



MINIS AT HOME

volume 1, issue 25

Greetings kids, parents, grandparents, guardians, friends and neighbors!

Welcome to issue 25 of *Minis at Home* newsletter. Each newsletter features a special theme and offers pertinent information, a craft, and recommended reading. Grownups: please work on projects together with your children. Your pARTicipation is important! We will offer hints and tips for ways to create art as a twosome or a family.

This week's theme = Listening to Spring

Spring is here! With spring, comes change.... lots of change. From warmer weather to chirping birds to flowers blooming. Spring is a time for new life. Creatures who have been hibernating wake up and venture outdoors, looking for food. Birds and migrating animals flock northward for the summertime. Birds make nests in which to lay their eggs. Plants and grass become greener, and leaves start to bud out on their branches. Flowers, fields, and gardens bloom with the help of the sun and rain. Seeds are planted, so food will grow. Animals, birds and insects will also have more to eat during the springtime. Although it still feels cool outside, the sun is higher in the sky and the days are longer. Spring is the time when the northern half of the Earth—known as the northern hemisphere—receives more direct rays from the sun.



We know it's springtime by the warmer weather and longer days, but we also know it's spring by the **sounds** we hear when we are outdoors. Spring is a busy time for all living things including people, animals, birds, plants, insects, and amphibians. Did you know that the songs of birds, frogs and crickets are all **unique**? That means that no two are ever the same.



Have you ever heard people playing outdoors when the weather is nice? Neighbors might be talking or you might hear children playing. Many of them have activities outdoors when spring arrives, such as bike riding, soccer, baseball or tennis. If you live near a park, can you hear a tennis ball against a racket or a baseball hit a bat? Or can you hear children laughing as they swing on squeaky swings? Do you hear people getting their yards and gardens ready for the spring by mowing grass, cutting bushes, and planting seeds? If you live near farm fields, you may hear tractors.



If you live near the water, you might hear boats as well as honking geese and quacking ducks. No matter where you live, there are many different sounds of spring.



A sure sign of spring is the singing and peeping of spring peepers. Peepers are small frogs that sound almost like sleigh bells. They are also called "chorus frogs" because they sing together in huge groups. If you go outside and listen, you may hear them "peeping" at nighttime. Spring peepers are one of the loudest animals in Maryland. Their songs can carry as far away as 3 miles, and if you measured their sounds in **decibels** (how loud something is) they would be as loud as a lawn mower!

Spring peepers are only about 1-inch long. They are green, tan and/or brown with a dark "X" on their backs, and they have white bellies. Peepers have large toe pads that make them great at climbing trees, although they spend most of their time living under leaves and debris on the forest floor. In the winter, peepers hibernate in the mud and under leaves. They can survive freezing temperatures because of a special liquid in their blood that acts like anti-freeze.



Peepers, like many other frogs you find here in Maryland, are well camouflaged; they blend in with their environments so predators cannot see them. You will hear peepers mostly at night because they are nocturnal, which means they hunt and look for a mate during the nighttime. They sing at night to attract their mates and they also hunt for beetles, ants, flies and spiders.

