

Applause! Cary Youth Theatre presents

tales of a



fourth grade
NOTHING

Based on the book by Judy Blume

Adapted for the stage by Bruce Mason

February 26-28, 2016

**This play features actors ages 6-12 and is appropriate
for all audiences.**

Tickets are on sale now! Call (919) 462-2055 for details.

PLAY SUMMARY:

Nine-year-old Peter Hatcher has been given an end-of-school-year assignment to write an essay about the most important thing that happened to him during fourth grade. Where to start?! A lot happened to Peter that year, particularly when dealing with his toddler terror of a brother, Fudge. Peter **reminisces** about Fudge's nonstop temper tantrums, a disastrous birthday party, getting blamed for Fudge knocking out his two front teeth, and more as he thinks about his year.

Still, Fudge always seems to get all the attention, while Peter gets all the blame. It's enough to make a kid feel like a fourth grade nothing!

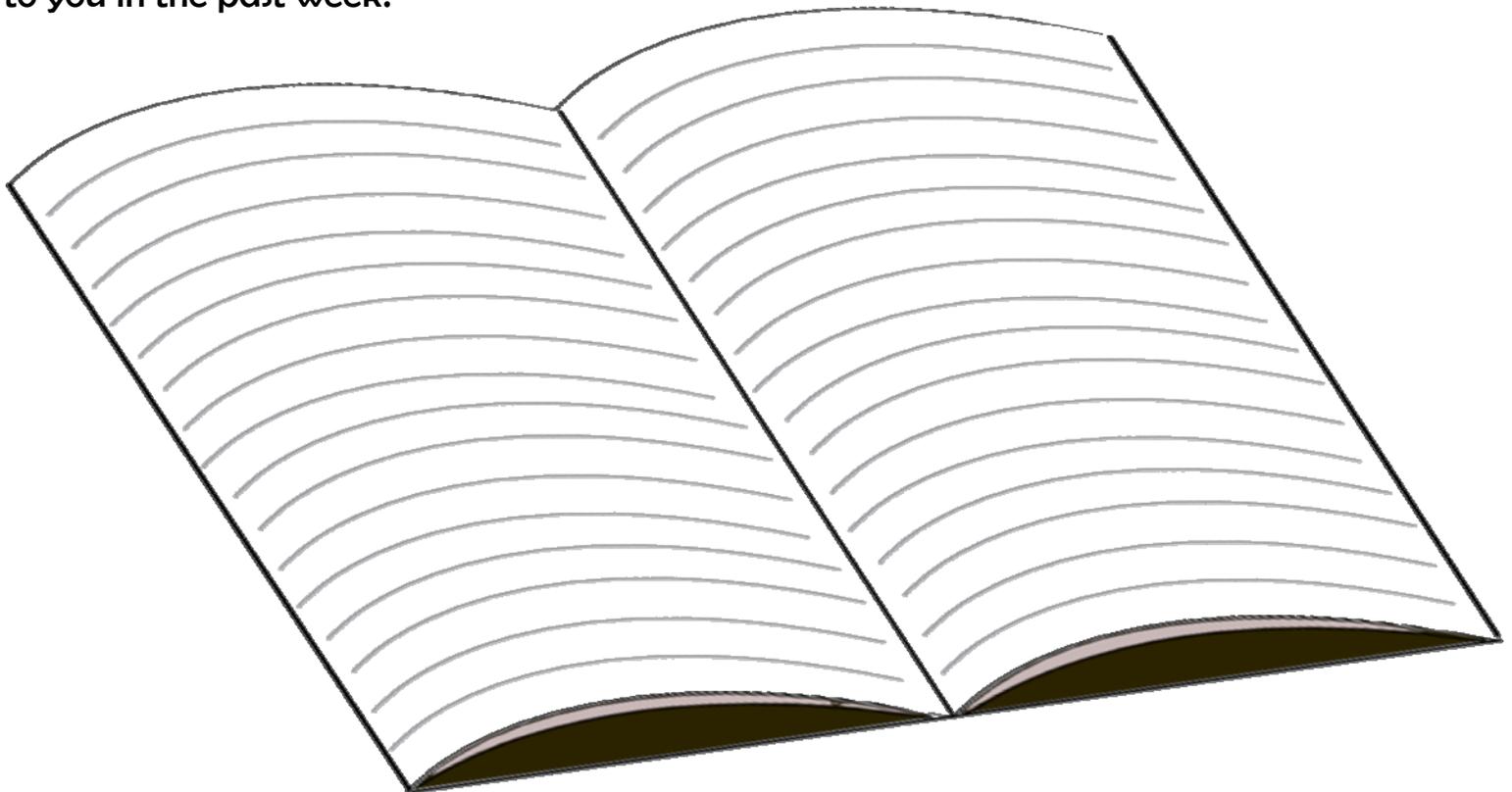
One day, Peter comes home to discover his beloved pet turtle Dribble is missing from his bowl. Fudge claims to have eaten Dribble, and is rushed to the hospital, where his claims prove to be correct. Everyone seems to be concerned about Fudge, and Peter, devastated by the loss of his pet, wonders if his parents will ever pay attention to him for a change. Imagine Peter's surprise when his parents reward him with a very special present, letting him know how important he is to them. Even better – this gift is too big for Fudge to swallow!



