ladd