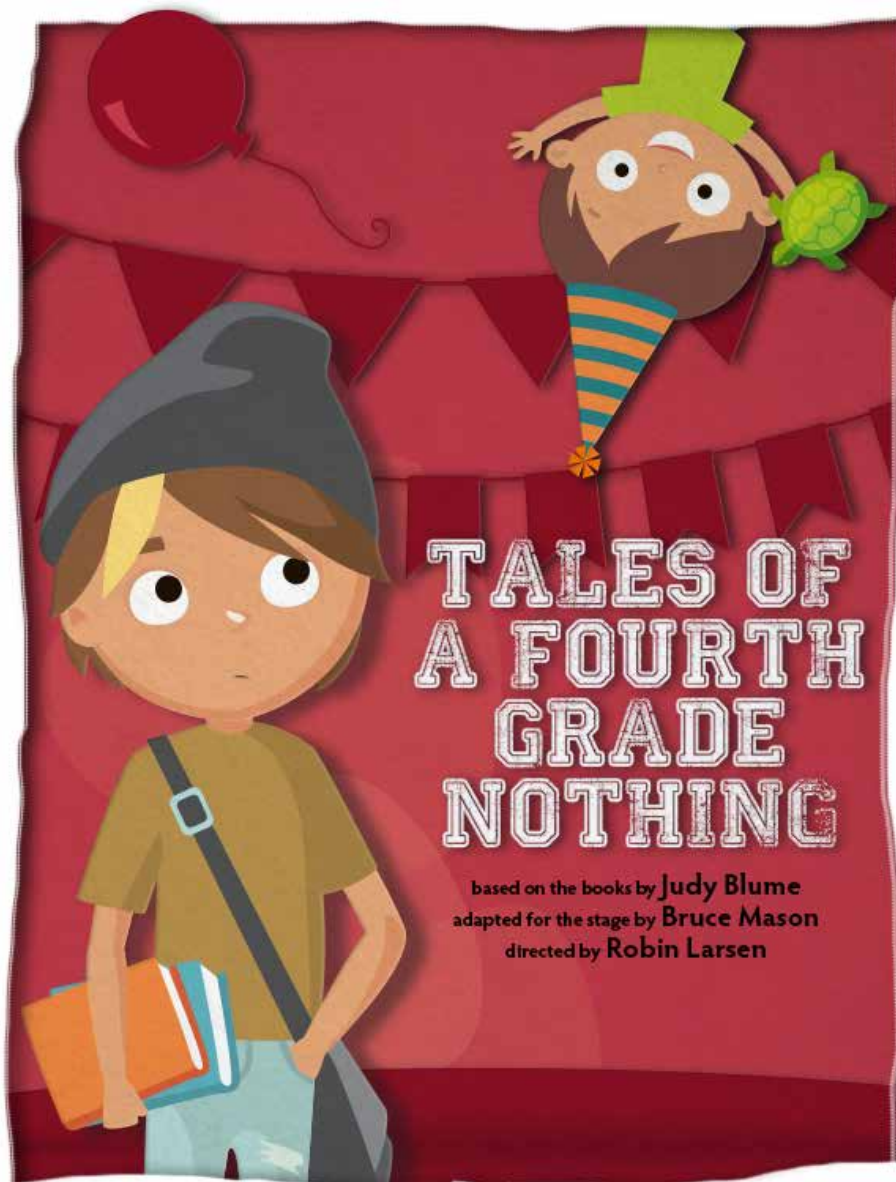


# South Coast Repertory

## STUDY GUIDE



Prepared by Literary Associate Kat Zukaitis

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# Part I: The Play

## THE CHARACTERS

**Peter Hatcher**, a fourth-grader

**Fudge**, Peter's two-and-a-half-year-old brother

**Mom**, Peter's mother

**Dad**, Peter's father

**Mr. Yarby**, the president of the Juicy-O Company

**Mrs. Yarby**, Mr. Yarby's wife

**Jimmy Fargo**, Peter's best friend

**Sheila Tubman**, a girl in Peter and Jimmy's class

**Jennie**, a toddler in the Hatchers' apartment building

**Ralph**, a toddler in the Hatchers' apartment building

**Sam**, a toddler in the Hatchers' apartment building

**Nurse**, a nurse at the dentist's office

**Dr. Brown**, the Hatcher family's dentist

**Janet**, Mr. Hatcher's assistant

**Ms. Vincent**, the president of the Toddle-Bike Company

**Director**, filming a Toddle-Bike commercial

## THE STORY

**N**ine-year-old Peter Hatcher feels like a big fat zero. Living in the same house with his super-annoying baby brother (who gets called Fudge because his real name is Farley Drexel) makes Peter crazy. Fudge screams, kicks, bangs, pesters, and messes stuff up all the time. Whether he's refusing to eat, jumping off of jungle gyms, or throwing a tantrum at their father's office, Fudge is never far from getting himself—and Peter—in big, big trouble.