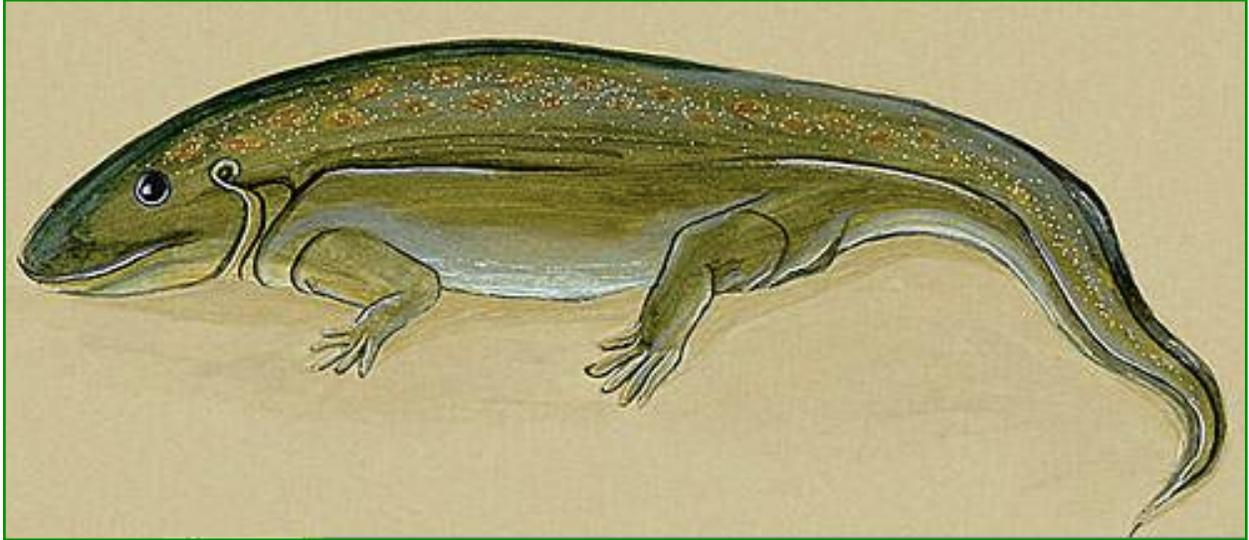
Frogs have excellent night vision. Their bulging eyes allow them to see in front, to the sides, and even slightly behind them. Their eyes are also important in helping them swallow their meals. They pull their eyes down into the roof of their mouths, which helps push their food down their throats!

How does such a tiny frog make such a big sound? Peepers, like all frogs, squeeze air out of their lungs and into a sac in their throats. This sack blows up like a balloon. As the air is pressed out of the lungs and into the sac, it vibrates against the frog's vocal cords, which makes the peeping or croaking sound. If you've ever squeezed air out of a balloon, you can hear the high-pitched squeaky noises made from the vibrations.

If you live near a forest, pond or swampy area, you may also hear larger frogs, such as leopard frogs and bullfrogs. These frogs are much larger than peepers, so their songs have a lower pitch or sound. Like birds, male frogs make themselves known to others by their songs or croaks. By letting others know they are around, they can attract a mate, scare away enemies, or both.

Did you know that frogs have lived on Earth for about **200 million** years? Some kinds of frogs were alive at the same time as the dinosaurs! Before animals could walk on land, they were all living in water as fish. It is believed that frogs were one of the first animals on Earth to evolve to walk on land. Today, frogs can both swim and walk. Frogs are amazing creatures that have evolved to survive from predators, extreme temperatures and changes in the environment. Because they can live both in water and on land, they

can easily escape predators and find plenty to eat. Frogs are cold-blooded, which means that their body temperature changes with the temperature outdoors. People need to put on jackets when it's cold or dress in shorts when it's hot because our body temperature stays the same.



<https://www.exploratorium.edu/frogs/mainstory/ichthyostega.html>

This is a picture of a **prehistoric** frog called **Ichthyostega**, also known as the "First Four-Legged Fish."

While you won't be able to see Ichthyostegas around anymore, when you hear a chorus of singing spring peepers or the low croaking of bullfrogs, you will know that you are listening to some of the oldest, most amazing creatures on Earth...and also that spring is finally here!



Activity: Craft**Frog on a Log****Materials:****Egg carton****Toilet paper roll****Pink and green construction paper scraps****Scissors****Green and brown paint****Paintbrush****Cloth tape or electrical tape****Googly eyes****Glue****Procedure:**

Cut out 2 cups from an egg carton.

Paint these using green and brown paint (you can make an olive-green color or leave it blotchy). The cups will form the frog's head and its body.

Paint the toilet paper roll brown. This will be the log that the frog sits on.

While the paint is drying, cut out 2 dime-sized green circles.

Glue a googly eye onto each green circle.

Cut 1 long, skinny rectangle out of pink paper and curl one end of the paper (you can do this easily by wrapping it around a pencil or the paintbrush handle). This will be the frog's tongue.

Cut out 4 rectangles for the frog's legs and create 3 rounded toes on the end of each. You can substitute triangles for the feet if you wish.

On the bottom of one egg cup, glue the 4 green frog legs so that they point diagonally in each direction.

Turn the cup over so it is open side up. Tape the tongue inside the rim of the cup so that the curled side sticks out.

