

# *The Ant and the Grasshopper*

## *A Teacher's Guide*

Inspired by the original Aesop fable

Written by Elizabeth Gorrie

Adapted by Barbara Poggemiller

Original Lyrics by Elizabeth Gorrie and Barbara Poggemiller

A Kaleidoscope Theatre Production

Guide Written & Developed by Shauna White, TOC (Saanich & Victoria)  
2807 Gosworth Road, Victoria, BC V8T 3C4 Phone: 598-2350

# *The Ant and the Grasshopper -- A Teacher's Guide*

## **The Ant and the Grasshopper -- A Summary**

This classic Aesop fable, familiar to teachers and students alike, has been adapted by Kaleidoscope as an exploration of the artist's role in society. This premiere addresses the challenges that arise when materialistic priorities govern and direct a culture. With the use of enchanting costumes, sets, and a lyrical score, the actors encourage young and not-so-young audiences to explore beauty in the world around them.

## **About the Author -- Aesop**

Aesop was allegedly a Greek writer who is known as both legendary and historical. He was said to have lived in the six century B.C. perhaps as a Phrygian slave who spent time pondering life's simple truths, and writing simple moralizing stories involving animals with specific characteristics. These stories are now known as fables. Several people feel that it is debatable as to whether or not Aesop actually wrote the fables that are credited to his name; however, this puzzle is also part of the intrigue of Greek mythology. Although the origin of Aesop's fables may be shrouded in mystery, they were likely orally passed down, changed, and transcribed by a man named Babrius, who lived in the second century A.D. Babrius is credited for collecting and documenting Aesop's and others' fables which have become famous and inspiring for fable writers of today. Regardless of how these stories were composed and stayed the test of time, society is now blessed with many short stories which teach morals to people of all ages. As G.K. Chesterton wrote in an introduction to one of many books relaying Aesop's fables, "There is every type and time of fable: but there is only one moral to the fable; because there is only one moral to everything". Whether or not this is believed to be true, one thing is for certain -- fables allow people to think about life's simple truths. Fables have also remained a popular form of writing as many of Aesop's fables have been retold by several authors and illustrated in many different ways; all evidence of people's desire to keep such stories alive.

## **Aesop's "Original" Fable - a version**

- taken from [Aesop's Fables](#) by V.S. Vernon Jones. Published in New York by Franklin Watts, Inc. 1969. p.125.

## ***The Grasshopper and the Ants***

One fine day in winter some Ants were busy drying their store of corn, which had got rather damp during a long spell of rain. Presently up came a Grasshopper and begged them to spare her a few grains, "For," she said, "I'm simply starving." The Ants stopped work for a moment, though this was against their principles. "May we ask," said they, "what you were doing with yourself all last summer? Why didn't you collect a store of food for the winter?" "The fact is," replied the Grasshopper, "I was so busy singing that I hadn't the time." "If you spent the summer singing," replied the Ants, "you can't do better than spend the winter dancing." And they chuckled and went on with their work.

*Prepare today for the needs of tomorrow.*

## **The Ant & the Grasshopper – a summary of the adapted play version**

---

From Elizabeth Gorrie's original script, Barbara Poggemiller has created an excellent version of this fable with a pleasant and comical twist in the storyline, which in turn changes the moral of the story. This adapted version of Aesop's classic fable begins with the view of a larger-than-life colourful and natural scene. The ant foreman introduces the audience to Aesop and the basic storyline using descriptive verse. The storyline begins to unfold as the ants show their hard work of collecting their winter bounty through their regimented way of life. Meanwhile, the grasshopper delights in the beauties of his surrounding environment which inspire him to create and display his artistry through song, dance, and poetry. Much bantering back and forth between the ants and grasshopper builds the story to show that the ants will be prepared for winter and the grasshopper may be left "out in the cold"; however, the grasshopper maintains his philosophy for enjoying the beauty of the world rather than focusing on material goods.

