Picture a sunny August day in the woods in Minnesota. It’s not a day when you’d expect something unusual to happen. That’s what a group of middle school students from the Minnesota New Country School who were on a nature-study field trip thought too. But what they discovered at a pond in the woods has alarmed environmentalists across the United States.

While they were walking to the pond, the kids caught some of the frogs that were hopping about. At first the class thought that someone had broken the legs on many of the frogs because the legs weren’t bending the way frogs’ legs should. Then the students realized that half of all the frogs they had caught were malformed in some way. Instead of four legs, some frogs had three or five. Some had too many feet.

Back at school, the students posted their experience on the Internet and also contacted Judy Helgen, a research scientist at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Helgen wanted to understand what was causing the frogs to be born with deformities, especially if the cause could be harmful to people too. Like the ripples on a pond when you throw in a rock, the story of malformed frogs got bigger and bigger. When an article about the students and Helgen was published in a local newspaper, people across Minnesota began calling her to report finding malformed frogs. Helgen realized that the problem was much more serious than a few frogs in a little pond in the woods.

Other people realized that too. Scientific meetings were held to discuss the frogs. Then the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in North Dakota set up the North American Reporting Center for Amphibian Malformations (NARCAM) to receive reports of frog malformations from anywhere in the United States and Canada. People who found malformed frogs or other amphibians, such as salamanders, could report them to a Web site (frogweb.nbii.gov/) or could call 1-800-238-9801. Suzanne Fowle, a biological technician, was a coordinator for NARCAM and one of the first people to take reports by phone.
Secret Garden

When Mary Lennox was sent to live with her uncle on an estate in England, everyone said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. She had a little slight face and a little lean body, thin light hair and a disagreeable expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ailing in one way or another.

Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and unwell himself. Her mother had been a grand beauty who cared only about going to parties and amusing herself with happy people. She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born, she handed her over to the care of a nanny—who was made to comprehend that if she wished to please her she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little infant she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also. She never remembered seeing anything familiar but the dark faces of her nanny and the other indigenous servants, and they always complied with her and gave her her own way in everything because, Mrs. Lennox would be angry if her weeping troubled her. By the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived. The young English governess who came to teach her to read and write detested her so much that she gave up her position in three months, and when other governesses came to try to fill in they always went away in a shorter time than the first one. So, if Mary had not elected to really want to know how to read books, she would never have learned her letters at all.

One frightfully hot morning, when she was about nine years old, she awakened feeling very irritable, and she became crosser still when she saw that the servant who stood by her bedside was not her nanny.

Oral Reading Fluency, continued

When I say “Begin,” start reading aloud at the top of the page (point). Read across the page (point). Try to read each word. If you come to a word you don’t know, I’ll tell it to you. Be sure to do your best reading. Ready, begin.

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