

# Theatre IV Classroom Study



## Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile

*Based on the books by Bernard Waber  
Book, Music & Lyrics by Bruce Miller*

### Quite an Unusual Pet

Josh Primm and his family have just moved to New York City. While settling into their new house, Josh's mother finds a crocodile in the upstairs bathroom. Around the crocodile's neck is a letter of introduction, reassuring everyone that he is a friendly crocodile named Lyle. As the neighbors stop by to meet the Primms, they are upset to find that they have a crocodile living with them. Even the children in the neighborhood are unsure of Josh and his pet crocodile until Lyle becomes an instant hero by hitting a homerun and winning the game for the kid's baseball team.

When the local news reports the story of Lyle and his heroic homerun, letters pour in praising the friendly crocodile. One letter is from Hector P. Valenti saying that Lyle belongs to him and that he will soon come to reclaim his famous croc. When Valenti shows up, Josh and the other children try to dissuade him from taking their friend. Valenti insists that Lyle should be with him, starring in their stage show "Lyle and Valenti." Josh's parents also try to stop Valenti, but it is no use, and Valenti takes Lyle off to Broadway. This makes Lyle and all his new friends very sad.

As the show begins Lyle runs away from the theatre to return home to his new family. Meanwhile, Josh has been pining away for his new friend. When Valenti calls the Primm's house looking for Lyle, Josh rounds up the neighborhood kids who all go in search of the lost crocodile. When Lyle is finally found, the Primms offer to buy him from Mr. Valenti. Valenti agrees to the deal and the Primms, the neighbors and Lyle all celebrate and prepare for the adventures yet to come.



Bernard Waber; author of the original Lyle books

**B**ernard Waber was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 27, 1924. During his childhood, his family moved around the city as one family business after another failed. With each move, young Bernard always made his parents promise that there would be a library and a movie theatre within walking distance of their new home. When Bernard was eight years old, he got his first job working in a local movie theater after school. Running to the theater from school everyday, Bernard would arrive just in time to watch the final ten to fifteen minutes of the daily feature. He would then spend his idle moments imagining the beginning and middle of the film. This became his first experience at plot construction, and to this day, Waber often thinks of the ending of a story before creating the beginning and middle.



After graduating from high school Waber joined the U.S. Army and served from 1942-1945. He then attended the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia College of Art from 1946-1950, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1950 - 1951. During college Waber married Pauline Fleishman and over the next few years, the two moved to New York City and had three children.

Waber's first employment was at Conde Nast Publications as an artist in the promotions department. During this time, art directors looking at his portfolio suggested that his style was appropriate for children's books. This suited Waber as he was beginning to read to his own children and found that he enjoyed their books far more than adult novels.

In 1961 his first book, "Lorenzo," was published by Houghton Mifflin. Over the years he has won many awards for his children's books including the New York Herald Tribune's Children's Spring Book Festival picture book honor and the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award.

Crocodile Research on the Internet

**American Zoo & Aquarium Association (AZA)** - <http://www.aza.org>

**Crocodile Specialist Group** - This group is devoted to the conservation of crocodiles. Site provides information about a variety of crocodile topics, including links to other sites. <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/natsci/herpetology/crocs.htm>

**Crocodylians: Natural History & Conservation** - Information on all 23 species of crocodiles, including photographs and detailed drawings. Links to other crocodile research pages. <http://crocodylian.com>

**The Gator Hole** - Focusing on the American alligator, this site answers many common questions regarding the alligator and its habitat. <http://magicnet.net/~mgodwin>

**Sea World** - This page is devoted to helping find quick information, including entries on the American alligator and Nile crocodile. <http://www.seaworld.org>  
Crocodiles

Lyle is indeed a rare crocodile. Except for alligators and the American crocodile, most crocodiles live in the tropical regions of the world, spending most of their time in and around water. Crocodiles are large, carnivorous reptiles whose primary diet consists of fish, birds, frogs, and small mammals. To capture their prey, crocodiles will often use their long, strong tails to corral the prey into deep waters and then crush the victim with their sharp teeth and powerful jaws. The power in a crocodile's jaw is, however, limited to closing for although a croc's jaw has enough force to crush the bones of small animals, it is also possible to hold a crocodile's jaw closed using bare hands.

