

# Resource Guide for Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing

Topeka Civic Theatre's Academy

Feb. 10 –19, 2012



## About the Show

The play is based on the book of the same name by Judy Blume.

It is divided into 7 different scenes and includes several stories from the book, including 'Mr. and Mrs. Juicy-O', 'The Birthday Bash', and 'The Flying Train Committee'.

The play is told through the 'eyes' of Peter. There are two Peters. One who is the narrator, or storyteller for the play, and the other, who acts out the stories. The narrator speaks directly to the audience while he tells the story.

## About Judy Blume

Judy Blume says she spent her childhood making up stories inside her head. She received a B.S. in education from NYU in 1961 and has written many books for children as well as three novels for adults. Besides the 5-book series about Fudge, you might recognize *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* and *Blubber*. She has sold over 80 million copies and her work has been translated into thirty-one languages.

In 1996, Judy received the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement from the American Library Association. She was also awarded the 2004 National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

Judy and her husband, George, live on islands up and down the east coast. They have three grown children and one grandchild.

To sum up: page 1

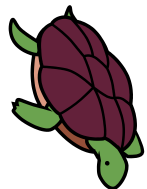
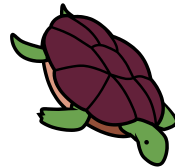
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## Main Idea

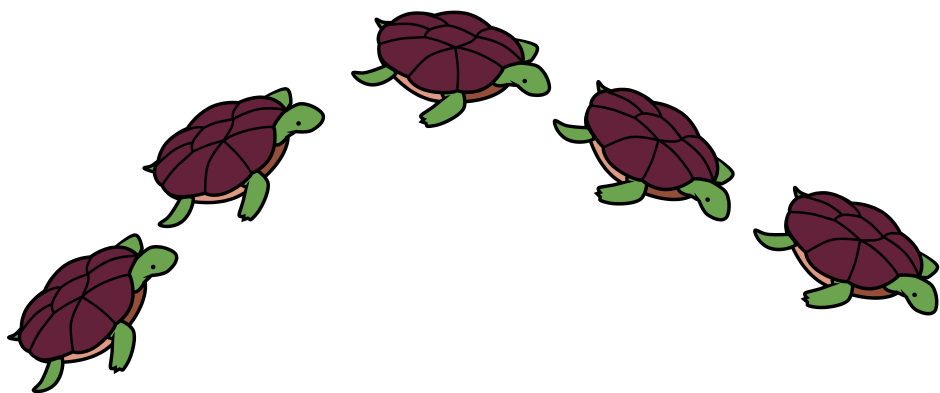
It seems like all of the attention gets paid to Peter's younger brother, Fudge. Adults think Fudge is cute and sweet, but Peter knows the truth! Fudge constantly messes with Peter's school projects, plays with his pet turtle, and embarrasses him in public. Will Peter ever get a break?



# Pre-show activities

Things to ponder.....

- Have you read the book by Judy Blume? If so, listen carefully. Much of the dialogue is lifted directly from her writing.
- In our show, there are 14 actors and 20 characters. Keep your eyes peeled to see if you can identify which roles each actor plays.
- Do you have younger brothers or sisters? Do you always get along with them? How do you resolve arguments?
- Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing concerns the relationship between a 9-year-old and a 3-year-old. In the story, the older brother feels like Fudge gets many more advantages. What are the positive aspects of being 3 (having to do fewer chores, for instance)? What are the advantages of being 9 (for example, getting to stay up late)? What are the disadvantages of each age? Which age would you rather be, and why?
- What does it mean to be responsible? Do you have responsibilities like schoolwork or chores or taking care of a pet? Do you have more responsibilities now or when you were younger?



Things to ponder...

- Who were your favorite characters and why? What were your favorite moments in the play? Did the show meet your expectations? Why or why not?
- The youth actors in this production play a wide variety of ages: toddlers, parents, bosses, etc. What did the actors do with their bodies and voices to heighten the illusion that they were younger or older than they actually are?
- How did the brothers express their anger and frustration? Compare Fudge's actions to Peter's.
- What were some of the tricks Peter and his parents played on Fudge to get him to behave properly? Was this fair to Fudge? Why or why not?
- Fudge drives Peter crazy sometimes but deep down he really loves his younger brother. How did Peter demonstrate his annoyance with Fudge? How do you know he really cares for him?

Turtles!

In the book and the play, Peter takes care of his pet turtle, Dribble. Take some time with your parents or teacher and research different kinds of turtles.

- What's the best habitat for a turtle?
- How big do they grow?
- How long can they live?
- What kind of turtle is small enough for Fudge to swallow?
- What do they eat?

# Fudge's Snazzy Shoe

Fudge doesn't like the shoes his mom picked out for him.  
Use the drawing to design a shoe you think he'll love!



Resources:

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

[www.theatreworksusa.org](http://www.theatreworksusa.org)