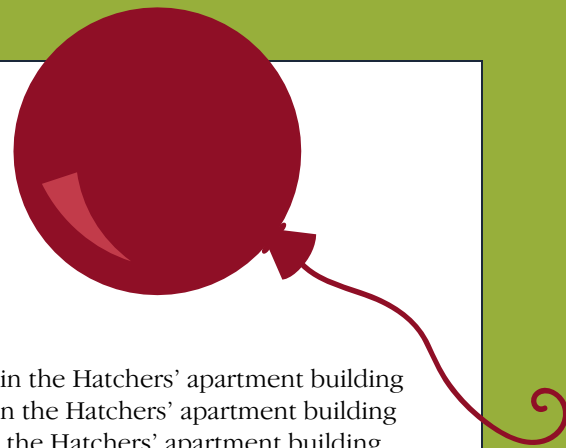
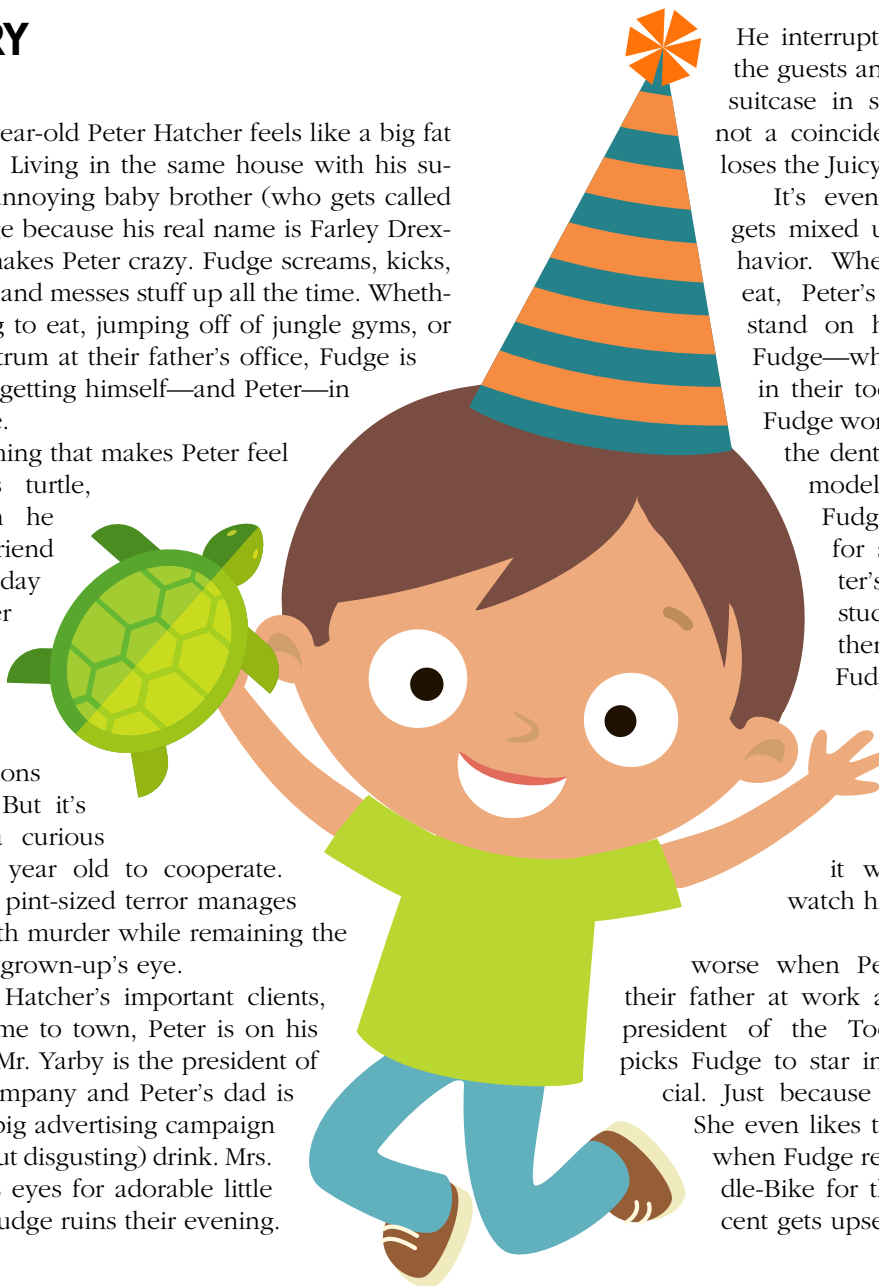
The only thing that makes Peter feel special is his turtle, Dribble which he won at his friend Jimmy's birthday party. Peter takes excellent care of Dribble, and gives Fudge strict instructions to stay away. But it's hard to get a curious two-and-a-half year old to cooperate. Somehow, this pint-sized terror manages to get away with murder while remaining the apple of every grown-up's eye.

When Mr. Hatcher's important clients, the Yarbys, come to town, Peter is on his best behavior. Mr. Yarby is the president of the Juicy-O Company and Peter's dad is in charge of a big advertising campaign for the fruity (but disgusting) drink. Mrs. Yarby only has eyes for adorable little Fudge—until Fudge ruins their evening.

He interrupts their dinner, scares the guests and covers Mrs. Yarby's suitcase in stickers. It's probably not a coincidence that Peter's dad loses the Juicy-O account after that.

It's even worse when Peter gets mixed up in Fudge's misbehavior. When Fudge refuses to eat, Peter's parents make him stand on his head—to distract Fudge—while they force food in their toddler's mouth. When Fudge won't open his mouth for the dentist, it's up to Peter to model how it's done. When Fudge's friends come over for a birthday party, Peter's the one who gets stuck trying to keep them all quiet. And when Fudge jumps off a jungle gym one day, knocking out two front teeth, Mrs. Hatcher yells at Peter! Even though it wasn't Peter's job to watch him. Life is NOT fair.

Things get even worse when Peter and Fudge visit their father at work and Ms. Vincent, the president of the Toddle-Bike Company, picks Fudge to star in their new commercial. Just because he's little and cute. She even likes the missing teeth! But when Fudge refuses to ride the Toddle-Bike for the cameras, Ms. Vincent gets upset and it starts to look



like Mr. Hatcher might lose another big account. Guess who saves the day? That's right: Peter. Peter dutifully gets his brother to ride the bike, even though he won't be on TV or get paid—or even get remembered for it. He is really just a fourth grade nothing.

Then, on the worst day of all, Peter comes home to find Dribble's bowl empty. He can't find his turtle anywhere—but Fudge seems to know something. Fudge says that he ate Dribble. Suddenly, the Hatcher house is a whirlwind of activity. Nobody seems to remember Peter or Dribble, though; they're all worried about Fudge. After Fudge gets checked into the hospital, Peter begins to worry about him, too. Sure, he's annoying... but maybe he's not that bad. And when Fudge finally comes home,

Peter's parents have a special surprise for Peter—something that convinces him that he's not a fourth grade nothing after all.

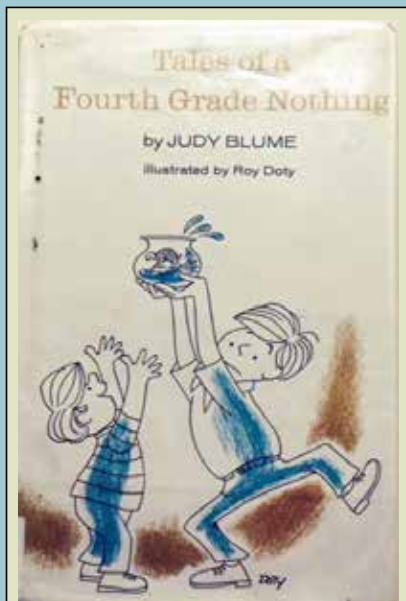
*Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* is based on Judy Blume's iconic children's book published in 1972. It was the first in a series of popular "Fudge" books, which also includes *Superfudge* (1980), *Fudge-a-Mania* (1990), and *Double Fudge* (2002). The book was adapted for the stage in 1987 by Bruce Mason in a script commissioned by Seattle Children's Theatre. Mason's dramatization utilizes Peter as the play's narrator, which makes perfect sense stylistically as Blume's book is written in first-person from Peter's point of view.

