

# Frederica the Frog



by

John Bonthron



This story was written for Molly, a girl who wanted a story about a real frog, a story without any Princes and Princesses in it.

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## Frederica the Frog

Frederica the Frog lived beside a pond where there were ducks and geese. Some of them thought she couldn't swim.



A few of them whispered behind her back:

"Look, that's Frederica. She's the frog who can't swim."

"Who ever heard of a frog that can't swim?"

'Even tadpoles can swim, and they're only baby frogs. And they can

swim even before they get their legs, by wiggling their long tails.'

Frederica could hear everything they said. She had very good hearing

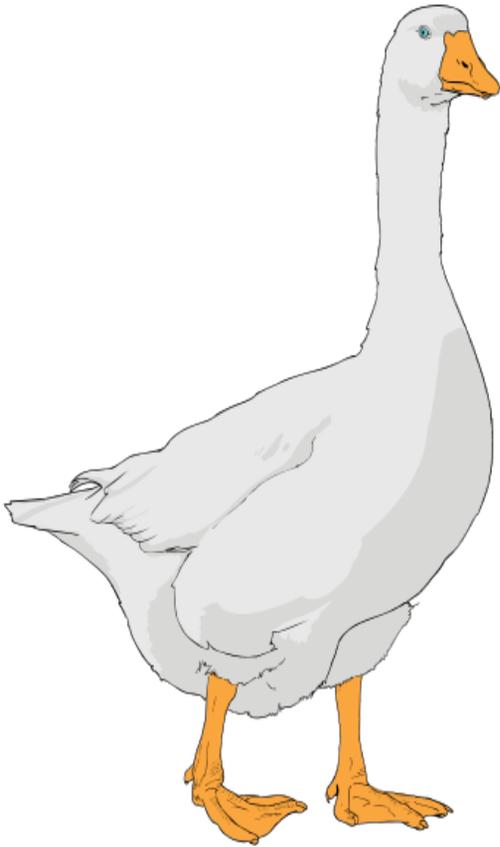
When they told these jokes she smiled her sad smile, but she never

complained.

In fact, Frederica seldom spoke.

She wasn't a very talkative frog.

## Frederica the Frog



But Gilbert the Gander was a talker. A big, big talker.

He was always talking, every minute of every day, honking out his opinions, very loudly.

Gilbert was a white goose, with yellow legs and the biggest feet you've ever seen, as big as dinner plates.

And he was very tall, with a long thick neck, and a huge strong beak.

Gilbert the Gander was always talking about Frederica, making fun of her.

Frederica was not a show off. Not like Gilbert the Gander who wanted everybody to pay attention to him, all the time. That's why he was always making a great big din, so that everyone would look at Him.

ooOoo

One day Frederica the Frog was at her usual spot, in the long grass, beside Deirdre the Duck's nest.

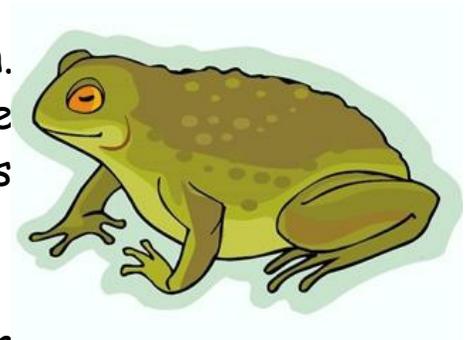
Frederica liked it there, hidden, out of sight, sitting quietly, minding her own business, watching everything that happened.

Like most frogs Frederica was very shy.

ooOoo

# Frederica the Frog

It was a lovely warm sunny afternoon. Frederica was wakened up from a snooze by Gilbert waddling towards her, on his big clumpy feet:



"Thump! Thump! Honk! Honk! Thump! Thump: 툼! 툼! 톱! 톱! 툼! 툼!"

He stopped directly in front of Frederica, cocked his head to one side and peered down at her with his small black eyes.

Then he honked at her, with his loud annoying honking laugh, making fun of her again.

'Listen up peoples. Look at Frederica the Frog. Peoples, listen up.

'Look at Frederica. Isn't she just the silliest billiest frog, in the whole of Scotland?

She can't even swim. Who ever heard of a frog that can't swim?'

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Look at Frederica, peoples.'

