

THE ANTS AND THE GRASSHOPPER

THE SEQUEL

by Dave Armstrong



It was a cold winter's night. A southerly gale was blowing up from Antarctica. Every creature in the bush was freezing — except the ants. The ants were safe and warm inside their colony, and they had plenty to eat.

It had been different during the summer. While the ants gathered food and insulated their colony, all the other creatures relaxed in the sun and enjoyed themselves. It felt as if the good times would never end.

“Hey, ants. Lighten up and come and eat with us,” said the huhu grubs as they feasted on dead wood.

“Sorry, can't stop now,” replied the ants.

“Chill out and enjoy the sun,” said the wētā as he lazed on a log. “You won't get the chance in winter.”

“No time,” said the ants. “There's work to do.”

“Check out all the amazing flowers and plants,” said the wasps as they buzzed from place to place.

“Out of the question,” replied the ants. “We know which plants we need to check out – the ones that can be stored for us to eat in winter.”

The grasshopper was not interested in gathering food. He lay in the hot sun and rubbed his legs together to make music.

“We're preparing for winter, and so should you,” said the ants to the grasshopper.

The grasshopper laughed. “Plenty of time for that,” he said. “Sit down and take it easy. Listen to these beautiful sounds.”





Now, only a few months later, the bedraggled grasshopper pounded at the entrance to the ant colony.

“Let me in! Let me in! It’s freezing out here.”

“Why should we let you in?” replied the ants. “You spent the entire summer doing nothing but making music. When we advised you to prepare for winter, you laughed.”

“But if you don’t let me in, I could die!”

“That is not really our problem,” said the ants. They went back to enjoying a particularly delicious dead bug that had rotted into a pleasant soup.

The wind blew even harder. Snow began to fall.

“I’ll do anything you want,” pleaded the grasshopper.

“Just let me in.”

The ants sighed. It was so typical of grasshoppers to behave this way.

“But what can you offer us?” asked the ants. “Are there any services you can provide?”



“I can play music.”

“That’s no good to us. Anything else?”

The grasshopper thought very hard.

“I can hop.”

“That’s even less useful than playing music.”

The grasshopper thought of all the things he could do that might interest the ants.

“I can serve you food. I can fix your roof if it leaks. I can stay awake and keep watch while you all sleep.”

The ants discussed the issue among themselves.

It might be useful having a grasshopper around to provide some extra labour.

“Very well,” said the ants.

“You can spend the winter with us.”

The grateful grasshopper leapt with joy. Then he came in and immediately began munching on a juicy leaf. “It’s so lovely and warm in here, and there’s food!” he exclaimed.

“You can eat later,” said the ants. “Now get to work. No wasting time, no fun, and most of all, no music.”

“No music at all,” replied the grasshopper obediently.



So, all that winter, the grasshopper worked for the ants. He was their waiter while they feasted on the food they had gathered in summer. He kept watch over the ants while they slept. And when the roof of the ant colony leaked, the grasshopper hopped up and fixed it. The grasshopper had never worked so hard in his life. But in return, he kept warm and received enough food to stay alive.



When summer finally came, the grasshopper was exhausted, but he was alive. As the ants started work, preparing for the next winter, the grasshopper lay down and rubbed his legs together to make music.

“Ah, the sound of summer!” cried the huhu grubs. “What great music. Why not come and play at our party next week? We’re celebrating the beginning of summer.”

“I’d love to,” replied the grasshopper.

The ants looked at each other with disapproval. Some creatures were beyond help – always relying on others and never bothering to help themselves.

But then the grasshopper said something unexpected. “So what will you pay me for making music at your party?”

The huhu grubs looked up with surprise. “Pay you? But you love making music.”

“True, but if I make music for free, I’ll have no food or shelter next winter.”

The huhu grubs had a quick conference. “Perhaps we could trade some food that we’ve collected.”

“That would be wonderful,” the grasshopper smiled. “But don’t give all the food to me,” he continued. “Give some of it to the ants.”

The ants couldn’t believe what they were hearing.

“But you did all that work,” they said, confused.

“You’ve already paid for your food and shelter.”

“I know,” said the grasshopper. “But you saved my life and taught me a very good lesson. You can have some of the food that the huhu grubs collect, too. Let’s just call it interest.”



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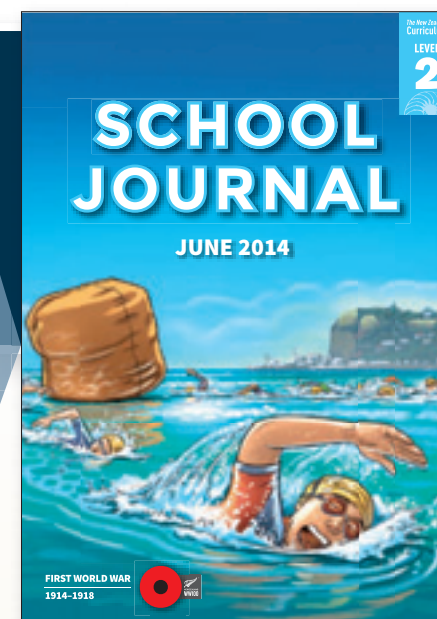
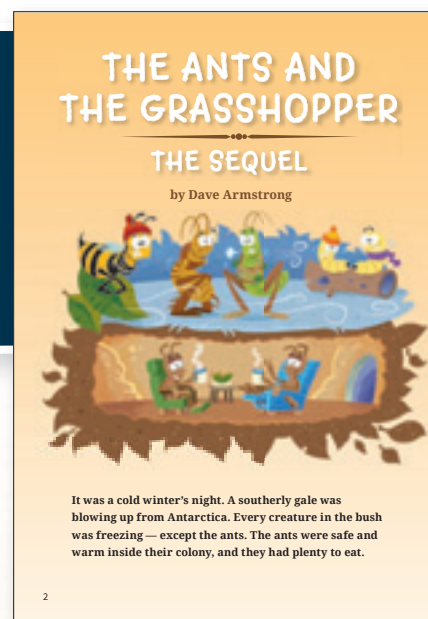
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