## GOING BY THE BOOK: AN EXCERPT FROM *TALES OF A FOURTH GRADE NOTHING* BY JUDY BLUME

*Excerpted from Chapter 1, "The Big Winner"*

**S**ome people might think that my mother is my biggest problem. She doesn't like turtles and she's always telling me to scrub my hands. That doesn't mean just run them under the water. Scrub means I'm supposed to use soap and rub my hands together. Then I've got to rinse and dry them. I ought to know by now. I've heard it enough!

But my mother isn't my biggest problem. Neither is my father. He spends a lot of time watching commercials on TV.



Cover of the 1972 edition of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*.

That's because he's in the advertising business. These days his favorite commercial is the one about Juicy-O. He wrote it himself. And the president of the Juicy-O company liked it so much he sent my father a whole crate of Juicy-O for our family to drink. It tastes like a combination of oranges, pineapples, grapefruits, pears, and bananas. (And if you want to know the truth, I'm getting pretty sick of drinking it.) But Juicy-O isn't my biggest problem either.

My biggest problem is my brother, Farley Drexel Hatcher. He's two-and-a-half years old. Everybody calls him Fudge. I feel sorry for him if he's going to grow up with a name like Fudge, but I don't say a word. It's none of my business.

Fudge is always in my way. He messes up everything he sees. And when he gets mad he throws himself flat on the floor and he screams. *And* he kicks. *And* he bangs his fists. The only time I really like him is when he's sleeping. He sucks four fingers on his left hand and makes a slurping noise.

When Fudge saw Dribble he said, "Ohhhhhh . . . see!"

And I said, "That's *my* turtle, get it? *Mine!* You *don't* touch him."

Fudge said, "No touch." Then he laughed like crazy.

## And the winner is . . . *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*

- 1983 Massachusetts Children's Book Award
- 1981 USAREUR Kinderbuch Award, U.S. Army & 7th Army, Heidelberg, Germany
- 1980 West Australian Young Reader's Book Award
- 1978 Rhode Island Library Association Award  
Georgia Children's Book Award  
Massachusetts Children's Book Award  
Arizona Young Reader's Award, Arizona State University
- 1975 Pacific Northwest Library Association Young Reader's Choice
- 1972 Charlie May Swann Children's Book Award
- 2012 *Scholastic Magazine's* 100 Greatest Books For Kids  
*TimeOut New York*, 50 Best Books For Kids

## MEET THE AUTHOR: JUDY BLOOM



Judy Blume

Judy Blume spent her childhood in Elizabeth, N.J., making up stories inside her head. She has spent her adult years in many places doing the same thing, only now she writes her stories down on paper. Blume gained popularity with children of all ages in the 1970s for her unique ability to tackle real-life issues in a kid-friendly manner. Adults, as well as children, will recognize such Blume titles as: *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*; *Blubber*; *Just as Long as We're Together*; and the five book series about the irrepressible Fudge. She also has written four novels for adults, *Summer Sisters*; *Smart Women*; *Wifey* and *In the Unlikely Event*, all of them *New York Times* bestsellers. More than 85 million copies of her books have been sold, and her work has been translated into thirty-two languages. She receives thousands of letters a year from readers of all ages who share their feelings and concerns with her.

Blume received a BS in education from New York University in 1961, which named

her a Distinguished Alumna in 1996, the same year the American Library Association honored her with the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement. Her other recognitions include the Library of Congress Living Legends Award and the 2004 National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

She is the founder and trustee of The Kids Fund, a charitable and educational foundation. She serves on the boards of the Author's Guild; the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators; the Key West Literary Seminar; and the National Coalition Against Censorship. Blume is a longtime advocate of intellectual freedom. Finding herself at the center of an organized book banning campaign in the 1980's she began to reach out to other writers, as well as teachers and librarians, who were under fire. Since then, she has worked tirelessly with the National Coalition Against Censorship to protect the freedom to read. She is the editor of *Places I Never Meant To Be*, *Original Stories*

## MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT: BRUCE MASON

Bruce Mason is the only artist that legendary young adult author Judy Blume has authorized to adapt her work, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*. *Tales* premiered at The Kennedy Center then toured internationally, and it has never been out of production since. Bruce also wrote and directed the feature film, *Chez Upshaw*, for which he was awarded Best Director at The IFS Film Festival; and the short film *Clowns*, which screened at Slamdance, Cannes and other festivals around the world. Bruce's television credits include serving as Head Writer and Associate Producer for the Barton-Printz series "Imagine" and as Head Writer for a series of short dramas sponsored by KCTS, Seattle's PBS affiliate. Mason was educated at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts and The American Film Institute in Los Angeles, from which he received an MFA in Directing.

by *Censored Writers*.

Blume has completed a series of four chapter books—*The Pain & the Great One*—illustrated by *New Yorker* cartoonist James Stevenson. She has co-written and produced a film adaptation of her book *Tiger Eyes*, and her new adult novel, *In the Unlikely Event*, was released in June 2015.

Blume and her husband, George Cooper, live on islands up and down the East Coast. They have three grown children and one grandchild.

## JUDY BLUME: IN HER OWN WORDS

*In this interview, Judy Blume answers questions submitted by students and shares a few tips for aspiring writers.*

### **How do you come up with such great ideas for plots, like in *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*?**

I like to create characters and just see what will happen to them when I let them loose!

### **When did you get the idea for the characters of Fudge and Peter?**

Fudge is based on my son, Larry, when he was a toddler. A very interesting child. Peter is from my imagination. At least, I think he is.

### **Will you be adding books to the Fudge series?**

I have a grandson who MUST have another Fudge book and it MUST be dedicated to him. So, I am trying really hard to come up with another adventure for the Hatcher family.