As winter approaches, the grasshopper realizes his dilemma of being cold and hungry and proceeds to seek kindness from the ants to help a suffering fellow insect. At first, the ants are not so quick to jump to the grasshopper's aid; however, they soon realize his plight and invite the grasshopper into their den for some warmth and comfort. After some debate as to whose job is more important in life (the gathering work of the ants or the artistic creations of the grasshopper), the ant foreman and the grasshopper decide to switch places the following summer for one week to prove that the other's work is really not too difficult to accomplish. So, the ant foreman believes that being creative really takes no talent and can be easily achieved. The grasshopper, however, believes that keeping order in the ant colony and ensuring the work gets done cannot be a difficult task at all.

When the following summer comes along, the two gladly switch roles. As they play out the other's duties, life becomes chaotic for everyone and they quickly find out that the work of the other was really much harder than it looked. They realize that they are much better suited to their own work and switch back to their roles. Also, the ants and the grasshopper agree that everyone's role in their society is important for the success of each member. The story ends with the ants proposing that the grasshopper continue to sing his songs and recite his poetry for their enjoyment while they work, and in return, the ants would provide the grasshopper with his winter's "room and board". The grasshopper gladly agrees. The performance concludes with the ants singing a rap to a distinct beat while the grasshopper sings his own song with both coming together in a fun and entertaining duet.

*All members of society have an important role to play and everyone can gain greater insight by learning from the talents of others.*

This theatrical version of Aesop's fable is a delightful event for people of all ages and contains an array of musical ensembles highlighting barbershop singing, rap, guitar, accordion, piping, and flute, as well as electrically charged movement throughout the play. It is an exciting and partially participatory performance making it fun for all. Through the fun, the play conveys an important message showing that all people create the fabric of the community, and in particular with this story, artists need to be recognized for their creative contributions to the community.

## Themes Which Relate to this Fable

- **Fables** - how they were written involving animals with human characteristics
- **Morals** - how they teach lessons about life
- **Types of Music** - rap, classical, pop, folk, barbershop, work chants
- **Music History** - how working songs came to be
- **Creative Movement** - to different forms of music
- **Environment** - what things surround us in our everyday lives that we might take for granted
- **Seasons** - how life is affected
- **Roles in Society** - different roles that different people contribute to society
- **Art Forms** - the effect of colour, size, transformation
- **Insects** - particularly ants and grasshoppers
- **Food Webs** - how different life forms and seasons affect food webs
- **Habitats** - of insects
- **Creativity** - expressing thoughts and feelings in different ways
- **Careers** - the value of different jobs in society
- **Poetry** - different forms

## Activities to Try Before the Play

### ***A: Drama Activity***

---

#### **Hand rainstorm**

This activity simulates a rainstorm by using hand movements to create sound. Show the students the movements:

1. rubbing hands together
2. clapping two fingers on the palm of the other hand
3. patting own legs with both hands alternating
4. patting the floor with both hands alternating

Have the students sit in a circle. Tell the students that the teacher will begin the rainstorm by making the first sound. The student sitting beside the teacher begins the sound immediately following the teacher, and then the sound moves around the circle as each person starts after the person before him/her. When the first sound makes it back to the teacher, he/she starts the second movement. At this point, there will be two sounds occurring within the circle and more of the sound will change as each student then changes to the second movement following the established pattern. The students should not start the next movement until the person beside him/her has started so that it creates a sense of the rain moving. This process continues with the third and fourth movement. After finishing the fourth movement, the teacher starts the third movement again, then the second, and ends with the first. The first movement begins softly, simulating a light rain, and the sound should grow in intensity as the movements change from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4. The sounds should also decrease in sound as they move back from 4 to 3 to 2 to 1. This activity is also very effective and better for ear training if the students try it with their eyes closed, encouraging them to really listen to the change in sound from the person next to them.

