

THE GARDEN

by Arnold Lobel

*(from the book of stories "Frog and Toad Together")
(Frog and Toad are friends who spend a lot of time together)*

Frog was in his garden.

Toad came walking by.

"What a fine garden you have, Frog," he said.

"Yes," said Frog. "It is very nice, but it was hard work."

"I wish I had a garden," said Toad.

"Here are some flower seeds. Plant them in the ground," said Frog,

"and soon you will have a garden."

"How soon?" asked Toad.

"Quite soon," said Frog.

Toad ran home.

He planted the flower seeds.

"Now seeds," said Toad, "start growing."

Toad walked up and down a few times. The seeds did not start to grow.

Toad put his head close to the ground and said loudly, "Now seeds, start growing!"

The seeds did not start to grow.

Toad put his head very close to the ground and shouted,

"NOW SEEDS, START GROWING!"

Frog came running up the path.

"What is all this noise?" he asked.

"My seeds will not grow," said Toad.

"You are shouting too much," said Frog. "These poor seeds are afraid to grow."

"My seeds are afraid to grow?" asked Toad.

"Of course," said Frog. "Leave them alone for a few days.

Let the sun shine on them, let the rain fall on them. Soon your seeds will start to grow."

That night Toad looked out of his window.

"Drat!" said Toad. "My seeds have not started to grow. They must be afraid of the dark."

Toad went out to his garden with some candles.

"I will read the seeds a story," said Toad. "Then they will not be afraid."

Toad read a long story to his seeds.

All the next day Toad sang songs to his seeds.

And all the next day Toad read poems to his seeds.

And all the next day Toad played music for his seeds.

Toad looked at the ground.

The seeds still did not start to grow.

"What shall I do?" cried Toad.

"These must be the most frightened seeds in the whole world!"

Then Toad felt very tired, and he fell asleep.

"Toad, Toad, wake up," said Frog. "Look at your garden!"

Toad looked at his garden.

Little green plants were coming up out of the ground.

"At last," shouted Toad, "my seeds have stopped being afraid to grow!"

"And now you will have a nice garden too," said Frog.

"Yes," said Toad, but you were right, Frog. It was a very hard work."

From: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. (J.K. Rowling)

Ch. 12 The Mirror of Erised (Extract)

(During one of his night wanderings around the school, Harry came across a mirror in which he could see his family. He was entranced and he started coming there every night of his vacation in his invisibility cloak)

And there were his mother and father smiling at him again, and one of his grandfathers nodding happily. Harry sank down to sit on the floor in front of the mirror. There was nothing to stop him from staying here all night with his family. Nothing at all.

Except –

“So – back again, Harry?”

Harry felt as though his insides had turned to ice. He looked behind him. Sitting on one of the desks by the wall was none other than Albus Dumbledore. Harry must have walked straight past him, so desperate to get to the mirror he hadn't noticed him.

“I – I didn't see you, sir.”

“Strange how nearsighted being invisible can make you,” said Dumbledore, and Harry was relieved to see that he was smiling.

“So,” said Dumbledore, slipping off the desk to sit on the floor with Harry, “you, like hundreds before you, have discovered the delights of the Mirror of Erised.”

“I didn't know it was called that, sir.”

“But I expect you've realized by now what it does?”

“It – well – it shows me my family – ”

“And it showed your friend Ron himself as head boy.”

“How did you know – ?”

“I don't need a cloak to become invisible,” said Dumbledore gently. “Now, can you think what the Mirror of Erised shows us all?”

Harry shook his head.

“Let me explain. The happiest man on earth would be able to use the Mirror of Erised like a normal mirror, that is, he would look into it and see himself exactly as he is. Does that help?”

Harry thought. Then he said slowly, “It shows us what we want ... whatever we want...”

“Yes and no,” said Dumbledore quietly. “It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. Ronald Weasley, who has always been overshadowed by his brothers, sees himself standing alone, the best of all of them. However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away before it, entrance by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible.

“The Mirror will be moved to a new home tomorrow, Harry, and I ask you not go looking for it again. If you ever *do* run across it, you will now be prepared. It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that. Now, why don't you put that admirable cloak back on and get off to bed?”

Harry stood up.

“Sir – Professor Dumbledore? Can I ask you something?”

“Obviously, you've just done so,” Dumbledore smiled. “You may ask me one more thing, however.”

“What do you see when you look in the mirror?”

“I? I see myself holding a pair of thick woolen socks.”

Harry stared.

