

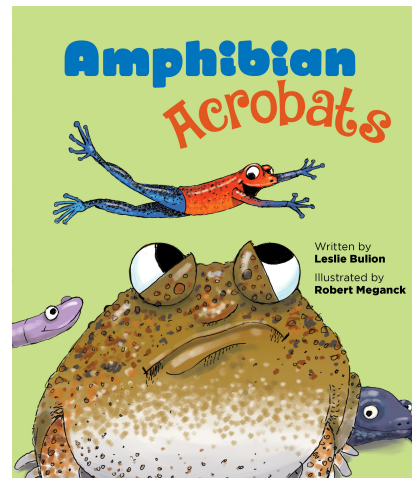
PEACHTREE  
**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

## Amphibian Acrobats

Written by Leslie Bulion  
Illustrated by Robert Meganck

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Ages 8–12 | Science, Poetry  
Lexile • F&P • GRL W; Gr 6



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Step right up and learn all about the lively participants in the Amphibian Acrobat show— from the agile Wallace’s flying frog to the bouncing Venezuelan pebble toad to the tricky salamander called the yellow-eyed ensatina.

These show-stopping creatures hail from around the world and your own backyard! They shape-shift and sky dive, balance and climb. You’ll marvel at the astounding agility of “The Olympic Jumpers” and you’ll be awed by the incredible stamina of the intrepid “Marathoners.” Plus, you may be surprised by the antics of the amphibians called caecilians. Come along and get to know all about these lively denizens with this entertaining collection of science verses.

Author Leslie Bulion includes a science glossary, notes on poetry forms, and resources for information about these extraordinary animals. Witty drawings by Robert Meganck add another layer of fun to this humorous and informative exhibition starring some of the world’s most remarkable frogs, salamanders, and caecilians.

### THEMES

amphibians | animal locomotion and behavior  
science poetry | endangered species

### ACTIVITIES

#### Activity 1: Amphibian Characteristics

- Ask students, working in pairs, to create a list of frog characteristics using information from *Amphibian Acrobats* and students’ own knowledge. Students may find help with physical characteristics using visual references from the endpapers, relative sizes chart on pages 58–59 and frog/toad poem illustrations throughout *Amphibian Acrobats* (eg: four legs, two hands and two feet, a mouth, a head, no tail, have backbones). Students may already know life history and behavior characteristics (eg: frogs jump/hop, eat bugs, lay eggs, usually hatch as tadpoles, need to stay moist) and may find additional information through close reading of the science note “Amazing Amphibians” and its “Frogs” section on pages 6–7, as well as individual frog/tadpole poems and the accompanying species notes on pages 8–35, and page 54. Share student lists to create a classroom master list of frog characteristics.
- Repeat this process for salamanders, with reference to pages 6–7 and pages 36–41, 54.
- Repeat for caecilians, pages 6–7 and pages 42–43, 54.
- Using the three master lists, create a classroom Venn diagram with three overlapping circles. Each circle will represent one of the three subgroups, called “orders,” of the larger taxonomic “class” of amphibians: frogs (and toads, which are frogs, too),

salamanders, caecilians. Which amphibian characteristics belong in the center overlapping area shared by all three orders of amphibians? Which characteristics are shared by frogs and salamanders, but not caecilians? Which characteristics are unique to salamanders?

### Activity 2: Math Detectives!

- Ask students to read the chart “How Many Known Amphibian Species?” on page 55. Which amphibian order has the largest number of identified species? Which has the next largest number of species? Which order has the smallest number of identified species?
- Ask students to round the number of species in each order to the nearest hundred. Using manipulatives or math, ask students to compare the number of species in each order and make observations about the relationship between these numbers.
- The author gave a hint about the relationship between the numbers of species in each amphibian order in the choices she made about the subjects of her poems. Ask students to take a closer look at the subjects of the poems. Do students recognize a pattern that relates to their findings?

### Activity 3: Amphibian Artistry

- Ask students to refer to the lists they made in Activity 1 and their own imaginations to create a list of physical and behavioral characteristics for a real or imaginary new acrobat in their favorite order of amphibians. Have students check that the characteristics they assign to their amphibian acrobat will fit within the Venn diagram created in Activity 1.
- Where in the world does their Amphibian Acrobat live (see map on pages 56–57)? In what type of habitat is it found? Is it endangered or threatened, and if so, why (see pages 54, 58–59)?
- Ask students to choose a poetic form such as the tanka “Desert Spadefoot Days,” p 22; the clerihew, “The Skin Shredders,” p. 42; or another mentor text poem they enjoyed in *Amphibian Acrobats*. Students can find details of the form in its poetry glossary entry on pages 48–52. Ask students to create a poem of one or more stanzas about their newly created amphibian acrobat using what they have learned and imagined.

- Ask students to illustrate their amphibian acrobat poem. Where does their amphibian fit on the relative size chart on pages 58–59?

### Activity 4: Sing Like a Frog!

- Discuss why frogs croak, chirp or ribbit (hint: read the science notes on pages 31 and 25 in *Amphibian Acrobats*).
- Visit <https://www.aza.org/frogwatch-species-list-by-state-and-territory> to learn about frogs you might find in your area. How many frogs live in your state?
- Click on “Listen to its call” to hear several of your region’s common frog calls. Discuss the differences students hear: is the call loud or soft, high or low-pitched, fast or slow?
- Divide students into working groups of four and have each group choose the name of a different common frog/toad they might find in your region from the FrogWatch state list. Ask students to click on “Listen to its call” and practice making the sound together.
- Come together as a class and ask each group to share the name of their frog and demonstrate the call to the class.
- Frogs are often hidden, or calling at night!
  - Move the groups of students around the room.
  - Ask all students to cover their eyes, and tap one group to see if the others can identify the calls by listening.

### RELATED READING

Lamstein, Sarah. *Big Night for Salamanders*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2010.

Sill, Cathryn. *About Amphibians*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 2018.

Stewart, Melissa. *A Place for Frogs*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 2016.

Turner, Pamela S. *The Frog Scientist*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2011.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leslie Bulion has written poetry since fourth grade and has always been interested in science and nature. She earned graduate degrees in oceanography and social work and worked both as a medical and a school social worker. She is also the author of *Hey There, Stink Bug!*, *At the Sea Floor Café*, *Leaf Litter Critters*, *Superlative Birds* and several novels for young readers. Leslie lives in Connecticut.

[www.lesliebulion.com](http://www.lesliebulion.com)

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### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Robert Meganck is a professor of illustration and graphic design at Virginia Commonwealth University. He has received over three hundred awards for his work. He lives in Virginia.

[www.meganck.com](http://www.meganck.com)

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prepared by Leslie Bulion

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