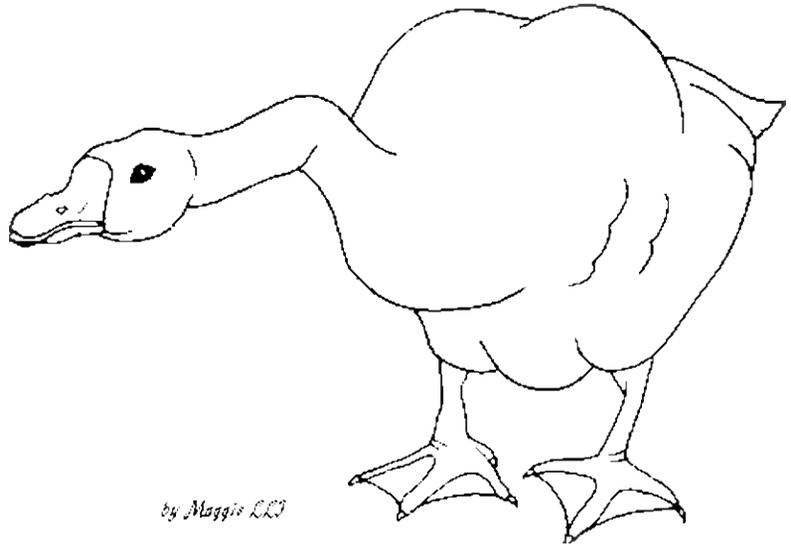
Just look at her, the only frog that can't swim.'

'Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.'

And being Gilbert, he didn't just say this once or twice. Oh no! He kept of saying over and over until everyone was fed up hearing it. He was really quite boring, as well as annoying and hurtful.

## Frederica the Frog

Frederica said nothing. She just ignored him, and this made Gilbert very angry. Gilbert hated being ignored.



Suddenly Gilbert lunged out with his big beak and stabbed down hard, trying to peck at Frederica.

He didn't want to eat her. Geese don't eat frogs. They only eat grass and weeds.

But Frederica didn't hop away. In fact, she didn't move a muscle. She stayed perfectly still. And Gilbert missed.

It wasn't the first time he had stabbed at her.

He had done it lots of times before. But he missed every time.

Gilbert had very bad eyesight.

But missing Frederica again made Gilbert even angrier.

He honked in his loudest voice:

# Frederica the Frog

'Listen up, peoples. Look at Frederica. *She's* stuck on this side of the pond, all the time, because *she* can't swim.

Then he waddled over to the edge of the pond and honked:

'GILLLBEEERT!' And jumped in with a giant:

"SPO-AAAA-LOSSSSH!"

And water splashed up out the pond in a great big lump, washing the baby ducklings right off their totty wee feet, scaring them very badly



They ran back to their Mother, Deirdre, whistling in their squeaky wee voices:

"Wheee! Wheee! Wheee! Wheee! Wheee!"

The Ducklings were very young and they had not learned how to quack like a grown-up duck.



Deirdre the Duck had a very loud quack:

'Quaaack! Quaaack! Quaaack!'

'Stop that at once Gilbert!'

'You'll hurt my wee ones!'

'Quaaack! Quaaack! Quaaack!'

## Frederica the Frog

But Gilbert didn't hear Deirdre. He was too busy honking, laughing, and swimming round and round the pond telling everyone about Frederica, the frog who couldn't swim.

The Ducklings climbed up onto Deirdre's back for safety and snuggled down underneath her wings.

All you could see were lots of tiny wee beaks sticking out.

Deirdre the Duck puffed up her feathers and shook her tail. She was very, very annoyed at Gilbert.

She turned to Frederica sitting beside her.

'What is that Gilbert like? I mean to say, isn't that Gilbert one, just so, so rude?'

'Yes,' croaked Frederica, 'Gilbert the Gander is very rude indeed.'

Then Frederica the Frog spoke to herself, but inside her head, where no one else could hear what she was saying:

*'Gilbert the Gander, it's time **you** were taught a lesson in manners.'*

ooOoo

A while later Deirdre got up and waddled out of her nest. The Ducklings wakened up and looked all around, wondering what would happen next.

'Frederica, I'm taking the kids for a swimming lesson.'

'OK, Deirdre. See you later, Alligator,' croaked Frederica.

Deirdre waddled over towards the pond quacking:

'In a while, Crocodile.'

## Frederica the Frog

The two friends always said this, instead of saying "Bye-Bye" or "Cheerio".