Place the other egg cup (frog's head) on top, leaving the open rims touching.

Tape the cups together on the inside back, so the frog's mouth can open and close...like a hinge.

Glue the eyes on top of the frog's head.

Glue the frog on top of the log.

Sounds of Spring Scavenger Hunt:

As springtime arrives and the weather gets warmer, we spend more time outside. There are many sounds you might hear while playing or walking outdoors. Some sounds are from nature and some are not. Head outdoors to listen for all the following sounds. Can you tell which sounds do not come from nature?

_____ **Bees buzzing**

_____ **Leaves rustling**

_____ **Birds singing**

_____ **Wind blowing**

_____ **Boat motoring**

_____ **Frogs croaking or "peeping"**

_____ **Geese honking**

_____ **Lawn mower or tractor grumbling**

_____ **People talking or laughing**

_____ **Ducks quacking**

_____ **Dogs barking**

_____ **Squirrels chattering**

_____ **Other animal sounds**

_____ **Car driving**

_____ **Rain falling**

_____ **Thunder booming**

_____ **Leaves, twigs and sticks crunching under your feet**

_____ **Airplane or helicopter flying**



Activity: Sing, Peep and Move!

Springtime Is Here

(original source unknown)

Spring, spring coming soon,
Grass is green and flowers bloom,
Birds returning from the south,
Bees are buzzing all about,
Leaves are budding everywhere,
Springtime, springtime finally here!



Five Little Speckled Frogs:

(original source unknown)

5 little speckled frogs (put 5 fingers onto your forearm, which you hold in front of you)
Sat on a speckled log
Eating some most delicious bugs (make eating motion with hands to mouth)
Yum, Yum!
1 jumped into the pool (Curve your arm into a circular “pond,” and with other hand put 1 finger in)
Where it was nice and cool
Then there were 4 speckled frogs (put 4 fingers on your arm)
Glug, glug

(Repeat counting down to zero)

Literacy: POEM TO SHARE

Sounds of Spring by Constance Del Nero



Spring goes peep
and cheep cheep cheep;
Spring goes rumble
and croak

Spring is the creak
of the old rope swing
tied to the branch
of an oak

Spring is the patter
of insistent rain
that turns my garden green

Spring is the chatter
of nattering squirrels
as they spiral
around the trees

Spring is the squelch
of my boots in the mud
as I muck about the yard

Spring is the scratch
of my sidewalk chalk
as I draw some rainbow art.

Literacy: RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Snuggle up in a big comfy chair and read together

Frogs by Gail Gibbons

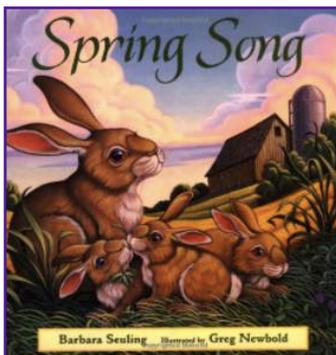
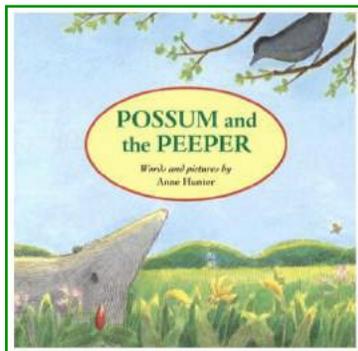
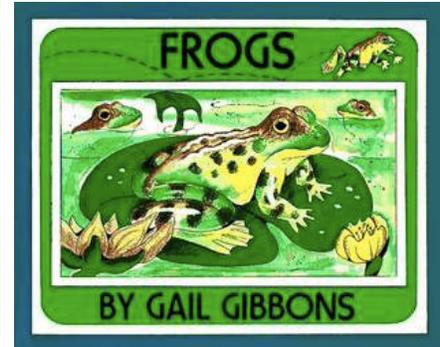
Possum and Peeper by Anne Hunter

Spring for Sophie by Yael Werber

Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring by Kenard Pak

Spring Song by Barbara Seuling

Busy Spring: Nature Wakes Up by Sean Taylor



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See you next week with issue 26 of **Minis at Home!**

Share your work on <https://www.instagram.com/minimastersaam/>

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