### **Why do you like to write about families?**

What else is there? I like all the drama about families, and we all come from families, don't we? For me, character is everything. I'm interested in people and how they cope and how they relate.

### **Do you prefer writing for children or adults?**

I have no preference. It's just a question of whose story I'm telling. But if I could only write for one audience, I'd choose kids.

### **When you first started writing, did you have any doubts about whether you could do it? What kept you going?**

I was filled with doubts. At night I would think, I'll never get anything published. But in the morning I'd wake up and say I CAN do this. It's hard to deal with rejection, but if you write it's a fact of life.

### **What was your favorite subject when you were in school?**

English. And drama. I was always dramatic! My aunt called me "Camille."

### **What advice would you give to an aspiring young author?**

Keep writing! Don't let anyone ever discourage you.

## HOW I BECAME AN AUTHOR BY JUDY BLUME

**W**hen I was growing up, I dreamed about becoming a cowgirl, a detective, a spy, a great actress, or a ballerina. Not a dentist, like my father, or a homemaker, like my mother — and certainly not a writer, although I always loved to read. I didn't know anything about writers. It never occurred to me they were regular people and that I could grow up to become one, even though I loved to make up stories inside my head.

I made up stories while I bounced a ball against the side of our house. I made up stories playing with paper dolls. And I made them up while I practiced the piano by pretending to give piano lessons. I even kept a notebook with the names of my pretend students and how they were doing. I always had an active imagination. But I never wrote down any of my stories. And I never told anyone about them.

When I grew up, my need for storytelling didn't go away. So when my own two children started preschool I began to write and I've been writing ever since! My characters live inside my head for a long time before I

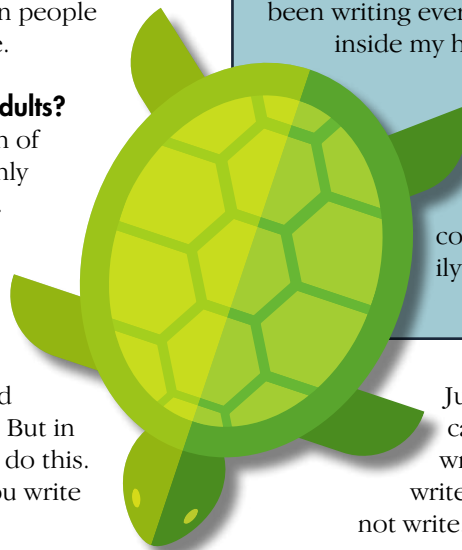
actually start a book about them. Then, they become so real to me I talk about them at the dinner table as if they are real. Some people consider this weird. But my family understands.

Just keep on going because you can't help yourself. You have to write! No one chooses to be a writer. You write because you can't not write.

### **Do you think that your books encourage kids to read?**

Well, I hope so. I think any book that someone likes encourages that person to pick up another, and that's how readers are made.

(Excerpted from an interview conducted with Judy Blume by students on [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com))



# Part II: Classroom Activities

## BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Have your students read Judy Blume's *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* independently or aloud in class.
  - a. Ask the students to identify the story's themes and underlying messages.
  - b. Ask the students to identify each character's journey. What do they want to achieve, and what's standing in their way?
  - c. Ask the students to analyze the characters' personalities and how that affects the way in which they perceive the world around them.
  - d. Ask the students to think about the novel's tone. What moments are funny? What moments feel more serious? How does this variety make the experience richer?
2. Peter's pet turtle, Dribble, is very important to him—even though Peter tells us that Dribble doesn't do much. ("It isn't easy to pet a turtle. They aren't soft and furry and they don't lick you or anything.") What makes Dribble so special to Peter? Ask the students to write about something that is important to them, even though other people might not realize what makes it so special.
3. "You know, if I decided to stop eating one day, probably no one would ever even notice!" Ask students if they have ever felt the way Peter Hatcher does. What did they do about it?
4. Peter often feels overlooked or frustrated—but there are also many moments of joy in the book. Other than the final chapter, what do you think is the lowest point in the book for Peter? What about the happiest?

**ACTIVITY:** What's the most important thing that's happened to you in the last year? Write a paragraph or two explaining why. Describe how you felt about what happened

5. *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* is told from Peter's point of view. Are there times in the novel when Peter misinterprets what is happening around him, or how other people are feeling? How would the story change if a different character was the narrator?

**ACTIVITY:** After you've discussed narrative point-of-view, have the students pick another character in the book, and rewrite a scene from that character's point of view.

6. When the book begins, Peter is nine and Fudge is two-and-a-half. What do you think Peter was like when he was Fudge's age? Do you think that Fudge will behave like Peter when he is nine? What will both boys be like when they grow up?

**ACTIVITY:** Have the students pick one of the other books from Judy Blume's "Fudge" series and write a short report on it. What is different about the Hatcher's life? In what ways have Peter and Fudge grown since *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*? How has their relationship changed?

7. *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* is set in New York City in the 1970s. Why is the setting important to the story being told? Discuss ways in which life in a big city—particularly that big city—is different from life in Orange County, California. Ask the students how Peter and Fudge's lives might be different if the story had a different setting. What if it took place in California? What if it was set in 2017?

8. Ask students to make predictions about the play they're going to see based upon their knowledge of the source text. For example, not every character or event in the book appears in the play. Which ones do you expect to see onstage? Which chapters do you think are the most important ones to include in the stage adaptation? How do you imagine the scenery, costumes and props?





## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### 1. “Character Traits”

**T**hink about all of the main characters in *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (Peter, Fudge, Mr. Hatcher, Mrs. Hatcher; other options include the Yarbys, Jimmy, Sheila and Mr. Vincent). Each has distinct personality characteristics that are unique to them. In order to help the students begin to think about “what type” of person each character is, do the following activities with your class in order:

- Discuss with the whole class how people are different and then give examples of people who are well known by everyone—for example, the teacher, the principal, certain students in the class, etc. Talk about their personality characteristics.
- Give examples of things that the characters do in the book and have the students guess who it is.
  - Always gets into mischief. (Fudge)
  - Has no experience with young children. (Mrs. Yarby)
  - Is the stricter parent. (Mr. Hatcher)
  - Is used to getting Fudge to do things. (Peter)
  - Is always trying to keep everyone happy. (Mrs. Hatcher)
- Make large sheets of chart paper, one for each character and post them around the classroom. Break the students into groups and have them brainstorm different character traits for each of the Main Characters. (Spend about 3 minutes at each poster.)

