

The Ant and the Cricket

A fable is a story, often with animals as characters, that conveys a moral. This poem about an ant and a cricket contains an idea of far-reaching significance, which is as true of a four-legged cricket as of a 'two-legged one'. Surely, you have seen a cricket that has two legs!

A silly young cricket, accustomed to sing
Through the warm, sunny months of gay summer and spring,
Began to complain when he found that, at home,
His cupboard was empty, and winter was come.

Not a crumb to be found
On the snow-covered ground;
Not a flower could he see,
Not a leaf on a tree.

“Oh! what will become,” says the cricket, “of me?”

At last by starvation and famine made bold,
All dripping with wet, and all trembling with cold,
Away he set off to a miserly ant,

To see if, to keep him alive, he would grant

Him shelter from rain,
And a mouthful of grain.
He wished only to borrow;
He'd repay it tomorrow;

If not, he must die of starvation and sorrow.





Says the ant to the cricket, "I'm your servant and friend,

But we ants never borrow; we ants never lend.

But tell me, dear cricket, did you lay nothing by

When the weather was warm?" Quoth the cricket, "Not I!

My heart was so light
That I sang day and night,
For all nature looked gay."

"You sang, Sir, you say?"

Go then," says the ant, "and dance the winter away."

Thus ending, he hastily lifted the wicket,
And out of the door turned the poor little cricket.
Folks call this a fable. I'll warrant it true:
Some crickets have four legs, and some have two.

adapted from *Aesop's Fables*

glossary

accustomed to sing: used to singing; in the habit of singing

famine: scarcity of food; having nothing to eat

lay nothing by: save nothing

quoth: (old English) said

working with the poem

1. The cricket says, “Oh! what will become of me?” When does he say it, and why?
2. (i) Find in the poem the lines that mean the same as “Neither a borrower nor a lender be” (Shakespeare).
(ii) What is your opinion of the ant’s principles?
3. The ant tells the cricket to “dance the winter away”. Do you think the word ‘dance’ is appropriate here? If so, why?
4. (i) Which lines in the poem express the poet’s comment? Read them aloud.
(ii) Write the comment in your own words.

If you know a fable in your own language, narrate it to your classmates.

Answers to Questions on page 9.

- (a) American Declaration of Independence.
- (b) Wilbur and Orville Wright made the first flight, remaining in the air for 12 seconds and covering 120 feet.
- (c) Hiroshima Day: an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan on this day.
- (d) Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.
- (e) Yuri A. Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth.
- (f) Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the Moon.