When Deirdre reached the edge of the pond she turned and looked back to her friend: 'Frederica, if you want, there's a space for you up on my back? I could teach you to swim, with the Ducklings, in the shallow water?' 'No thanks, Deirdre. I'll stay here. I've got some thinking to do.'

ooOoo

Deirdre slipped into the water without making even the slightest splash, like the perfect lady she was.

'Quaaack! Quaaack! Quaaack!' said Deirdre, softly, reminding the Ducklings to be on their best behaviour.

'Wheee! Wheee! Wheee!' whistled the Ducklings.

But this time they whistled very quietly, trying hard to be polite, like their Mother and Frederica, who were always polite.

Every day, sometimes three times a day, Deirdre told her Ducklings:

"It is good to be polite, to have good manners. Everyone knows that. Everyone except Gilbert the Gander."

ooOoo

Now that Frederica was all alone, she put on her thinking cap. Of course it's wasn't a real cap, just an imaginary cap. To put it on she closed her eyes tightly shut and, when it became dark inside her head, she turned on her imagination, which was like a television screen where she could see her thoughts.

# Frederica the Frog

At first, all that Deirdre could see was a picture of Gilbert the Gander, and the big splash he had made, and how it had washed the Ducklings off their feet.

Then, after a while, the pictures in her head changed, and that is when she got her idea.

ooOoo

Later that day Deirdre came back with her Ducklings. She took them to her nest. Her nest was hard to find. It was well hidden in the long grass where Frederica the Frog sat, waiting quietly.

The Ducklings snuggled underneath Deirdre's tummy, where it was warm and cosy, and they soon fell fast asleep.

Deirdre quacked her softest quack, so that she wouldn't waken them.

'Well Frederica, that went well. They're swimming fine now. All except wee Daisy my youngest. Daisy is still a bit unsure of herself.'

'Deidre, I've had an idea,' whispered Frederica, 'but I'll need you're your help to make it work.'

Frederica whispered her plan to Deirdre.

Deirdre started to giggle. In fact, Deirdre thought Frederica's plan was so funny that she almost laughed out loud, which would have wakened the Ducklings.

The Ducklings did wriggle a bit, but after a few minutes they settled down and went back to sleep, exhausted by their swimming lessons.

'OK Frederica, I'll do it. But you'll need to look after the kids, do a bit of Duckling-sitting, OK?'

'Of course, my pleasure,' replied Frederica.

# Frederica the Frog

Then Frederica the Frog and Deirdre the Duck sat together without talking, and waited.

It was nearly dark now and they didn't have to wait long.

ooOoo

Just as the top of the Sun dropped down behind below the brow of the hill, Gilbert the Gander started being his usual noisy, annoying self.



'Right. Listen up peoples. OK? It's bedtime everyone. OK? Time to go to bed everyone. OK?'

# Frederica the Frog

'Are you listening up, peoples. CAN YOU HEAR ME?'

On and on and on he went, honking loudly as he swam around and around the pond.

'Time to go to bed.'

'Do you hear me?'

'GO TO SLEEP NOW. OK?'

'DO YOU HEAR ME, PEOPLES?'

'TIME TO GO TO SLEEP!'

Gilbert did this same thing, every single night. Just as Deirdre and

all the other mums had managed to get their kids off to sleep, Gilbert's honking wakened them all up again.

*(One time, a long time before, Deirdre had complained, still trying to be polite:*

*"Oh Gilbert, do be quite, please. Have a bit of consideration for others. You've just wakened all the kids up again!"*

*"What was that, Deirdre? I missed that. WHAT DID YOU SAY?"*)

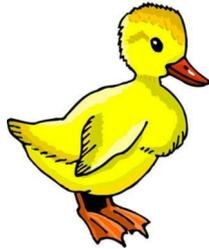
But this time, just before Gilbert swam past their part of the pond for the second time, Deirdre slipped off her nest. And Frederica crawled up and sat down on top of the Ducklings.

When the Ducklings felt Frederica's tummy on top of them it was cold and slippery. Not like their Mother's warm, soft, feathery tummy.

But they thought it was 'so cool' having Frederica for a new Mummy that they laughed and giggled and wiggled underneath her.

## Frederica the Frog

But Daisy didn't laugh. She missed her Mummy. No one noticed when Daisy wriggled out of the nest to follow Deirdre.



Deirdre reached the pond just as Gilbert was swimming past again. Daisy saw her Mummy and ran after her. But Deirdre had already slipped smoothly into the water without a sound and dived out of sight. It was nearly dark and no one except Frederica saw her doing this.

