A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go

Randolph Caldecott · *1883* · *English original*

A frog's fashionable call becomes a party, then a rapid succession of escapes and captures.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How long can the visitors' polite world keep ordinary animal appetites outside?

"So off he set with his opera-hat,"
Opening stanzas: setting out

The gathering lasts until larger hunters enter; the frog's flight only carries him to another predator.

KEY CHARACTERS

Mr. Frog
Dressed-up traveler who seeks Mousey and escapes the party briefly.

Mr. Rat
Accompanies the frog and is seized by the cat.

Miss Mousey
Receives the callers and offers to sing.

The Cat and Kittens
Break up the gathering by attacking the small guests.

The Duck
Swallows the frog at the brook.

Grades K–2
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

An independent caller

OPENING STANZAS: SETTING OUT

The frog sets out smartly dressed, following his intention to visit Mousey despite possible objections at home.

- Frog sets out a-wooing, whether his mother would let him or no.
- The refrain names Rowley and Anthony Rowley, with rowley-powley, gammon and spinach.
- This is Caldecott's 1883 picture-book text of the traditional song.

> *"So off he set with his opera-hat,"*
> Opening stanzas: setting out

02

Company at Mousey's Hall

ARRIVAL AT MOUSEY'S HALL

The frog recruits the rat, and the visitors arrive to find Mousey occupied with domestic work.

- On the way he meets a Rat and asks him to come see pretty Miss Mousey.
- The company grows as they go together to Mousey's hall.
- Keep the sung refrain; do not turn the verses into plain prose.

> *"Now they soon arrived at Mousey's Hall,"*
> Arrival at Mousey's Hall

03

The party turns

THE INTERRUPTION

Requests for drink and music give way to danger when a cat and kittens enter the gathering.

- The visit becomes a little feast and a song in the house.
- The party turns when danger enters the scene.
- The duck is the turning point, not a later moralist.

> *"A Cat and her Kittens came tumbling in."*
> The interruption

04

The last escape fails

PENULTIMATE STANZA

The frog leaves the captured companions behind, but a duck ends his journey at the brook.

- Froggy is gobbled at the silvery brook.
- The last stanza closes the Rat, the Mouse, and the little Frog-gee.
- The picture-book ads are not part of the hosted song.

> *"A lily-white Duck came and gobbled him up."*
> Penultimate stanza

Courtship and company

Refrain and surprise

Animal appetite

What to watch for as you read

GRADES K–2

1. The recurring names in the chorus do not introduce new guests.
2. Illustration markers stand where the pictures have been omitted.
3. The lively tune continues through the sudden deaths.

Quotations are verbatim from the English original, Project Gutenberg #14077: Randolph Caldecott, A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go (picture book of the traditional song, 1883)., the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/a-frog-he-would-a-wooing-go/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.