Vocabulary words in bold are defined in the glossary on the back of this guide.

Activity: The Most Important Thing

Peter's essay assignment makes him think about everything that happened to him over an entire year. What would you write about if you had the same assignment? A year is a long time; if you're stuck, try starting with writing about the most important thing that happened to you in the past week.



LITERARY LINK:



Judy Blume (born February 12, 1938) is one of America's favorite authors of children's and young adult literature. Growing up, Blume loved to make up stories, and she has been storytelling and publishing books ever since. Over 80 million copies of her books are in print, and have been translated into 32 languages.

Blume is known for her use of relatable characters and **dialogue**, and for writing about topics that young people might be too shy or uncomfortable to talk to someone about. In 1996 she won the Margaret Edwards Award from the American Library Association for her contribution to writing for teens.

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing is among Blume's most popular works. Blume got the idea for the book when she read a news article about a toddler swallowing a turtle. She wrote a picture book called "Peter, Fudge and Dribble," which was rejected by several publishers for being too **implausible**. A few years later, her agent advised her to use the story as part of a chapter book, and Blume based the character of Fudge on her own son's toddler years.

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing was so successful as a book that a play and television script were created based on the book's characters.

Activity: Green-Eyed Monster

Sometimes jealousy is described as a "green-eyed monster". Peter is learning how to find his role in his family, but still sometimes feels jealous (and angry, and frustrated...) that Fudge is the center of attention. Peter starts to beat his Jealousy Monster by focusing on the things that make him special.

Draw a picture of your Monster, and think about what helps you fight it. Maybe you're great at art, or music, or math, or maybe you're the best soccer player on the team! What makes YOU special?



How I beat the Jealousy Monster:

TELLING THE STORY:

A script is a play's starting point. Scripts can be simple or elaborate, original or an **adaptation** of a previous work. The play's director and production team use the script as a building block for the entire production process. One of the first things to consider is the script's **Given Circumstances**:

PREVIOUS ACTION:

Any action mentioned in the play's **dialogue** that reveals something that happened *before* the current action of the play.

- ❖ Almost all the scenes in *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* are Previous Action; they come from Peter's memories of various events that have already happened to him. Previous Action scenes in this play are told through **flashbacks**.
- ❖ In Applause!'s play, you'll see two actors playing the role of Peter: one actor plays Peter in the play's present-day, as he is working on his homework assignment, and the other actor plays Peter in the flashback scenes.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS:

Information about location, date and time, season, and sometimes potentially important historical details.

- ❖ In the play, the year is not noted, but we know it takes place in New York City. The play's dialogue also tells us that Peter's family lives in an apartment, Peter's father works in advertising, Peter is finishing up fourth grade at school, and other things.

POLAR ATTITUDES:

Beliefs held by a character that are in direct opposition to that character's world. This creates conflict which creates dramatic action.

- ❖ Peter is the play's **protagonist**. In Peter's mind, the role of **antagonist** is played by his three year old brother, Farley Drexel Hatcher, or "Fudge."
- ❖ Fudge is constantly bothering Peter. Peter complains to his mom and dad, but his feelings are increasingly hurt. Peter and Fudge's "sibling rivalry" is the main conflict in the play. The dramatic action of the play includes all of the events and situations that happen, and how they are resolved at the end.

MEMORY LANE:

An audience is a group of individuals gathered together in the same time and place for no purpose other than to see the performance. We call theatre a “living, breathing” art form because of its live performers and live audience and the effects those have on each performance. Theatre captivates and stirs the audience’s imagination through unfolding events, surprises, discoveries, and characters with whom we identify.