“One can never have enough socks,” said Dumbledore. “Another Christmas has come and gone and I didn't get a single pair. People will insist on giving me books.”

It was only when he was back in bed that it struck Harry that Dumbledore might not have been quite truthful. But then, he thought, it had been quite a personal question.

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

By James Finn Garner

Once there were three little pigs who lived together in mutual respect and in harmony with their environment. Using materials which were indigenous to the area, they each built a beautiful house... One day, along came a big, bad wolf with expansionist ideas. He saw the pigs and grew very hungry in both a physical and ideological sense. When the pigs saw the wolf, they ran into the house of straw. The wolf ran up to the house and banged on the door, shouting, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!"

The pigs shouted back, "Your gunboat tactics hold no fear for pigs defending their homes and culture".

But the wolf was not to be denied what he thought was his manifest destiny. So he huffed and puffed and blew down the house of straw. The frightened pigs ran to the house of sticks, with the wolf in hot pursuit. Where the house of straw had stood, other wolves bought up the land and started a banana plantation.

At the house of sticks, the wolf again banged on the door and shouted, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!"

The pigs shouted back, "Go to hell, you carnivorous, imperialistic oppressor!"

At this, the wolf chuckled condescendingly. He thought to himself: "They are so childlike in their ways. It will be a shame to see them go, but progress cannot be stopped".

So the wolf huffed and puffed and blew down the house of sticks. The pigs ran to the house of bricks, with the wolf close at their heels. Where the house of sticks stood, other wolves built a time-share condo resort complex for vacationing wolves, with each unit a fiberglass reconstruction of the house of sticks, as well as native curio shops, snorkeling, and dolphin shows.

At the house of bricks, the wolf again banged on the door and shouted, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!"

This time in response, the pigs sang songs of solidarity and wrote letters of protest to the United Nations.

By now the wolf was getting angry at the pigs' refusal to see the situation from the carnivore's point of view. So he huffed and puffed, and huffed and puffed, then grabbed his chest and fell over dead from a massive heart attack brought on from eating too many fatty foods.

The three little pigs rejoiced that justice had triumphed and did a little dance around the corpse of the wolf. Their next step was to liberate their homeland. They gathered together a band of other pigs who had been forced off their lands. This new brigade of porcinistas attacked the resort complex with machine guns and rocket launchers and slaughtered the cruel wolf-oppressors, sending a clear signal to the rest of the hemisphere not to meddle in their internal affairs. Then the pigs set up a model socialist democracy with free education, universal health care, and affordable housing for everyone.

Please note: the wolf in this story was a metaphorical construct. No actual wolves were harmed in the writing of the story.

PUPPY LOVE

Dogs as accessories

We are already a nation of dog lovers. However the UK's love for their pets is evolving into obsession as they are becoming more than family pets but one of the latest fashion accessories.



The recent trend, mainly in female celebrities, is to take your dog with you everywhere in your handbag whether you are going shopping or out to dinner. Her Majesty the Queen is famous for her corgis but these days you are just as likely to see singers Geri Halliwell and Cheryl Tweedy travelling with their dogs.

Accessories for small dogs

High street shops like Next and Top Shop are cashing in on the trend by selling items of dog clothing alongside their women's collections. They are entering the 'dog clothing' market making it easy to buy for your dog while buying for yourself. There is no need to shop online at one of the dedicated dog clothing websites or go to a specialist shop dog-fashion is now out in the open.

'The closest my dog gets to clothes is a new collar at Christmas' Amanda, 27, Birmingham

'I think it's cute I have a coat for my little dog although I don't carry her around in a bag. What's the point of having a dog if you don't take it for walks where they are actually walking.' Elaine, 26, Liverpool

Doggie retreats

And people are not just pampering their pets with the latest clothes and accessories. More people are taking their pets away with them for holidays. UK hotels and holiday parks are catering for the animal lover by allowing people to holiday with them. If you are travelling abroad why not leave them at a doggie retreat or spa where they will be pampered.



'We send our dog to a special spa kennel that pampers them while we are away - they even have their own TV' Liz, 24, Manchester

Dogs are for life...

Famous campaigns like 'Dogs are for life and not just for Christmas' highlight the responsibility of owning a dog and so it's important to remember that when you see people and their pets what you don't see is the time, money and love invested in man's best friend. Actress Sienna Miller recently took a responsible attitude by returning two young dogs to ex-partner Jude Law because she can't give them the attention they need.



Personally I love dogs but I'm allergic to them so I won't be seen carrying one around in my handbag. I just spend my time and money on the handbags themselves.

