

What Made Tiddalik Laugh

Long, long ago in the Dreamtime in Australia, there lived a Giant Frog called Tiddalik. Tiddalik had been sleeping for many nights and many days. When he woke up he yawned, stretched and said, "I'm thirsty. I need a drink."

Now Tiddalik was not just a little bit thirsty. He was enormously thirsty. When he thought about it, he realised that he was absolutely parched. "I'm so thirsty that I could drink a lake." he said.

And that is exactly what he did.

He sat by the edge of a lake and drank it up, every drop. *(slurp)* He moved on to a stream and drank that up, too. Every drop. *(slurp)* He found a water hole and drained that, too. Every drop. *(slurp)*

As he drank, Tiddalik swelled and swelled, *(can you show him getting bigger?)* but he was still thirsty, and all through the day he searched for water. All through the day, slurping and gurgling, he drank every drop of water he found. With each drop of water inside him he swelled more and more until at last he was no longer thirsty.

Darkness fell and Tiddalik rested. He was completely full. "Now I can sleep." He said. And he did. *(can you sleep, too?)*

The next morning, the sun rose. It was hot and strong. In its bright light it was clear that there was not one drop of water left anywhere. Where there had been lakes, there was no water. Where rivers had once flowed, there were empty river beds. The streams and the water holes, even the puddles, were completely dry.

All through the day the flowers and the grass withered. All through the day the leaves of the trees turned brown and began to fall.

Everywhere the birds and the animals were searching for water. In desperation they gathered together.

"Tiddalik has drunk all the water, every last drop ." they said "Whatever shall we do? We will die without water."

Different animals had different suggestions, but only the wise wombat had the answer.

"We must make Tiddalik laugh," he said. "When he laughs he must open his mouth and, when he does that, all the water will pour out. Every drop."

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The animals ran to where Tiddalik slept. (can you run with me?) They thought of all the things they could do to make Tiddalik laugh.

The animal made silly faces. Rude faces, funny faces – they tried everything. (what funny faces can you make?) But Tiddalik did not laugh. He did not even smile.

Then the animals tried silly dances. Wild dances, mad dances — they tried everything. (can you do a silly dance?) But Tiddalik did not laugh. He did not even smile.

Deep under the ground, the platypus heard the wild dances and raucous songs. Now, the platypus is soft and furry like a wombat, but has a duck's bill and duck's feet and it is a creature that keeps itself to itself. The platypus had been asleep. She did not know that Tiddalik had drunk up all the water, every drop.

The platypus came out of her hole to find out what all the noise was about. She was sleepy, cross, and determined. She looked at Tiddalik lying on the ground. She went right up to him.

"You have woken me up," she said. "You have disturbed my sleep."

Tiddalik looked at this strange creature. He looked at her soft fur and her duck's bill and her duck's feet. He had never seen such an unusual animal before. It was much funnier than all the old jokes, or the new jokes, far sillier than the rude faces or the funny faces, and far more entertaining than wild dances or raucous singing.

Tidddalik smiled. A few drops of water fell from the sides of his mouth. He smiled more. A few more drops spilled out.

Suddenly Tiddalik laughed.. He laughed and laughed and laughed. He roared and bellowed and hooted with laughter. He shrieked and howled and screamed with laughter. He giggled and gurgled and choked with laughter. (can you laugh with me?) And as he laughed, lakes and rivers and streams and water holes of water came streaming and pouring from his mouth.

Soon the lakes and rivers and streams and water holes were full again. The trees flourished and the grass grew. All the animals drank and drank. Everything was refreshed. "Thank you, Platypus," the wise wombat said. "It was you who made Tiddalik laugh."

Now the Dreamtime was a long, long time ago. There are still frogs in Australia who can fill themselves up with water and save it for a dry day, but they are only small ones. Never again will a giant frog be able to drink up all the water, not every drop.

Storytelling tip –

every time you mention Tiddalik, pull your mouth out wide at the sides and flick your tongue in and out. You will look just like a giant frog.