*This activity is used in the play and involves the audience.*

## ***B: Language Arts Activities***

---

### **Fable Unit Ideas**

1. Explore fables in the classroom, including their history, style of writing, elements (usually involving animals that personify human traits), and the inclusion of a moral with each tale. Begin with fables by Aesop or variations on his work, and move to other fables from different ethnic origins. Once the students are familiar with the idea and style of a fable have them create their own fables with morals. Encourage each student to present his/her fable to the class through a variety of forms such as reading, drawing pictures, drama, movement, or a combination of these forms. This will help students to see how stories can be told effectively in many different ways.
2. Read Aesop's original fable (as included in this guide - or another of your choice) to the students. Stop at a turning point in the story and have the students write their own ending and moral to their stories. Have the students share their endings and compare their stories to the ending in the original fable. Discuss how the endings and morals may differ and which ending the students prefer. Talk about how the play they will be seeing uses the main storyline, as in Aesop's original fable, but has been changed to create a different ending with a moral that may be more applicable in today's society.

### **Poetry Unit Ideas**

1. Study poetry that relates to seasons, for example:
  - Spring: seed growing, blossoming trees and flowers, colours
  - Summer: sunny and warm weather, busy insects, birds and butterflies
  - Autumn: changing colours, leaves, preparing for winter
  - Winter: snowflakes, burrowing, icicles, and cold weather
2. Activities to follow reading poetry:
  - Analyze the different poems to gain an understanding of the meanings
  - Collect descriptive words that the students could use in their own writing - post on a word wall or have them write them into their own word books
  - Write own poetry about the various seasons and share them with the class
  - Write poetry in-role as an ant or a grasshopper about what life might be like during the changing seasons

## ***C. Music Activities***

---

### **Listening Unit**

Choose a selection of different music from forms including classical, rap, barbershop singing, and folk. Have the students listen to different pieces of music (for 2-3 minutes at a time)

- **Listen with eyes closed:** At the end of each selection, ask the students to describe what they heard. Try to encourage them to discuss the different sounds, tones, pitch, volume, and tempo.
- **Listen and colour:** Give each student a piece of paper (11x14) and have them lay their pencil crayons or felts out on their desks. Have them divide the paper into four parts and label each part according to the four styles of music chosen. Play the

selected pieces of different styles of music for 1-2 minutes each. Ask the students to colour anything that comes to mind in each section as they listen to the music. The colouring does not need to be structured in any way, but more importantly it should show how the different types of music affects each student individually. Afterwards, ask students to share their colourings and talk about how the music affected them.

- **Mind Map:** Choose a particular piece of music, and have students use colour and drawing to show what they hear in the music. Ask them to start on one side of the page as the music starts and move across the page in segments as the music progresses through the piece. Encourage students to make different marks and use variety in colour to show different kinds of sounds. For example:
  1. long, flowing lines of baby blue to show legato style in the music
  2. short, dotted marks of red to show staccatos in the music
  3. movements up the page to show crescendo and down to show decrescendo (with the colour intensity also increasing or decreasing)

After the music is over, ask the students to show their colour interpretation of the music and explain how the music inspired their work.

- **Listen and write:** From the listen and colour activity, discover what type of music is soothing to the students in your own class. Choose other pieces of music that are similar in style and play these pieces while the students are working on writing assignments. Ask the students to try and let the music act as a source of inspiration for writing; to open their minds and let the words flow.

### **Working Songs**

Many folk songs were composed to make work more fun and to add joy to days of completing mundane tasks. Through song, people also felt a sense of camaraderie with their fellow work mates and these songs added spirit to their working days. Choose a selection of working songs or chants and try some of the following activities:

- Study the historical roots of working songs and chants.
- Discuss the elements of the different songs and what made them appealing to the people who used them when working.
- Analyze the lyrics to understand the era in which they were used frequently.
- Post words that were associated with work (e.g. “donkey” was used to refer to a large winch on a sailing ship in the song “Donkey Riding”)
- Discuss how the songs have been carried on today and how their use may have changed (e.g. many people still enjoy singing these kinds of songs around campfires)
- **SING** different working songs. Create a presentation of working songs combined with art and actions/drama movements and present to another class or to the school.