<b>PETER</b>  Responsible Careful Polite	<b>FUDGE</b>  Silly Sneaky Smart	<b>MRS. HATCHER</b>	<b>MR. HATCHER</b>	<b>THE YARBYS</b>
--	--	---------------------	--------------------	-------------------

- Come together as a whole group and discuss each chart and if you are still reading the book, invite students to add to the chart as you continue reading.

### 2. “Rules for Toddlers”

**T**here are many situations in *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* when Fudge is very naughty and seems to avoid any consequences. Because he is a toddler, no matter what mischief he gets into, people think he’s funny and cute. He is not held to the same rules and expectations that his older brother Peter is. Often, instead of making him stop his tantrum or stubbornness, his parents or other adults use Peter to manipulate his little brother into doing what they want. Is that fair? Do you think that in some situations, the rules should be the same and in other situations they should be different? Write a paragraph explaining your opinion and give examples from the book and/or your own life experiences to support your opinion.

### 3. “Toddler Talk”

**I**n the book, everyone instantly falls in love with Fudge and thinks that he’s soooooo cute. One thing that makes toddlers so irresistible is when they talk “Baby Talk”.

- Discuss with the students what it is about toddlers that make them so cute and write the ideas down as they brainstorm.
- Ask the students how a three year old would say things versus an older brother or sister.
- Break the students into small groups and have them come up with three situations showing how an older



sibling would say something versus how a toddler would say the same thing. Give them time to act these out with their small groups and then perform the scenes for the class.

**Discussion Questions:**

- Is it cute when a toddler talks “baby talk”? Why or why not?
- What would people think if the older brother or sister started talking “baby talk” like their younger sibling? Do you think people would still think it was cute? Why or why not?
- Do adults speak differently to toddlers than they do to older children? Why do you think they do? Give examples.

**4. “Make the Connection”**

**T**he story of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* has a theme that all children can relate to on a personal level. All of them either have been around a young child, seen them on TV and the movies, or have younger siblings themselves. The students easily recognize many of the situations that happen with Peter and Fudge. As you are reading the book, have them make a T-Chart of their own personal connections. The left side of the T-Chart will be for situations from the book, and the right side for brief descriptions from their own life. Share connections after each reading!

Situation From Book	My Own Connection
Fudge threw food in the restaurant	My baby sister once threw food while we were having dinner at the mall and we had to go home early.

**5. “Be the People”**

**A**dult actors will perform *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* as a play adapted from the book. In order to get the students thinking about how an actor would deliver their lines based on their character’s age, put them into groups of three and allow them to experiment how different things would be said by: an adult, an older child and a toddler. This activity is powerful because it gets the students thinking about the craft of acting, and it will also make viewing the play more meaningful and exciting for them when they hear the actors use the lines that they used in their classroom skits!

**Day One:**

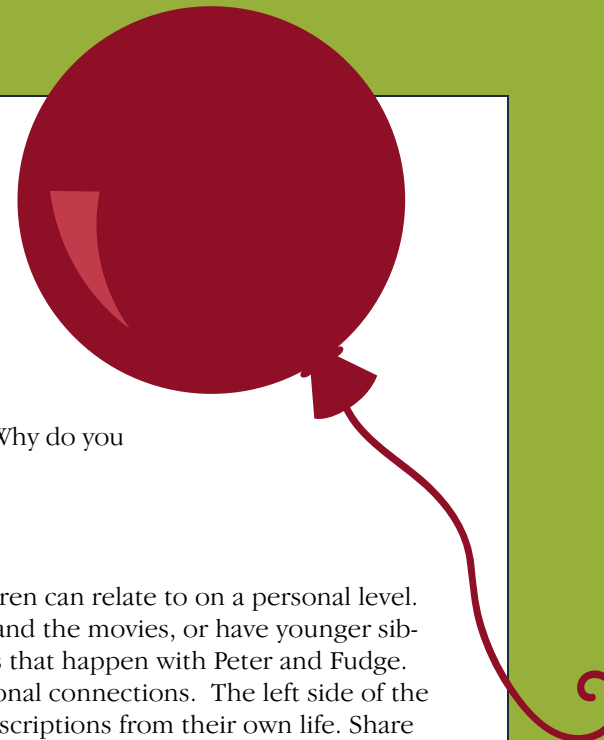
- Break the class into groups of three and assign them each a different role—an adult, an older child and a toddler.
- Give them a family situation like dinnertime, a birthday party, or bedtime. Have them role-play what each character would say to each other in that situation. Give them time to practice their lines as a group.
- Have each group perform their scene for the class.
- Discuss what worked:
  - Language, body language, tone of voice, etc.

**Day Two:**

- Have the students get back with their groups and review what they did the previous day.
- Then pass out lines taken from the play (see next page) and have them incorporate these lines into their dialogue, making adjustments so that these lines make sense in their scene.
- Allow time for practice and then perform for the class.

**Discussion Questions:**

- Fudge is a very young child. How do you think SCR actors will let the audience know that he is nearly three?
- How will you know who Peter is?





**ADULTS:**

-----  
“I’m not going to take care of him.”  
-----

-----  
“Make him get that thing out of here.”  
-----

-----  
“This is more than I can handle.”  
-----

-----  
“We’ll have to feed you right here on the floor.”  
-----

-----  
“Why didn’t you tell me you had a hole in your sock?”  
-----

-----  
“I don’t want to be the one to tell you what to do.”  
-----

-----  
“That racket is giving me such a headache.”  
-----

-----  
“You know I don’t like the way he smells.”  
-----

-----  
“What an awful thing to say!”  
-----

-----  
“Aren’t we carrying this a little too far?”  
-----

**OLDER CHILD:**

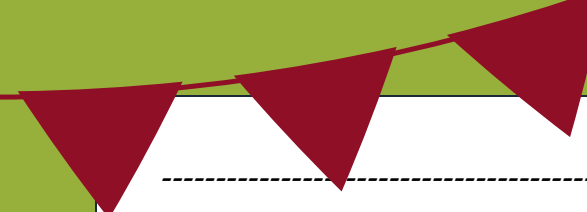
-----  
“The only time I really like him is when he’s sleeping.”  
-----

-----  
“I wanted to vanish.”  
-----

-----  
“Saturday is always the best day of my week.”  
-----

-----  
“It burns me up the way people treat him.”  
-----

-----  
“That’s mean. You’re taking advantage of him.”  
-----



---

“You sure can fool little kids easily.”