Deirdre was a diving duck which meant she could swim under the water for a long time, without needing to come up for a breath.

Daisy reached the edge of the pond but she was running so fast that she fell in. No one saw this happen. Not even Frederica. No one knew that Daisy was missing.

Gilbert swam pass the spot where Frederica was sitting on the nest:

'Right now, peoples. Time for bed everyone.'

'GET TO BED, PEOPLES. GET TO SLEEP'.

It was then that Frederica put the next part of her plan into action.

She croaked as loudly as she could:

***'Alligator attack, watch out Gilbert. Alligator attack.'***

But Gilbert the Gander just laughed at the little frog:

# Frederica the Frog

'Don't be daft Frederica. Don't you even know that there are no alligators in Scotland?'

And then, right at that very second, as Gilbert honked the word "alligator", Deirdre swam up from underneath and grabbed one of his toes in her sharp beak and gave it a very hard peck.

Gilbert thought he was being bitten by an alligator and was so frightened that he flapped his great white wings and soared up into the dark night sky and flew away like a ghost, shouting:

'AAAALLLLLLIIIIIGGGGGAAAATTTTOOOORRRR!'

Deirdre was giggling as she swam back to the edge of the pond. She flapped her wings and fluttered up on to the bank and, quacking with laughter, began shaking the water off herself, making a huge spray of water droplets.

Frederica leapt from the nest to land beside her so that she could get a free shower.

When she was dry Deirdre waddled back to her nest. Before she hopped up to sit on the Ducklings she did a quick count. One was missing!

She counted again, more slowly, saying each name to herself:

'Denise, Donald, Deborah, Daniel, Dorothy, Doris, Declan, Daphne,

Derek, Dais ...'

'Oh help me, Frederica, help me. Oh please, please, help me. My wee Daisy is missing and she can't swim yet. Where can she be? Wee Daisy is lost and all alone in the dark.'

Deirdre went quacking off all over the place, looking under every bush, trying to find Daisy, shouting in her loudest voice:

# Frederica the Frog

'Daisy, Daisy, Daisy. Oh Daisy, where are you?'

Another thing about frogs is that they have excellent eyesight, much better than ducks and geese.

Frederica looked out over the dark pond and spotted a tiny bundle of yellow feathers bobbling about.



It was Daisy! And although Daisy could float, she couldn't swim properly yet and she was very frightened. And she was far out from the edge. Because of her excellent hearing Frederica was the only one who could hear Daisy whistling for help:

'Wheeh! Weeeh! Weeeeeeeh! Help meeee! Help meee!'

At once Frederica made an enormous hop.

No one saw her.

Everyone else was too busy running about looking for Daisy, in the long grass, under the bushes.

Frederica flew through the air and



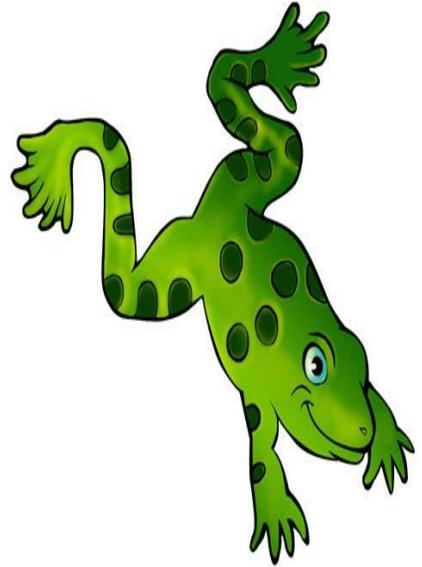
# Frederica the Frog

landed in the water with a tiny "Plop" just behind Daisy and dived down underneath her.

Another interesting thing about Frogs is that they can actually breathe underwater.

They can stay underwater for as long as they like.

Frederica looked up from the bottom of the pond and bobbing up above her was Daisy. Frederica swam upwards and helped Daisy up from underneath and gave her a tiny push forwards.



Daisy stopped panicking. She was no longer afraid. She started to paddle with her tiny webbed feet and soon she was zooming along as if she had always been able to swim.

While she was still quite far out in the pond Daisy saw her Mummy, Deirdre.

And she started to shout in her tiny squeaky voice:



# Frederica the Frog

'Wheee! Wheee! Wheee!'

'Mummy, look at me. Look at me.'

'Mummy, I can swim! I can swim!'

'I can really do it now, look.'