Some working songs to try:

- The Ants Go Marching
- I’ve Been Working on the Railroad
- Donkey Riding
- Whistle While You Work
- Cockles and Mussels
- Momma’s Little Baby Loves Shortenin’ Bread
- Row, Row, Row Your Boat

## Activities to Try After the Play

### ***A: Drama and P.E. Activities***

---

1. **Slow Motion Movement:** Have the students use slow motion to exaggerate facial expressions, gestures, moving forward, backward, up, down. Give a theme for each movement activity, for example ask students to move in slow motion as in the play when the ants were saving the grasshopper from the cold. Try this activity after reading a story and choose a portion of the story to reenact. Afterwards, discuss how the students liked doing this activity and what parts were difficult or easy to do.
2. **Seed Growing:** This activity simulates the growth and change through the seasons. Choose a piece of music that begins soft and slow and gradually builds in volume and tempo. Play the piece of music for the students while they close their eyes and imagine that they are seeds growing into plants. Have the students lay on the floor curled up in a ball to simulate a seed. Ask them to move, change, and grow into a plant as the music moves, changes, and grows. This activity can be extended as the students can transform into the following elements:
  - Trees blowing in a summer breeze.
  - Autumn leaves falling, whirling and twirling from the trees.
  - Ants collecting food for their winter bounty.
  - Snowflakes gently falling from the sky.
  - Icicles forming on tree branches.
  - Snow whirling in the wind.
  - Ants in their colonies enjoying the fruits of their labour.
  - Hibernating animals going to sleep for the winter. (Curl back up on the floor as the music closes - transformation could occur again and the cycle restarts as they are now seeds ready for growing in the spring.)
3. **Hand Rainstorm** - as stated earlier in this guide

### ***B: Language Arts Activities***

---

**Recap and Writing:** After the students have seen the play, have a recap session where the students can review the play and talk about what they learned and what they liked about it. Once the students have had an opportunity to discuss the play, ask them to write the fable in their own words, or have them rewrite the fable with a different ending. Use the following questions to stimulate their thoughts for their writing:

- What was the moral of the story?
- What did you learn from the play?
- What were the roles of the ants?
- What was the role of the grasshopper?
- Why is it important to prepare for tomorrow (winter)?
- Is it possible to be both creative and productive at the same time?
- Why is it valuable for members of society to be talented in different ways?

**Writing-in-role:** Have the students write from one of the ants' or grasshoppers' perspective in the play. Ask them to think about questions while they are writing such as the following.

**Ant questions:**

- How did you feel when you were working hard while the grasshopper was singing and dancing?
- What was it like to work as part of a team?
- How did it feel to be prepared for winter?
- What did you think about grasshopper when he was asking for help?
- How did you feel about sharing your food from all of your hard work?

**Grasshopper questions:**

- While you were enjoying the beauty of the summer, how did you feel when the ants kept pestering you about collecting food for the winter?
- How did you feel when winter rolled around and you had no food to eat?
- What was it like to feel so cold that you had trouble speaking?
- How did it make you feel when the ants saved you and brought you to their home?
- What would you have done if the ants had not saved you?

**Questions for both:**

- How does the world look from your eyes?
- What would it be like to try a new job with which you were not familiar?
- What did you think about the way things worked out in the end?

**Story Map**

Brainstorm a list of all the places where the characters in the story went, and the main events which took place. For example,

- The ants working hard collecting food
- The grasshopper playing music and reciting poetry while the ants work
- The changes of autumn occur
- Winter comes
- The grasshopper is cold and hungry while the ants are warm and comfortable
- The grasshopper asks for help
- The ants eventually help the grasshopper
- The following summer the role reversal occurs
- Chaos takes over community
- The ants and the grasshopper agree to respect one another's roles

Ask the students to create their own map of the storyline including the above points or the ones brainstormed by the class. The maps should include a roadway that simulates the direction the story took. Have the students fill in the spaces along the roadway with pictures and key words to help retell the story. After the story maps are complete, ask students to share their maps and tell the class their own perspectives of the story. Post the story maps on a display board.



## Letter Writing

Have the students write letters to the Kaleidoscope players including questions and/or comments about the play. Also, have them include their own ideas about different options that they may have included in the story if they were in the writer's or director's spots.