---

“I feel like the world’s greatest living fool.”

---

“It’s ruined. I could kill you.”

---

“Did anyone ever tell you you’re too bossy?”

---

“How could you let him? Don’t you care about me?”

---

**YOUNGER CHILD::**

---

“MINE! It’s MINE! It’s MINE!”

---

See? See the Book?

---

Pretty . . . All gone!

---

No eat! No grow!

---

Woof! Woof!

---

NO! NO! NO!

---

No, no shoes! Bunnies!

---

Cookies first.

---

“ME! I want to ride...”

---

Eat it or wear it!

---

## AFTER THE SHOW

### Discussion About the Theatre

Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance and ask the students about their experience attending live theatre.

1. What was the first thing you noticed about the theatre? What did the stage look like?
2. Discuss the technical elements of the production—the set, the costumes, the lighting and the sound. Ask the students what they liked best and why. How did these elements help to tell the story of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*?
3. How is attending a live performance different from attending a movie? How is the experience different when you know that the story is happening in the same room as you and that the actors can see and hear you?
4. Discuss the ways in which the play was surprising. Was the story told in the same way that you imagined it would be?
5. Several actors in the production played multiple characters—ranging from toddlers to grown-ups. Talk about how their voices and movements changed for each character. How could you tell how old each character was meant to be?

### Discussion About the Play

Now guide the discussion through the content of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*.

1. What was your favorite moment in the play? What was the funniest? What was the saddest?
2. Adults often treat Fudge differently from Peter. Are they being unfair? Point to a moment in the play when someone is unfair to Peter. Can you find any moments when someone treats Peter and Fudge differently—but there's a good reason for it?
3. Because Peter is the narrator, we get to hear a lot about what he thinks and feels—but we don't always get the same insight into the other characters in the play. How do you think Peter's parents feel about the events in the play? What is the most difficult moment for each of them? How can you tell?

4. The Yarbys seem very excited to see Fudge, but they are not very patient with him. Why do they change their mind about him? Do you think they really like children as much as they say? What are some clues about how they really feel?
5. Why does Peter's mother yell at him when Fudge jumps off the jungle gym? Why does she later tell him that it wasn't his fault?
6. Why do you think that Fudge copies Peter's behavior so often? (There's a saying: "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." What does it mean—and does it apply to this play?) Do you think that Peter's parents are right to take advantage of this? How do they let Peter know that they are grateful for his cooperation?
7. When Peter wakes up from his nightmare, he says, "I'm a nothing. I'm just a fourth grade nothing." What does he mean by that? Does he still think that he's a "fourth grade nothing" by the end of the play? What might have changed his mind?



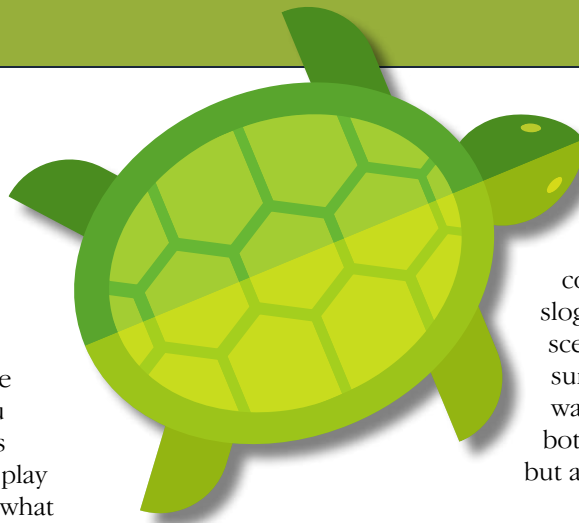
### LETTERS OF THANKS

Give the students the opportunity to write letters of thanks to SCR describing the most memorable aspects of attending a performance of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and what they enjoyed most about their visit to the theatre.

**South Coast Repertory**  
**Attn: TYA**  
**PO Box 2197**  
**Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2197**

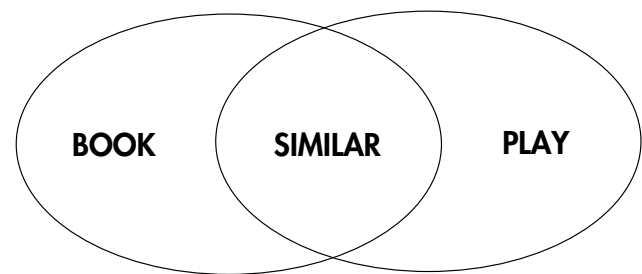
## ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine that Peter grows up and has a family of his own. Write a paragraph about what Peter's life and family are like. What advice do you think he'll pass on to his children? If you wrote a play about Peter as an adult, what would the title be?
2. At the advertising agency where Peter's dad works, he helps to create television commercials for lots of different products, including Toddle Bikes and Juicy-O fruit drink. Commercials are designed to get people to buy stuff. In order to accomplish this task, they use the art of persuasion to influence people in a certain way to believe what they're seeing and hearing on the screen. Pretend that Juicy-O needs an advertising campaign for its brand new drink and that Mr. Yarby, the company



president, is coming all the way from Chicago to see what you've come up with. First you must invent the new drink, come up with a catchy name and slogan, then draw and color the one scene from your commercial you're sure will make everyone who sees it want to run right out and buy a big bottle. Be silly, be smart, be serious, but above all . . . be persuasive!

3. Make a Venn diagram comparing the differences between the book *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and the play.



## TURTLE TERROR

**D**uring the 1970s (when Judy Blume's novel was originally published), it became something of a fad for parents to buy baby turtles (usually red-eared sliders) about the size of a silver dollar for their small children. But once they got their new pets home, kids began ingesting bacteria left on their hands after handling turtles, and some (like Fudge) even put turtles in their mouth. Gross! As a result, there was a nationwide outbreak of a dangerous infection known as *salmonellosis*, which causes high fever, abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, and can even lead to death. It is likely that 90% of reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, and crocodiles) are carriers of these toxic germs.