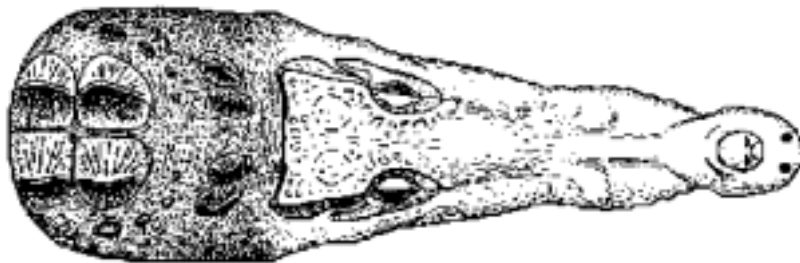
Unlike most reptiles, crocodiles produce a wide variety of sounds, from quiet hisses to fearsome roars. They also differ from other reptiles in that they protect and take care of their nests of eggs and their young. Like other reptiles, the cold-blooded crocodile's body temperature depends on the climate and they are known to hibernate by burying themselves in the mud during the dry season in warmer climates and during winter in colder climates.

There are many different species of crocodiles living all over the world and ranging in size from the 11 foot long Nile Crocodile to the 30 foot long Saltwater Crocodile. Crocodiles move best on land in a belly crawl but can also walk on all four legs. They are good swimmers, using their strong tails to propel themselves through the water with their eyes, nostrils and a portion of their back being the only part visible above the water.

Discussion and Activities



Side and top view of the American Crocodile.



1. When the neighbors first met Lyle they weren't too sure that they wanted a crocodile living in their neighborhood. Why do you think they didn't want a crocodile on their block? Do you think it was because they had never known a crocodile before and they weren't sure what to expect? Look up the word *prejudice* in the dictionary. Do you think that they were prejudiced against crocodiles? What causes people to be prejudiced?
2. Lyle is an extraordinary pet who helps around the house, plays ball and has had a career on Broadway. Discuss some of the responsibilities involved in having a pet of any kind. After learning about real crocodiles, what do you think it would be like to have a real crocodile for a pet? What would be some of their special needs? Ask students what types of pets they have and what it takes to take care of their pet?
3. When the children learn that Mr. Valenti is going to come get Lyle they are very sad. But when Mrs. Primm assures them that they will figure out a way to keep Lyle, the children sing a song about looking on the bright side. What are examples of times when you have had to look on the bright side? What do you do to cheer yourself up? How do you cheer up a friend who is down in the dumps?
4. Josh sneaks out of his house and runs away to find his friend Lyle. This was a very dangerous thing to do. What would have been a better, safer way for Josh to search for his friend?
5. Before seeing the play, try to decide which facts about crocodiles will apply to Lyle in the Theatre IV production. Do some additional research on crocodiles to add to the facts contained in this guide. After the production, discuss with your classmates what the character was really like. What were some similarities and differences between Lyle and real crocodiles?
6. In some species, crocodiles are close to extinction. What endangers animals, like the crocodile, to become extinct? What other North American animals are close to extinction? What can be done to help these animals? Pair up with other classmates and research your ideas. Share your findings with the class by making large posters describing the animal, its habitat and what is endangering its habitat.

Additional Books to Read

**Other Books About Lyle**

*The House on East 88th Street*  
*Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*  
*Lovable Lyle*  
*Lyle and the Birthday Party*  
*Lyle Finds His Mother*  
*Lyle at the Office*

**Other Books By Bernard Waber**

*But Names Will Never Hurt Me*  
*An Anteater Named Arthur*  
*Ira Says Goodbye*  
*Nobody is Perfick*  
*I was All Thumbs*  
*A Rose for Mr. Bloom*

Classroom Art Activity:

**D**raw your favorite character or scene from *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*. Send your drawing to Theatre IV for our "From Stage to Page Art Contest." Theatre IV staff members will select several drawings to be used in future study guides. (One drawing per student. Please write name, grade, age, teacher, school, and school address clearly on the back of each drawing. Drawings will not be returned. Teachers will be notified by mail of selected drawings.) Please mail class drawings to: Theatre IV, Department of Education, 114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220.

**T**heatre IV is the second largest theatre for young audiences in the nation and is the Children's Theatre of Virginia. We encourage your comments about *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*, please send your letters to:

**Theatre IV, 114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220**

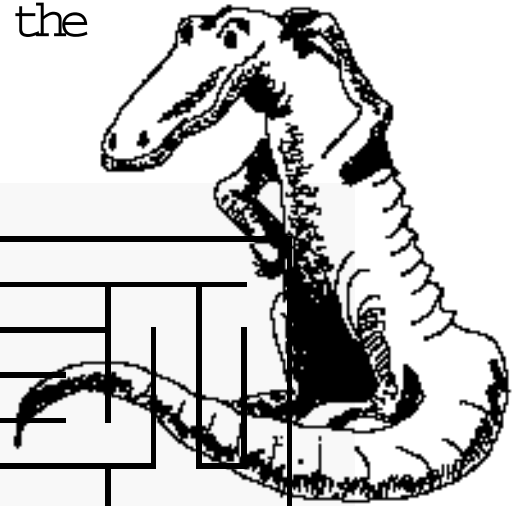
If you need to reach Theatre IV by phone, please call **1-800-235-8687**.

