

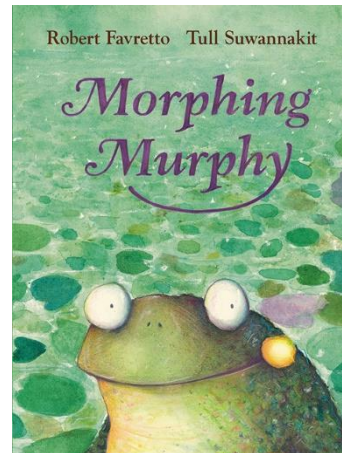


Teacher's Notes

# Morphing Murphy

By Robert Favretto and Tull Suwannakit

**Target Audience:** 3 – 6 year olds



## Synopsis:

*Murphy likes his life the way it is – swimming in his weedy pond, slurping up algae and rotting water plants. But then things begin to change . . . and he's not the only one caught by surprise!*

*Morphing Murphy* is a delightfully funny and light-hearted story about a tadpole developing into a frog. It is a tale where Murphy learns that resilience in life can only grow stronger when he embraces change and manages these challenges in a positive way. All these changes represent progress and development and therefore cause Murphy to improve and better adapt to the environment. But in a surprise twist, he also benefits from another amazing life changing experience.

## Author's Inspiration:

As a boy, I loved lizards and other creepy-crawly things, but frogs had always held a special fascination for me. While growing up, near Merri Creek, they seemed magical and provided simple joys for me and my friends. I learned about the stages in a frog's life, and this inspired me to write *Morphing Murphy* – with a splash of humour.

## Main Character (Murphy):

Murphy is an Eastern Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii*), also colloquially known as the 'Pobblebonk'. He is a species of burrowing frog native to south-eastern Australia. The colloquial name of this species reflects the 'bonk' call, which sounds a bit like a banjo string being plucked! Males of the species produce a single 'bonk' note, with other individuals often calling in response. When many frogs call and respond, it creates a delightful chorus of notes at slightly different pitches and is a unique sound of south-east Australian wetlands.

## Themes:

- Metamorphosis
- Resilience
- Perseverance
- Adaptation
- Loneliness
- Love
- Happiness
- Humour
- Habitat



## Key Points:

- A light-hearted story about change and adaptation with engaging illustrations – best read aloud
- A useful resource for Early Childhood and Primary School educators to introduce the process of metamorphosis in frogs
- Promotes the importance of resilience – the capacity to cope, learn and thrive in the face of change, challenge and adversity
- Focuses on repetitive words and phrases that allow children to make predictions as a valuable strategy to improve reading comprehension
- A progressive tale of change with a twist in the tail of the tale.

## About the Author:

Robert Favretto is a children's author of junior fiction and picture books. He has 38 years of primary school experience and enjoys writing stories that inspire and encourage children to become engaged readers. Robert also conducts workshops to demonstrate fun and unique ways of getting kids to write and read.

Also by Robert Favretto

- *Gorski's Bitemare*
- *Home of the Cuckoo Clock*
- *CAT-astrophe*
- *CAT-apult*
- *On the Nose*
- *Leonardo's Spot of Trouble*
- *Lost for Words*

For more information: visit **Robert Favretto Books Facebook** page

## About the Illustrator:

Tull Suwannakit is a children's book author and illustrator with a background in animation and fine art. He began his artistic career as a set designer and sculptor for an independent animation studio in New York. Tull's books have been published in Australia, the UK and the US, as well as being translated in numerous languages worldwide.

*What Happens Next?* (Walker Books Australia and UK) was featured in the Sydney Morning Herald, ABC Mornings Radio and Play School on ABC4Kids, and was short-listed for 2015 Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Award. His latest collaborated picture book, *Sad, The Dog* (Walker Books, Australia and Candlewick Press, USA) written by Sandy Fussell gained positive reviews from *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The New York Times*.