The sale of small turtles (with a shell under four inches in diameter) has been illegal in the United States since 1975. What are some other animals that might be dangerous or difficult pets? Pick one and research whether there are any legal restrictions on owning it. Then find out how to properly care for



A red-eared slider turtle

it—what environment does it need and what precautions should a responsible pet owner take? Present your report to the class.

Here are some good starting places for your research:

<http://www.humanesociety.org>

<http://www.peteducation.com>

# Part III: At The Theatre

## WELCOME TO THE ARGYROS

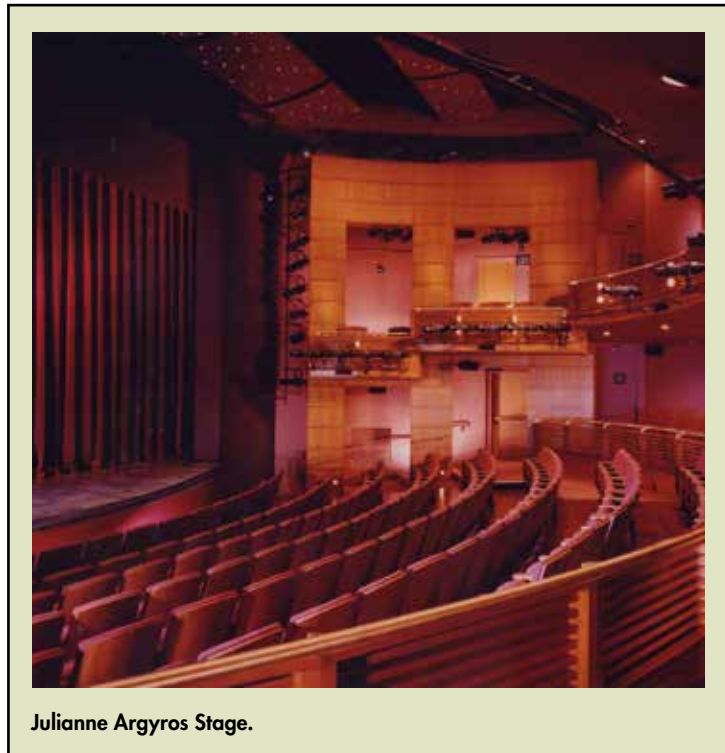
**T**he 336-seat Julianne Argyros Stage opened in 2002 with a huge celebration and we are delighted that thousands of Orange County school children fill this state-of-the-art facility each season to enjoy our Theatre for Young Audiences productions. The Argyros is a proscenium theatre designed to provide audiences a feeling of intimacy, with no seat more than 39 feet from the stage.

## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

**T**heatre is an art form that depends on both the artists and the audience. A performance is influenced by an audience, just as an audience is influenced by a performance. The artists and staff of South Coast Repertory are creating a special new world for you to visit. When you walk into the theatre, you will have a sense that behind the curtain lies the secret of that new world which is about to come to life before your eyes. Sometimes it's so exciting that you can barely hold still. But remember that once the play begins, you have a very important job to do. Everybody in the theatre is a part of the play. You are connected to all the other people in the audience, as well as to the actors on the stage. Remember, you're all in the same room. The actors can SEE you, HEAR you and FEEL you, just as you can SEE, HEAR and FEEL them. Your attention, involvement, responses and imagination are a real part of each and every performance. The play can actually be made better because of you!

## STUDENT TIPS FOR THEATRE TRIPS

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Listen carefully to the SCR staff member who will board your bus with last-minute tips.
- Take your seat in the theatre before going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.



Julianne Argyros Stage.

- Absolutely no chewing gum, eating or drinking in the building.
- No backpacks, cameras or electronic devices are permitted in the theatre.
- Feel free to talk quietly in your seats before the show.
- Show your appreciation by clapping for the actors at the end of the play.
- After the lights come back up, wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.

## PROGRAMS

**E**veryone who attends a Theatre for Young Audiences performance at SCR receives a program, also called a playbill. Patrons at weekend public performances receive their programs from the ushers upon entering the theatre. At the conclusion of each weekday matinee, teachers will be given programs for their students which can be distributed back in the classroom. In addition to the customary information about the play and the players, the program contains features and activities that students will have fun working on after the show, either in class or at home on their own.

# Part IV: Education Station

Here are some of the California state standards that apply to attending this performance of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and doing the activities in this study guide.

## FROM VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS:

### Theatre Content Standards for Grade Four

For other grades, see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/.asp>

#### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Processing, Analyzing and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre

Students observe their environment and respond, using the elements of theatre. They also observe formal and informal works of theatre, film/video and electronic media and respond, using the vocabulary of theatre.

##### Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre

- 1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as plot, conflict, climax, resolution, tone, objectives, motivation and stock characters, to describe theatrical experiences.

##### Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theatre

- 1.2 Identify a character's objectives and motivations to explain that character's behavior.
- 1.3 Demonstrate how voice (diction, pace and volume) may be used to explore multiple possibilities for a live reading. Examples: I want you to go. I want you to go. I want you to go.

#### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Creating, Performing and Participating in Theatre

Students apply processes and skills in acting, directing, designing and script writing to create formal and informal theatre, film/videos and electronic media productions and to perform in them.

##### Development of Theatrical Skills

- 2.1 Demonstrate the emotional traits of a character through gesture and action.



Tom Shelton and Brenda Canela in SCR's 2008 production of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*.

##### Creation/Invention in Theatre

- 2.2 Retell or improvise stories from classroom literature in a variety of tones (gossipy, sorrowful, comic, frightened, joyful, sarcastic).
- 2.3 Design or create costumes, props, makeup or masks to communicate a character in formal or informal performances.

#### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theatre

Students analyze the role and development of theatre, film/video and electronic media in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting diversity as it relates to theatre.



The cast in SCR's Theatre for Young Audiences 2008 production of *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*.

### Role and Cultural Significance of Theatre

- 3.1 Identify theatrical or storytelling traditions in the cultures of ethnic groups throughout the history of California.

### History of Theatre

- 3.2 Recognize key developments in the entertainment industry in California, such as the introduction of silent movies, animation, radio and television broadcasting and interactive video.

## 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Responding to, Analyzing and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences

Students critique and derive meaning from works of theatre, film/video, electronic media and theatrical artists on the basis of aesthetic qualities.