*Example:*

*Dear Kaleidoscope Theatre:*

*I really had fun watching your play. I especially liked the part when the grasshopper was almost frozen and the ants went to save him. The actors did a really good job of moving in slow motion and making it look so real. Was it hard to move in slow motion? I was happy that our teacher read us the story before we saw the play but I definitely liked your ending better than the real story's ending. It was a much happier ending. I was thinking that maybe in your next play, you could make one of the ants a girl. Thank you for coming to our school and I hope that you come back again soon!*

*Sincerely,  
Jennifer Black*

## C. Music Activities

---

### Music Composition

This activity will give the students the opportunity to put their own words to music. Use the tunes from common songs and change the words to reflect the various happenings in the play. For example, working songs of the ants and/or songs talking about the beauty of the world from the grasshopper's perspective. Follow the process below to guide the students through this activity.

- Play the chosen tune for the students
- Clap the beat of the song as the students listen
- Find the strong beats and the weak beats
- Clap the melody of the song to establish the notes used (e.g. quarter, eighth, sixteenth notes). The timing of the notes will help the students to choose words that will fit in with the sound of the music. For example, each note can represent one syllable in a word.
- Write a poem using words that will fit with the notes used in the music. Ask the students to hum the tune to themselves as they are writing the poem. This will help them to choose words that will work.
- Ask students to share their poems (spoken first)
- Put the poems to the music and sing as a class

### Possible songs to use:

<b>Ant songs - ones with strong regimented beats</b>	<b>Grasshopper songs - softer, flowing songs</b>
She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain	On Top of Old Smoky
Freres Jacques	There's a Hole in My Bucket
Do Your Ears Hang Low?	Land of the Silver Birch
The Ants Go Marching	Fire's Burning
Alouette	Down By the Bay

## OTHER SUBJECT AREA IDEAS

### ***Science and Math Activities***

- Study insects - food webs, habits, habitats
- Study seasons and changes that occur in the different seasons
- Learn about winter activities for ants and grasshoppers
- Research different species of ants and grasshoppers
- Counting activities using 1's, 5's, 10's, 100's, and 1000's
- Sorting activities with food collected by the ants

### ***Social Studies Activities***

- Learn about different career opportunities
- Discuss the importance of different roles in society
- Look at how art enhances the character of a community - find examples in your own town/city and discuss the importance of art contributions to communities and schools.
- Research the changes that have occurred in society since the establishment of the grocery stores known today. How did they change people's need to prepare for winter?

### ***Art Activities***

- Explore colour and how colour changes with each season
- Draw creative pictures as described in the prologue of the play:  
Prologue: A movement landscape...the magical, miniature world of the insects.
- Recreate the set and characters of the play in a colourful poster to promote the play.
- Use image development strategies such as distortion, embellishment, or fragmentation to change the look of the characters in the play. Have students draw a caricature of their favourite character first to use as a base for transforming the character. These strategies can be found in more detail in the Fine Art IRP: K to 7, Appendix F - Glossary of Terms and Approaches.



### ***Kaleidoscope Theatre***

Kaleidoscope is a theatre dedicated to young audiences with an artistic mission to create and present original, innovative and relevant theatre that stimulates and inspires the minds and imaginations of its young audiences, using a style of presentation that emphasizes timeless and universal themes, is centred on the lives of young people, enhanced by the integration of visuals, music and movement.

Kaleidoscope regularly performs to, and in, schools and festivals throughout Canada with a season of mainstage productions and subsidiary programming in Victoria, and tours around the province, country, and even further abroad. In Spring 2001 the theatre was invited to tour its original adaptation of *The Ant & the Grasshopper* to South East Asia, and undertakes a National Tour of this play in Spring 2003 to the National Arts Centre (Ottawa), Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People (Toronto), and the Calgary International Children's Festival.

Kaleidoscope is the only professional theatre company on Vancouver Island that offers ongoing theatrical ventures designed specifically for youth and families, with full production values. Over the past 28 years Kaleidoscope has created and produced over 70 original plays/original adaptations, and delighted the imaginations of over 2.5 million children in BC, throughout Canada, and around the world.

*For more information, contact:*

Kaleidoscope Theatre  
204-556 Herald Street  
Victoria, BC V8W 1S6  
ph. 250/383-8124, fax. 250/383-8911  
1-800-811-5777  
info@kaleidoscope.bc.ca  
www.kaleidoscope.bc.ca