Previous published books include:

- *Sad, The Dog*: by Sandy Fussell (Walker Books Australia, Candlewick Press USA)
- *Thimble*: by Rebecca Young (Scholastic Press)
- *The Little Stowaway*: by Vicki Bennett (Scholastic Press)
- *What Happens Next?* (Walker Books Australia/ UK)

## Illustration Style:

For *Morphing Murphy*, Tull researched many types of frogs that best suited the narrative, as well as being native to Australia. The Pobblebonk frog was eventually used as the character for Murphy. Tull used mostly watercolour and colours pencils for the rendering of the illustrations. Chalk pastels were used in some of the scenes to bring out added glow and luminosity of the colours. In the first half of the story, the colours were done in a muted and slightly on the muddier side of the palette, while the 2nd half was replaced with brighter and more optimistic tones to juxtapose between alienation and a new change.

### **CLASSROOM IDEAS: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

NB: The following teaching points and activities are linked to the Australian Curriculum and generally apply to the targeted audience selected for *Morphing Murphy* (3 – 6 years).

#### **ENGLISH: (Ref: Australian Curriculum – Content Descriptions)**

**ACELY1660:** Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

- Before reading *Morphing Murphy*, view the cover and title of the book.
- What do you think this book is about?
- Do you think this story will be happy or sad? Why?
- How do you think it will begin and end?
- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- Who is the publisher?
- Ask students if they can recognise and name the frog shown on the cover.
- Ask them what they know about frogs.
- Look at the back cover of *Morphing Murphy*.
- What is a blurb?
- Why is a blurb important?
- What does the blurb tell you about the book?
- Why does the blurb say ‘. . . and he’s not the only one caught by surprise!’
- During reading, identify and list the themes in *Morphing Murphy*.

**ACELT1783:** Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in the story

**ACELT1582:** Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences

**ACELT1578:** Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text

- Why does Murphy enjoy his life the way it is?
- After reading, what changes does Murphy experience during the story?
- How does he react and cope with these changes?
- Dealing with change can sometimes be uncomfortable, stressful or even scary. Discuss some things you can do to help cope with change and make your life a little easier. For example:
  1. Think things through and ask, ‘What is the worst that can happen?’
  2. View change as an opportunity to learn and grow, rather than as a setback.
  3. Try to make the best of the situation – celebrate the positives!
  4. Try some problem-solving techniques, or set goals to proactively address any challenges. Focusing on the problem at hand, developing a plan of action, and asking

for advice are useful active strategies.

5. Improving your ability to handle stress will go a long way to helping you deal with change. E.g. Mindfulness/meditation, or other relaxation techniques.

- Why is the girl important to the story?
- How does Murphy support the girl and help her learn from her situation?

**ACELA1462:** Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things

- Explore how language is used to express Murphy's feelings about his changes. E.g. 'AARGH!' 'YIKES!' 'OH NO!' 'What's happening to me?'
- List the adjectives used to describe his emotions during his metamorphosis.
- Ask students to suggest other words or ways to describe Murphy's feelings.

**ACELA1786:** Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts

- What do you notice in the pictures?
- Do the words exactly match what's happening in the illustrations?
- Do the images make the story funnier or easier to follow?
- Do the pictures add new information to *Morphing Murphy*?
- Why is some of the language repeated throughout the book? (It helps pre-schoolers anticipate what will come next in the story, and it provides a rhythm that is useful to early reader word recognition. Best of all, repetition builds a sense of expectation that, in *Morphing Murphy*, is delightfully highlighted both in text and visuals on the book's last page.)
- How does the colour of the illustrations change through the book?

**ACELA1451:** Identify the parts of a simple sentence that represent 'What's happening?', 'What state is being described?', 'Who or what is involved?' and the surrounding circumstances

**ACELA1462:** Identify language that can be used for appreciating texts and the qualities of people and things

- Give examples of the events leading up to each stage of Murphy's development.
- Encourage students to identify some of the adjectives relating to his change.
- How does the water beetle react to Murphy's metamorphosis?
- How does the dialogue replicate the sounds a frog makes?
- Explore how language is used to express feeling, for example 'Cool, thought Murphy. *Life is good. I wouldn't change a thing.*'

**ACELT1584:** Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts

- Identify whose point of view (POV) the story is written in.
- Attempt to write the story from the water beetle's point of view.
- Discuss how the plot develops including: beginning (orientation), how the problem (complication) is introduced and solved (resolution).
- Ask students to come up with ideas about what might happen next in the story if it continued past the last page.
- **Write a book review of the story using the worksheet provided:**

# A Book Review by: \_\_\_\_\_



Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Illustrator: \_\_\_\_\_

What was the story about?