### Critical Assessment of Theatre

- 4.1 Develop and apply appropriate criteria or rubrics for critiquing performances as to characterization, diction, pacing, gesture and movement.
- 4.2 Compare and contrast the impact on the audience of theatre, film, television, radio and other media.

### Derivation of Meaning from Works of Theatre

- 4.3 Describe students responses to a work of theatre and explain what the scriptwriter did to elicit those responses.

## 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Theatre, Film/Video and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

Students apply what they learn in theatre, film/video and electronic media across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication and time management that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to theatre.

### Connections and Applications

- 5.1 Dramatize events in California history.
- 5.2 Use improvisation and dramatization to explore concepts in other content areas.

### Careers and Career-Related Skills

- 5.3 Exhibit team identity and commitment to purpose when participating in theatrical experiences.





## BASIC THEATRE VOCABULARY

**Acting** The process by which an individual interprets and performs the role of an imagined character.

**Action** The core of a theatre piece; the sense of forward movement created by the sequence of events and the physical and psychological motivations of characters.

**Ad-Lib** To improvise stage business or dialogue; to make it up as you go along.

**Apron** The area of the stage that extends toward the audience, in front of the main curtain.

**Backstage** The space behind the acting area, unseen by the audience.

**Balcony** An upper floor of seats projecting out over the main seating area of a theatre.

**Blocking** The movement and stage business, designed by the director and performed by the actors.

**Boxes** Seats separated from the main seating area located on the upper level near the stage.

**Box Office** A windowed space at the front of the theatre building where tickets are sold.

**Business** Any action performed on stage.

**Character** The role played by an actor as she or he assumes another's identity.

**Choreography** The art of creating and arranging dances onstage.

**Conflict** The problem or incident that creates the action and is resolved by the end of the play.

**Costume** The carefully selected or specially designed clothing worn by the actors.

**Cross** The actor's movement from one stage location to another.

**Cue** The last words or action of an actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor.

**Dialogue** The stage conversation between characters.

**Diction** The clarity with which words are pronounced.

**Director** The person who oversees the entire process of staging a theatrical production.

**Downstage** The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time stages were raked, or sloped, with the lower ("down") part closest to the audience, and the higher ("up") part further away.

**Ensemble** A cast of actors working together effectively to present a theatrical performance.

**Flats** Canvas or wood-covered frames that are used for the walls of a stage setting.

**Green Room** A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests. The

room's name comes from Elizabethan times, when actors waited on a real "green" (or patch of grass).

**Improvisation** The spontaneous use of movement and speech, made up by an actor to create a character.

**Lobby** The public waiting area outside the theatre space.

**Mezzanine** Lower level seating area beneath the balcony overhang.

**Monologue** A solo speech during which the character reveals personal thoughts.

**Narrator** A character who tells the story of the play directly to the audience.

**Orchestra** Lower-level seating area immediately in front of the stage.

**"Places"** Direction given by the Stage Manager for actors to be in position before each act begins

**Plot** The "what happens" in a story: beginning (the setting, characters, and problem); middle (how the characters work to solve the problem); and the ending (resolution of the problem).

**Project** To speak loudly so the entire audience can hear you.

**Props** All the stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.

**Proscenium Stage** A traditional theatre with the audience seated in front of a proscenium arch framing the stage. SCR's Argyros Stage is a proscenium stage.

**Run** Length of time the play will be presented (i.e. two weeks, two months, two years).

**Script** The text of the play, including dialogue and stage directions, all written by the playwright.

**Set** All of the scenery that makes up the physical environment of the world of the play.

**Stagecraft** The knowledge and skills required to create the physical aspects of a production; i.e. scenery, lighting, costumes, props and recorded sound and music.

**Stage Left** That part of the stage to the actor's left when the actor faces the audience.

**Stage Manager** The person who supervises the physical production of a play and who is in charge of the stage during the performance.

**Stage Right** That part of the stage to the actor's right when the actor faces the audience.

**Strike** Dismantling the set, costumes and props at the end of the run of a show.

**Theme** The central thought, idea or significance of the action of a play.

**Upstage** The area of the stage farthest way from the audience and nearest to the back wall.

# PART V: Resources

## STUDY GUIDES

Main Street Theater:

[http://www.mainstreettheater.com/youththeater/materials/Tales\\_of\\_a\\_Fourth\\_Grade\\_Nothing\\_edmats.pdf](http://www.mainstreettheater.com/youththeater/materials/Tales_of_a_Fourth_Grade_Nothing_edmats.pdf)

Applause! Cary Youth Theatre: <http://www.townofcary.org/home/showdocument?id=9451>

Two Beans Productions: [http://www.theatreworksusa.org/uploads/studyguide/studyguide\\_910.pdf](http://www.theatreworksusa.org/uploads/studyguide/studyguide_910.pdf)

Penguin Books Lesson: [Guide: http://www.penguin.com/static/images/yr/pdf/FourthGradeNothinglessonplans.pdf](http://www.penguin.com/static/images/yr/pdf/FourthGradeNothinglessonplans.pdf)

## JUDY BLUME AND HER WORKS

Judy Blume's Website: <http://www.judyblume.com>

Judy Blume – Author Bookshelf: <http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/author/blume-judy/>

Guided Reading Lesson Plans for *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*:

[http://www.warsaw.k12.in.us/document-library/guided-reading-lesson-plans-1/level-q-1/3710-  
tales-of-a-fourth-grade-nothing-level-q/file](http://www.warsaw.k12.in.us/document-library/guided-reading-lesson-plans-1/level-q-1/3710-<br/>tales-of-a-fourth-grade-nothing-level-q/file)

Books and Authors in Your Classroom: <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/read.jsp>

## PETS AND PET CARE

Humane Society of the United States:

[http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/exotic\\_pets/  
facts/thinking\\_of\\_getting\\_turtle\\_012609.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/exotic_pets/<br/>facts/thinking_of_getting_turtle_012609.html)

Turtles at the San Diego Zoo:

[http://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/animals/turtle-  
terrapin](http://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/animals/turtle-<br/>terrapin)

American Humane Association:

<https://www.americanhumane.org/>

American Society for the Prevention of  
Cruelty to Animals:

<https://www.asPCA.org/>