Of course Frederica was still swimming along underneath, still holding her up, still helping her.

Then Frederica let go. And it became true: Daisy was swimming along by herself. She had learned to swim at last.

Daisy reached the edge of the pond and scrambled out.

Deirdre and all other Ducklings crowded around Daisy and made a great fuss of her. They were so happy that she was back safe and sound.

'Daisy, you are such a clever Duckling, learning to swim, all by yourself, and in the dark too.'

They were all far too busy to notice Frederica. The little frog crawled back up onto the bank and hop-hoppity-hopped over to her favourite spot, in the long grass, right beside the nest.

Soon the Ducklings were snuggled up underneath their Mother.

Deirdre wiggled down on top of them and they were soon asleep, tired out by the hullabaloo, even though Deirdre was making a great racket, quack-quack-quacking with excitement:

'Frederica, did you see that Gilbert? Did you see him when I nipped his toe and he thought it was an alligator? What a laugh! Eh? And did you see my wee Daisy has learned to swim now? Eh? Did you see it?'

'Yes, Deirdre, I enjoyed everything, very much,' said Frederica.

# Frederica the Frog

'Do you know Frederica, I'm completely exhausted. What a day. What a laugh! Eh?'

'Yes, it was all very satisfying, Deirdre, you did well.'

'So, did you see where he went Frederica? You know, Gilbert. Where did he go?'

'I've no idea, Deirdre.'

'Well I hope he stays there, wherever it is. Good riddance, I say. I just can't stand that big goose. He's so, so rude. I tell you Frederica I can do without Gilbert the Gander very nicely, thank you kindly. That's what I say.'

Frederica had closed her eyes and was pretending to be asleep.

Eventually Deirdre calmed down reached her head over her back, tucked it under her wing and fell asleep too.

When it was quiet and completely dark, Frederica crawled off to look for something nice and juicy to eat. Like all frogs, Frederica

was nocturnal, which means frogs normally hide during the day and come out to look for food at night.

ooOoo

On the hill, high above the pond, Gilbert the Gander was all alone. He was quivering with fear. And he was doing something he was not at

all used to: Gilbert was keeping very quiet. He was sitting down, stretching his neck along the ground in front of himself, trying to become invisible, just in case the alligator was still after him.

# Frederica the Frog

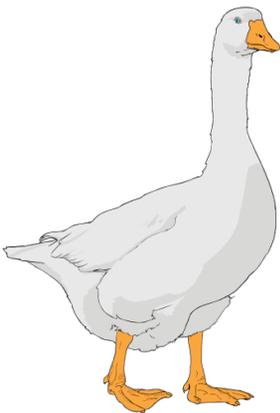
It was a long, long time before Gilbert the Gander went anywhere near the pond. But when he did return he was changed for the better. Gilbert had learned to have manners.

ooOoo

Nowadays, almost all of the time, Gilbert is quiet and polite.

And he never, ever, ever goes for a late night swim.

Gilbert the Gander knows he was lucky: if Frederica had not warned him about the alligator, he could have been swallowed up. And sometimes, when he thinks back to that night he can almost feel the alligator nipping again on his big toe.



And when it starts to get dark, Gilbert always comes along to find Frederica and Deirdre:

'Please, would it be all right with you if I sit beside you tonight? You know, just in case of the alliga\*\*\*.'

Actually Gilbert is too afraid to say the word "alligator" out loud.

But Frederica and Deirdre know perfectly well what he means. 'Of course, Gilbert, you may sit with us. That would be very nice.'

ooOoo

And nowadays, only sometimes, when he gets excited, Gilbert will honk his big loud voice. But he soon calms down. And nowadays he never says anything nasty about anyone.

# Frederica the Frog

But even now Gilbert still thinks that Frederica can't swim.