Who were the characters?


What did you like about the book?

Draw your favourite picture:




What rating would you give this book out of 10? Why?

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**ACELT1582:** Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences

- Ask students to discuss what they think of *Murphy Murphy* and how it relates to their feelings and emotions about familiar experiences and memories.
- Compare other characters from books and films that have similar themes to *Morphing Murphy* or to their own experiences. Do they have a favourite? Why?

**ACELA1453:** Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning

- Look for the visual clues the illustrator includes in the story to show Murphy's different stages of development.
- Talk about what is real and what is imagined in the text.
- How are the colours used to signify feelings and evoke a response?
- Describe how textual effects can generally offer a greater sense of reality to a picture.
- How is Murphy portrayed in the different settings?
- Is Murphy always drawn from the same or different angle? What does this imply about him?
- Examine Murphy's facial expressions, gestures, stance or position. How do the images depict Murphy's personality and what he is experiencing?

**MATHEMATICS:** (Ref: Australian Curriculum - Content Descriptions)

**ACMMG007:** Compare and order duration of events using everyday language of time

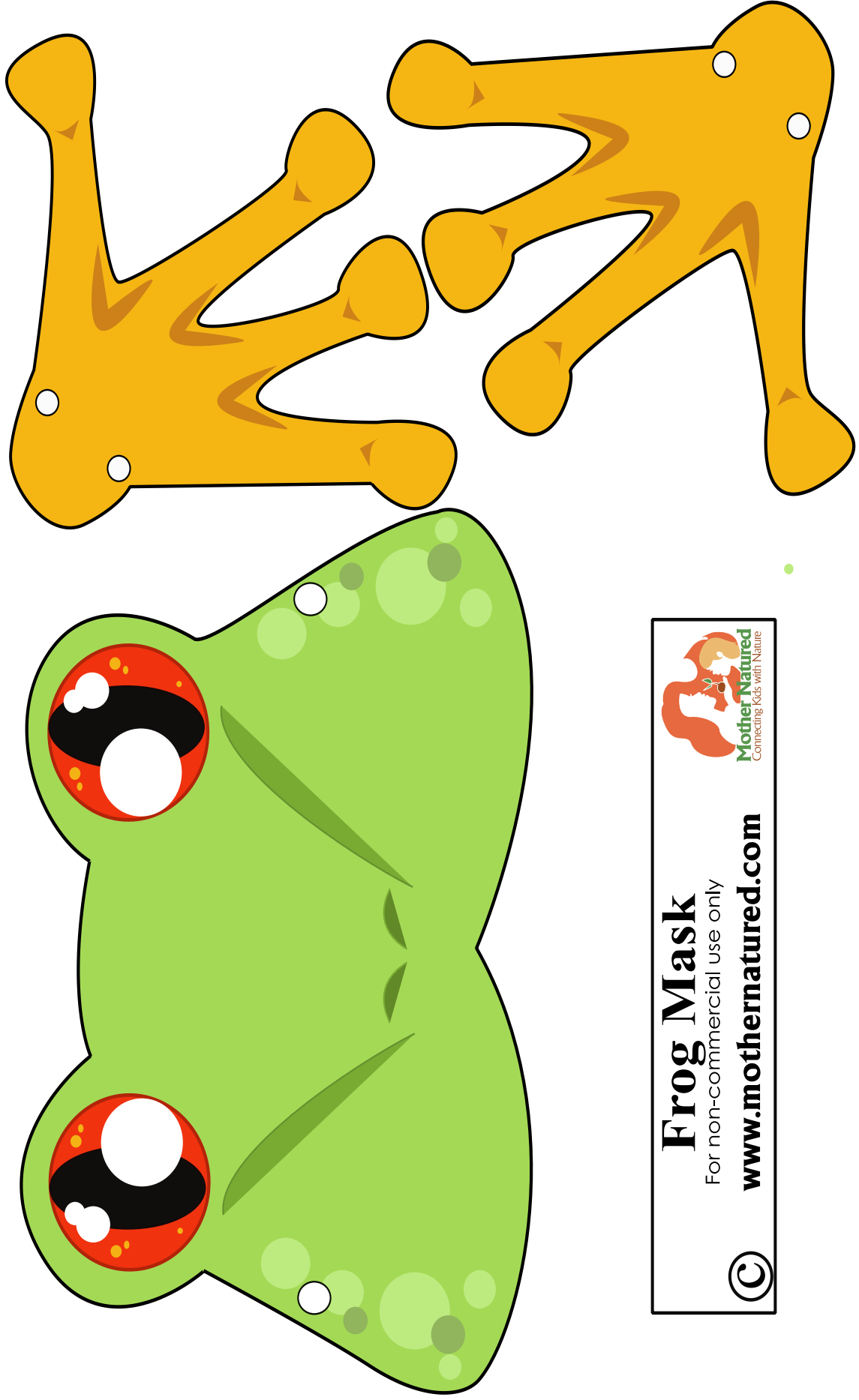
**ACMMG066:** Identify symmetry in the environment