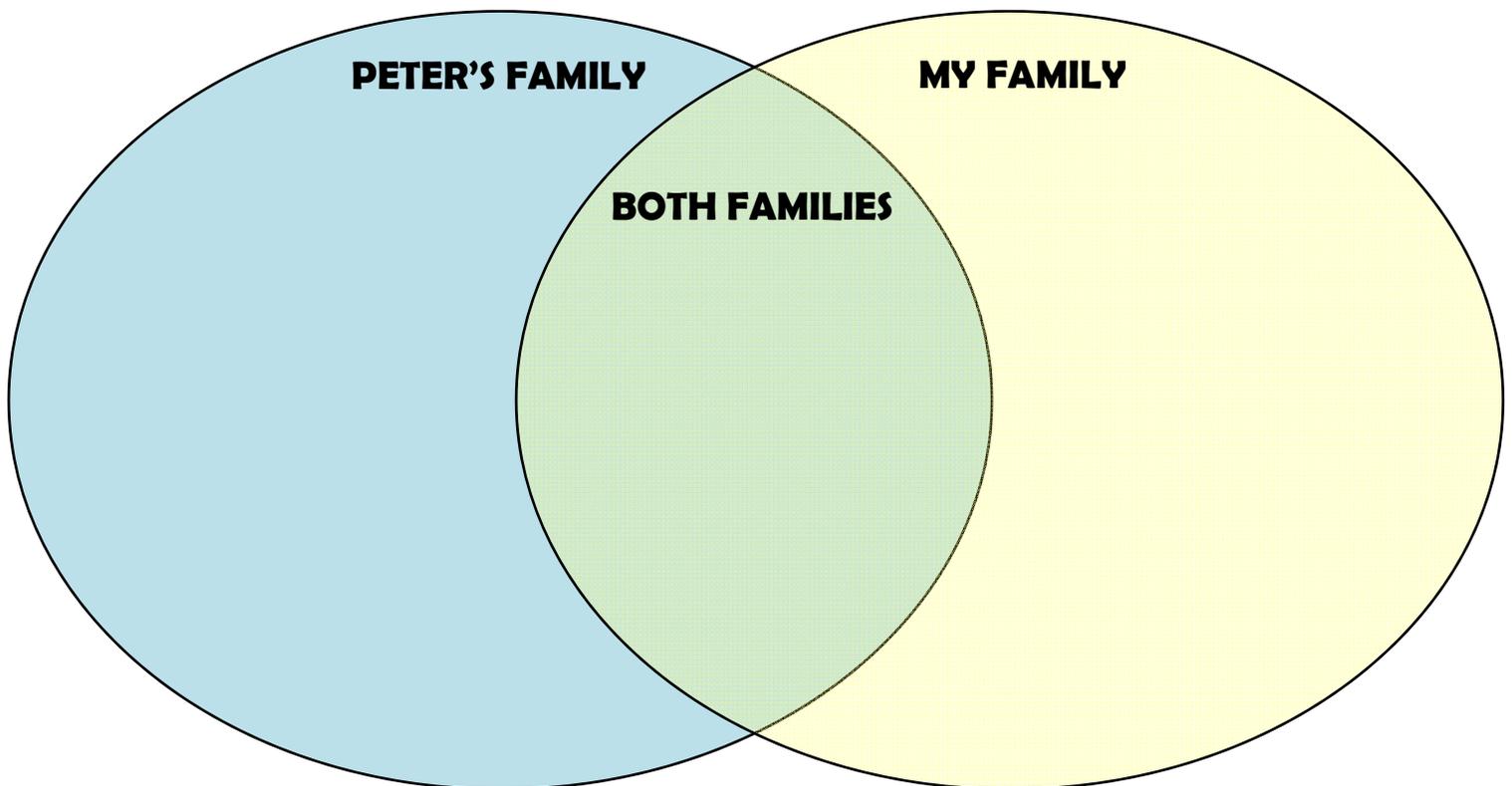
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing brought back lots of fond childhood memories for our production team, and we want to share that with our audience. Our play is set in the late 1970s/early 1980s, and all our design elements have been inspired by that time period. Some of the things you might see in the play include:

- ❖ A NYC skyline that includes the Twin Towers
- ❖ A telephone on the wall! With a cord!
- ❖ Polaroid photos
- ❖ An ELO hit or two

If you’re a kid, this stuff might seem WAYYYY old to you. But, ask your mom or dad about their fourth grade year. Do they remember bikes with banana seats, flared plaid pants, or roller skates (with FOUR wheels)? Enjoy the show!

Activity: Common Bonds

A Venn diagram uses overlapping or non-overlapping circles to show relationships between groups of things. Use this Venn diagram to compare characteristics of Peter and Fudge’s family to your own.



GLOSSARY:

Adaptation:	A story or work of art that has been created from the basis of an original work, reimagining its form of storytelling.
Antagonist:	A character or group of characters who opposes a protagonist. From the Greek word <i>antagonistēs</i> meaning “opponent, competitor, enemy, rival”.
Dialogue:	The lines spoken by a character in a drama or fiction.
ELO:	The Electric Light Orchestra (ELO) are a British rock group known for modern rock and pop songs with classical overtones. ELO’s debut album was released in 1971.
Flashback:	A scene in a movie, novel, etc., set in a time earlier than the main story.
Given Circumstances:	Everything that defines the special world of a play.
Implausible:	Not having the appearance of truth or credibility.
Nostalgia:	A sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.
Protagonist:	The leading character, hero, or heroine of a drama or other literary work.
Reminisce:	To recall past experiences of events.

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