

# The Ant and the Grasshopper Notes

It was suggested on P4C.com that this Aesop's fable might lend itself to different endings. I have written four endings, of which **Ending one** is the original.

## Using drama or readers' theatre

The dialogues can be read around the class, performed as reader's theatre or performed as a drama. With young children, you can always read the parts yourself. Using drama, especially with younger children, I have found it useful to separate the acting from the reading which allows:

- the readers to concentrate on the words and the actors on the actions
- more parts to be available (acting is always very popular)

## Setting the scene

Decide which endings you want to use. Endings one, two and three go well together. One, two and four might be more suitable for an older group.

Say that you have brought a traditional tale that was originally written with a moral. Explain what a moral is.

Say that you have given the story several endings and removed the moral. You want your class to decide, for themselves, the moral for each ending. You might need to explain that they don't necessarily need to agree with the moral, in fact they might totally disagree with it or even think it is 'immoral' (this is especially important for ending two).

## A suggested way of exploring the story

1. Read/perform the main body of the story.
2. Read/perform your first chosen endings. One and two go well together.
3. Ask the class to decide what they think is the moral of each ending – they can do this individually, in pairs, or in small groups as you see fit.
4. List all the suggested morals on the board. See if you can group them into themes.
5. Ask people to decide whether they would agree or disagree with each set of morals and note the numbers agreeing and disagreeing alongside each (group of) moral(s).
6. At this point you could proceed in a variety of ways:
  - a) You could air some of the thinking behind the agreements and disagreements and then proceed as usual into the question formulation, selection and building.
  - b) You could first take a vote on which theme the class wants to explore and then proceed to questioning, selection and building.
  - c) Or you could select a moral that seems contentious because it has attracted more agreements and disagreements. Ask people to sit on one side of the class if they agree and

the other if they disagree with the moral. You can then run a discussion, perhaps (to start with) alternating between the two sides. You can allow people to change sides as long as they articulate why they have changed their mind. When arguments have been aired, you could even ask people to switch sides and see if they can articulate the opposite points of view.

7. Steps 2-6 can be repeated for other endings.

Alternatively, you could take another contentious moral and explore that as explained in 6c.

### **Strengths of this approach**

1. It can help a class that is having difficulty constructing philosophical questions. Morals offered often only require slight changes of wording in order to become philosophical questions.
2. You highlight in advance which morals/questions invoke the widest range of opinion and which might, therefore, be fruitful for further discussion. You also have the opportunity for modelling the giving of reasons for opposing points of view.
3. An active approach as explained in 6c can often bring a lot more people into the discussion, especially with children who find it difficult to sit in a circle and talk for long. For instance, I found it worked extremely well with a year 7 SEN group which includes some youngsters who don't even want to be in school. More of them engaged in discussion and reasoning than previously and some were prepared to change their mind as a result of hearing other arguments.

### **Some examples of morals that have provided vigorous debate**

- It's OK to pinch things if people won't share
- Don't say no to someone bigger than you
- You get what you deserve (the ants had it coming to them because they didn't have a good work/life balance!)
- You should have to work for your food to survive the winter.