- How long does it approximately take for a tadpole to become a frog?
- As a class, sequence a frog's metamorphosis in time order.
- What is a Leap Year? Explain the relationship between different units of time (months and years; seconds, minutes and hours).
- Explore a pond to find shapes with one or more lines of symmetry.

**VISUAL ARTS / CRAFT:** (Ref: Australian Curriculum – Content Descriptions)

**ACAVAM107:** Use and experiment with different materials, techniques, technologies and processes to make artworks

- Ask students to draw their own frogs, lily pads, marshes, etc.
- Make a Frog Life Cycle Flip Book to show the metamorphosis process of a frog's life.
- Search for frog-shaped rocks, colour them green with acrylic paint and add eyes and a few speckles for good measure.
- Dip the feet of plastic frogs into various colours of paint and have them 'hop' across the paper to make a cool design with the footprints.
- Complete the *Morphing Murphy* colouring-in worksheets to improve colouring skills.
- **Create a frog mask using the template provided:**
- Print your frog mask and cut around the edges of the frog mask and the hands.
- Cut the eyeholes using scissors.
- Use hole punches to put holes where the strings go.
- Tie the string on the mask and the hands.
- Tie the mask to your student's head and the hands to your student's wrists.
- Time to let your students play!



 **Frog Mask**  
For non-commercial use only  
[www.mothernatured.com](http://www.mothernatured.com)

**Mother Natured**  
Connecting Kids with Nature

# Murphy Colouring Page



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## **SCIENCE:** (Ref: Australian Curriculum – Content Descriptions)

### **ACSSU002:** Living things have basic needs, including food and water

- What do frogs need for survival? Discuss the basic needs of living things and relate these to frogs. Talk about or annotate images of frog ponds, identifying the common features and how these meet the needs of frogs, e.g. water to live in, plants to provide shelter, a log or rock as an access ramp, insects for food.
- Why do frogs need water to survive?
- What insects do frogs eat?

### **ACSSU017:** Living things have a variety of external features

- What are the physical features and characteristics of frogs? They have two bulging eyes; strong, long, webbed hind feet that are adapted for leaping and swimming; and smooth or slimy skin. They have a long, sticky tongue for catching insects).
- What is the difference between a froglet and a frog?
- What type of frog is Murphy?
- How does he differ from other types of frogs?
- How do frogs breathe?
- How long can a frog stay under water?
- How do frogs protect themselves?

### **ACSSU211:** Living things live in different places where their needs are met

- Recognise that frogs live in the water and on land and belong to a group of animals called amphibians?
- Discuss that a cool moist environment is essential for many frogs so water does not evaporate from their skin in hot, dry weather. A place to hide – rocks, leaf litter, mulch, twigs, shrubs, trees, hollow branches and bark provide safety from predators.
- Explore what happens when habitats change and some living things can no longer have their needs met.
- How can we improve a local environment to encourage frogs to thrive?
- Create a frog pond (at home or at school) with the addition of natural items such as plants, gravel and logs.