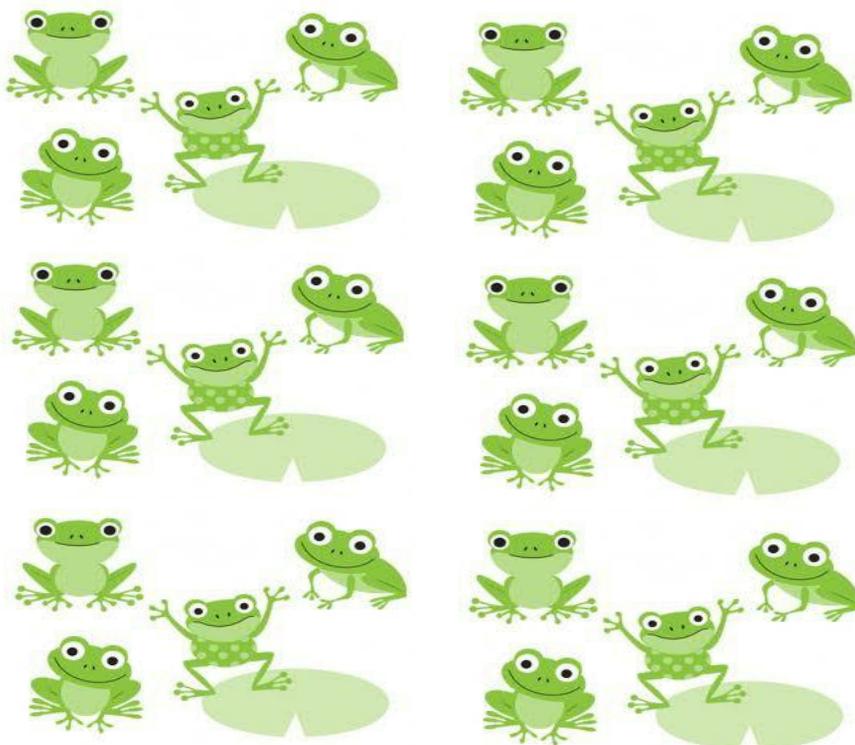
And that's where he is very wrong.

We know she can swim, don't we?

In fact all frogs are actually great swimmers, but only when they want to swim. And because they almost always swim underwater, you hardly ever see them.

Most gardens will have at least one frog in it. But they are hard to find because they usually hide during the day and then at night-time, when it's dark and damp, they crawl around eating snails and slugs.

That makes gardeners very happy. Gardeners love frogs.



## Frederica the Frog

Frederica and Deirdre kept their secret safe from everyone, so no one else knew what had actually happened.

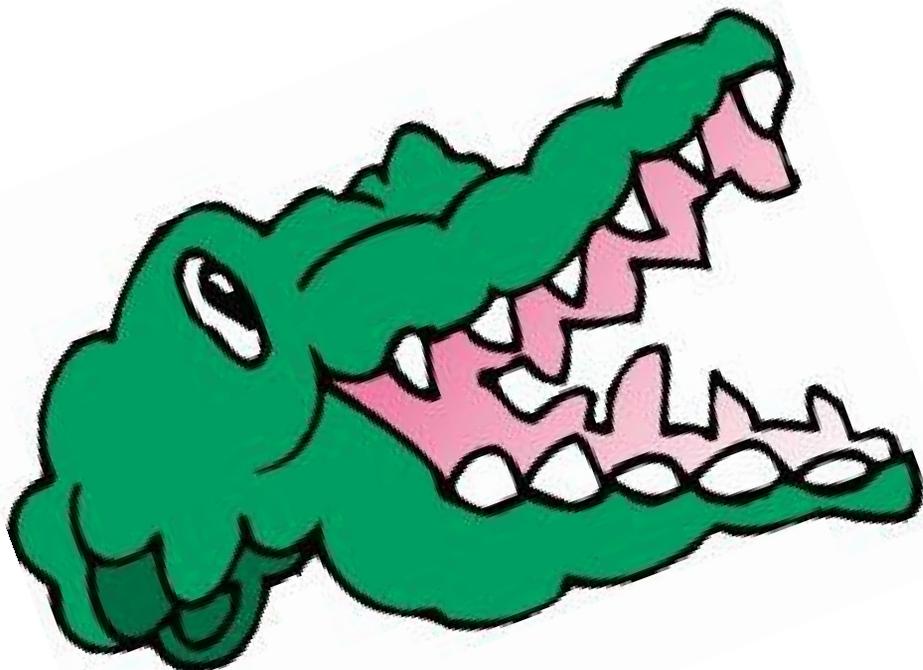
Except, of course, someone like you who is reading or listening to this story.

But Gilbert had been right about one thing.

Do you know what that was?

There are no alligators in Scotland.

Except a few and, hopefully, those are in zoos.





This is a story about a clever little Frog called Frederica.

She was very shy.

Everyone thought she couldn't swim.

Some of the animals made fun of her.

Especially Gilbert the Gander.

But Frederica and her friend Deidre the Duck teach Gilbert manners.

And nowadays Gilbert is much nicer.

