

# Jason & Jake

BY REGAN W. H. MACAULAY



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"Mom, look what I found! Can I keep him?" cried Sam. She had been looking all morning for the toad she saw in her yard.

"Keep who, honey?"

"It's a toad," Sam replied. "His name is Jake."

"No, honey," Sam's mom replied. "Are you ready for school?"

Sam stared at the plump toad sitting in her hands. She brought Jake to her mom. "Maybe he can be another class pet?"

Sam's mom bent down and looked at Jake. "Find a box and take Jake to school," she said.

By the time Sam got to school, Jake had settled down quietly inside the box. She showed Jake to Mrs. Fudge, her grade one teacher. Sam asked if Jake could live in the classroom.

"I found Jake this morning," said Sam. "Can I put Jake in the tank with our class toad, Jason?" Mrs. Fudge smiled and nodded.

Sam placed Jake in his new home. Excited kids came over to watch Jason and Jake hop about the terrarium in the soft soil, bark and leaves. Though Jake was larger than Jason, with more slender fingers, they still got along. "Cool toad!" said a boy called Tom. Sam smiled and watched Jake splash in the water dish.

The next day, Mrs. Fudge showed Sam and the other students a picture of a toad which she had taped to the chalkboard. “Let’s learn more about our class pets, Jason and Jake,” she said. The class sat down and listened. “Common toads, or *Bufo Americanus*, are found in the eastern United States and Canada, in gardens, as well as forests. In the spring, they lay two strands of eggs in ponds or puddles. Tadpoles emerge from the eggs.

“Toads are brown and warty, but you can’t catch warts by touching them. They have poison glands on the sides of their head, though, so always wash your hands after handling Jason or Jake. If a dog picks up a toad in its mouth, it will spit it out and its mouth will foam, but it won’t be harmed.

“Do you know what toads eat?” Mrs. Fudge asked the class.

Sam put up her hand. “Insects!”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Fudge. “Insects and worms. Let’s go outside and find food for our toads!”

Sam and her class went outside to search for insects with Mrs. Fudge. When they returned with a jar full of bugs, Sam opened the lid to the tank and noticed Jason and Jake sitting together in the water surrounded by a coil of gelatinous eggs! Jake was a girl, and she was laying eggs for Jason to fertilize!

They developed into tadpoles over the next two weeks. Sam and her class moved the tadpoles to an aquarium filled with spring water. For two months the class raised the tadpoles together. They became baby toads, and were smaller than Mrs. Fudge’s thumbnail! Sam quickly prepared a new tank to move the toadlets out of the water and onto dry land.

The day after, Sam and her classmates went on a field trip to their local Conservation area to release the baby toads. Sam was sad to see them go, but happy to have the memories of rearing them with Mrs. Fudge and her class.

“Are you going to rename their mom?” Tom asked Sam as they returned to the bus.

Sam thought for a moment.

“No. She’ll always be Jake to me.”