Thanks to our Sponsors:

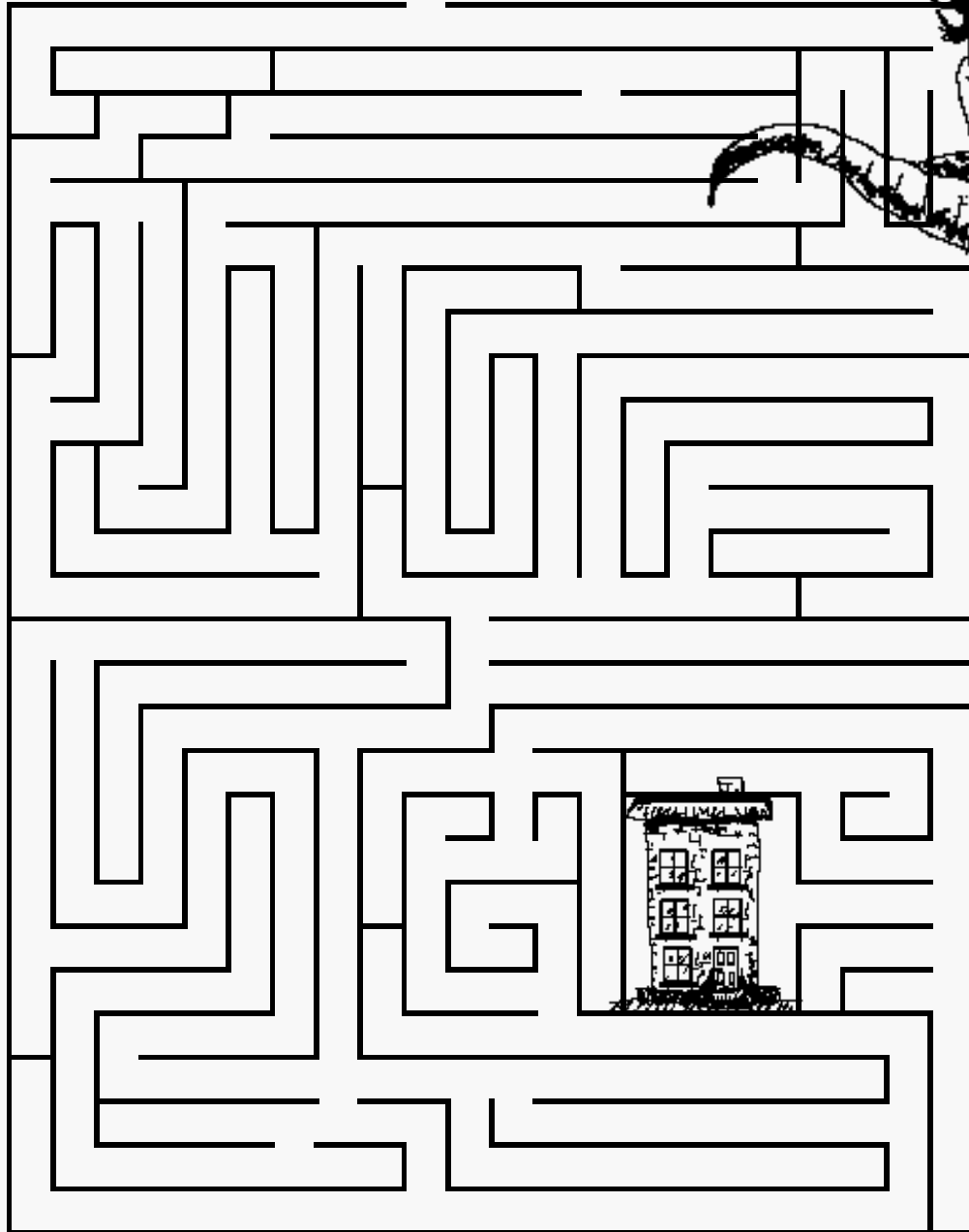
**T**heatre IV gratefully acknowledges the major supporters of our touring programs: The National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts; The Cincinnati Institute for the Arts; The Ohio Arts Council; the E. R. & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; and the Flagler Foundation.

# Lyle is Lost!

Help Lyle find his way home through the



START



# Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile



  
THEATRE IV