Lucy

Consumerism

If we don't need to buy so much, we don't need to work so much. We can take part-time jobs or reduce our working day from 8 hours to 6 hours. Some people are leaving very well paid jobs to live a healthier life in the countryside or a more exciting life abroad. This is called 'downshifting'. Parents can spend more time with their children and the unemployed are given more opportunities to work.

If we start to respect saving the earth more than spending money, we will become 'conservers'. When we are conservers, we try to choose environmentally-friendly products which are durable and last a long time. We may find growing our own vegetables or making our own clothes more rewarding than buying them.

What was the best thing you bought last week? Could you choose from lots of different types? We like having a choice of what to buy. People who buy things are called consumers. Consumers have choices. We usually choose the colour, taste, smell or size of what we buy, but there are other choices we can make. The following questions will help you to consider these choices.

Where was it made? If you don't like the place it was made, you might decide not to buy that particular product. A lot of people don't buy products from certain countries when they don't like the way the country is run. Was it made in a factory or on a local farm? If the product was unbelievably cheap, the people who made it might not have been paid much.

Who made it? Do you know? If a friend made it, you probably like it more and you will want to keep it for a long time. If it was made by somebody who enjoyed making it, the quality and the design are probably better. Or does it look like it might have been assembled in a large factory?

There are children in Asia who make Santa Claus dolls for European children to play with. The children who make the toys don't celebrate Christmas because they are not Christian; they think of the dolls as work. Would it be better if the children in Europe made their own Christmas dolls?

What is it made from? One of the places where we want to buy expensive luxuries is at the airport's duty-free shop. Next to the chocolate and cigarettes, there are beautifully-shaped bottles and compact boxes full of perfumes and creams which promise to make you look and feel more beautiful. If you look at the ingredients you will find that the perfumes are mainly alcohol and the creams are mainly made of petroleum!

Almost all products are sold in packaging. Some products have too much packaging, creating more rubbish and using up resources. Some use recycled packaging, which is better for the environment. Next time you go shopping, think about what you really need to buy. Don't deprive yourself of things you like, but decide what you should buy before you go out, so that you won't be influenced by advertisements or promotions. If it is more expensive to buy goods which don't have much packaging and things which are more durable, buy less. If you can choose to work less, decide which things you would like to make, do or grow yourself. Even though you have less money, your life will become richer!

WHAT IS THERE TO DO AFTER DARK?

It's a myth that there's nothing to do in our cities at night. Our cities are packed with culture and attractions, and many people go to cities such as Newcastle or Glasgow for the nightlife alone.

As night falls on Newcastle the shops and offices close, transforming the city. Newcastle's nightlife has something to offer everyone, from dinner at one of the many restaurants to an evening at the 'Theatre Royal'. Most young people are drawn to the centre of Newcastle for its trendy bars and clubs.

An area of town named the 'Bigg Market' helped put Newcastle on the 'party' map and at weekends it is full of people moving from bar to bar. As the night draws on, they then move onto nearby night-clubs.

PARTY ATMOSPHERE

Crowds of friends mix with groups of visitors, from tourists to hen and stag parties. These are traditional parties that happen before weddings, the women have hen parties and the men stag parties to celebrate their last night out as single people.

Conversation, laughter and loud music are everywhere; pouring out of hot night-clubs and trendy bars. Amongst the crowds you'll hear the local Geordie accent mixed with others from all over the UK and the world.

A NIGHT-CLUB WITH A DIFFERENCE

One of the most popular destinations is the 'Tuxedo Royale' a ship permanently moored under the Tyne Bridge. It's open every night and is an old Northern Irish ferry which has been converted into a floating night-club. There are many bars and dance floors on it. At weekends the wait to get in can be quite long but once on board ship, the drinking and partying continues into the early hours.

WHAT TO WEAR?

Dress codes for entry into bars and clubs are common and strictly enforced at the weekends, which means people wear their best clothes and are out to make a good impression. People don't wear much, which may appear strange, as it can get very cold outside at night. There's a very good reason for it though - inside the night-clubs it's very hot, so there is no need for a coat. Some groups of people dress in theme outfits for special nights out like birthdays so don't be surprised if you see clubbers in school or police uniforms.

SAFETY ON THE STREETS

The police maintain a high profile to deter trouble and watch over the clubbers making sure that people enjoy a safe but fun night out. The police presence means people are loud and high spirited but not generally aggressive. It's the combination of the historic setting, the wide choice of bars and night-clubs, and Geordie attitude to having a good time that attracts people from all over the country to enjoy the amazing nightlife.