### **ACSSU072:** Living things have life cycles

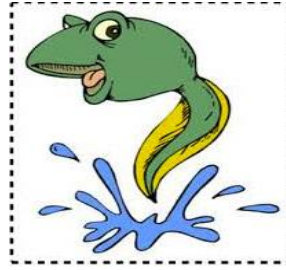
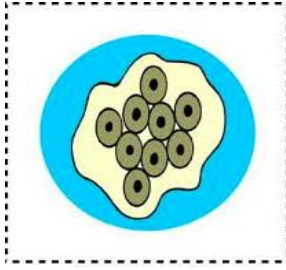
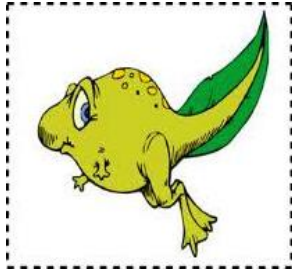
**NB:** Suitable for F – 4

- Can you describe the life cycle of a frog?
- What is metamorphosis? Metamorphosis means changing from one form into another.
- What physical features are changing as a frog progresses from tadpole to adult? The jaw changes shape, tail recedes, tongue for catching flies develops, hind legs and then front legs begin to grow, and lungs develop as gills disappear. This is merely a list of some of the most obvious changes that occur as a frog undergoes metamorphosis and is not intended to be an exhaustive description.
- Where do frogs lay their eggs?
- What is another name for frog's eggs?
- After a frog egg hatches, what is the animal called?
- Why do tadpoles grow lungs?
- What do tadpoles feed on?
- Are frogs the only animal to go through metamorphoses during their life cycle?
- **Complete The Life Cycle of a Frog using the worksheet provided:**

# Life Cycle of a Frog



Cut and paste the pictures in the correct order below.  
Describe each stage of the frog's life cycle.



	<b>First,</b>
	<b>Next,</b>
	<b>Then,</b>
	<b>Finally,</b>

## **MUSIC:** (Ref: Australian Curriculum - Content Descriptions)

**ACAMUM081:** Sing and play instruments to improvise, practise a repertoire of chants, songs and rhymes, including songs used by cultural groups in the community

**ACAMUM082:** Create compositions and perform music to communicate ideas to an audience

- Teach *Galumph Went the Little Green Frog* and explore call and response songs
- Considering viewpoints – meanings and interpretations: For example – What did this music make you think about and why?
- What type of instruments could be used to describe the various movements, vocal sounds and habits of a frog?
- Introduce and explore the aboriginal Dreamtime story of *Tiddalick the Frog*. Learn the song, focusing on fast and slower rhythms and call and response.
- Students can write and read their own frog stories and then create a dance to reflect the actions in the story.
- Learn the *Metamorphosis* (Tadpole into Frog) song about the frog cycle:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jR0EPHyo128>

## **DRAMA:** (Ref: Australian Curriculum – Content Descriptions)

**ACELA1787:** Explore different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions

**ACADRM027:** Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama

- Encourage students to use their frog masks or create a sock puppet or paper bag frog to re-enact *Morphing Murphy*.
- Use the puppets to help students learn about Murphy's emotions. (Through the use of puppets, students can gain a better understanding of emotions and the behaviours that correspond with them.)
- Ask students to experiment with their puppets to show different facial expressions, hand movements, and personality traits.

## **HEALTH and PHYSICAL ED:** (Ref: Australian Curriculum – Content Descriptions)

**ACPPS005:** Identify and describe emotional responses people may experience in different situations

**ACPMP008:** Practise fundamental movement skills and movement sequences using different body parts

- Discuss the concept of growth and change.
- Identify and describe Murphy's emotions during his change. E.g. scared, confused, anxious, happy or excited. How does he feel?
- Ask students to bring in two photos of themselves: one as a baby and one as a school student. Using these photos, students identify their needs at these two points in time and changes that had occurred. Recognise they are still growing by identifying skills they are yet to develop. Talk about connections between feelings and body reactions.
- Recall and share emotional responses to different situations.
- Encourage physical activity to develop gross motor skills through fun challenges such as Jump Rope (skipping), Leap Frog, Long Jump, Hopscotch and Stair Hop.

