

Focus Question:

What makes ants awesome?

Book Summary

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational

In the millions of years that ants have crawled on the Earth, they have become some of the most fascinating and amazing insects. Informative and entertaining, *Awesome Ants* gives students a look into the intricate lives of ants. Detailed photographs provide up-close views of everything awesome about ants, from communication through scents and vibration to their underground activities. The book can also be used to identify main idea and supporting details.

The book and lesson are also available for levels N and Q.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Ask and answer questions to understand text
- ☐ Identify main idea and details in a text
- ☐ Describe information provided by labels
- ☐ Recognize and use the conjunctions *and* and *but*
- ☐ Identify synonyms and antonyms

Materials

- ☐ Book: *Awesome Ants* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Main idea and details, conjunctions, synonyms and antonyms worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

• Words to Know

Story critical: *antennae* (n.), *colony* (n.), *communicate* (v.), *insects* (n.), *mandibles* (n.), *sensors* (n.)

Enrichment: *cultivate* (v.), *scavenge* (v.), *species* (n.)

- **Academic vocabulary:** *allow* (v.), *different* (adj.), *instead* (adv.), *protect* (v.), *release* (v.), *through* (prep.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students about their encounters with ants. Encourage them to explain where and when they have seen ants and what they know on the basis of these experiences. Record their responses on the board.
- Show students the cover of the book and read the title. Explain that this book is about the life of ants. Ask students what they think the author's opinion of ants might be on the basis of the title. Guide students to provide questions they may have about the book on the basis of what they have seen so far. Record these questions on the board.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *Awesome Ants*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).
- Preview the table of contents on page 3. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of the book. Ask students what they expect to read about in the book, on the basis of what they see in the table of contents. (Accept all answers that students can justify.)

Introduce the Reading Strategy:

Ask and answer questions

Explain to students that engaged readers ask and answer questions while they are reading and that one way to organize this information is to use a KWLS chart. Display a KWLS chart on the board. Have students look at the cover of the book and call on students to share information that would fit in the *K* section of the chart. Write student responses on the chart. Invite students to preview the photographs in the book with a partner to create questions about ants. Have students share, then record these questions

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

in the *W* section on the chart. Point out that, as students read, they should look for answers to these questions as well as create new questions to add to the chart.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Main idea and details

- Explain to students that a book has a general topic that is called the *main idea* and that the extra information or descriptions that help readers better understand the topic are the *details*. Point out to students that both the main idea and the details are needed in order to fully understand and enjoy a book.
- Explain that sometimes information in nonfiction text is divided into sections and each section contains a main idea and supporting details. Invite students to review the table of contents. Point out that the title of each section often provides information or clues about the main idea. Have students turn to a partner and discuss their predictions for the main idea of each section in the book. Remind students that identifying the main idea and supporting details of each section will help them to better understand and to enjoy the book.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the “Words to Know” box on the copyright page. Discuss each word with students. Then, have students turn to the glossary on page 16. Explain that the glossary provides definitions for the vocabulary words in the book. Point out the use of each content word and academic vocabulary word in the book, and then use each word in a different model sentence. Have students work in groups to create posters for these words. Have them include on each poster the word and its part of speech, the definition, the word in an example sentence, and a picture illustrating the meaning of the word.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about ants. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- Which details support the idea that ants have been able to adapt to their environments? (level 1) page 4

- How are the bodies of ants unique? How are they similar to other insects? (level 2) pages 5–8
- How are an ant’s mandibles its most important feature? (level 1) page 6
- In what ways are ants able to communicate? (level 2) pages 9–10
- How do the different roles of ants help create one big, happy family? (level 2) pages 11–13
- Why is the role of the queen important in the colony? (level 2) pages 12 and 13
- How do ants help the environment? (level 1) page 15
- How does being social insects help ants survive? (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Labels

Explain that labels clarify a photograph or illustration by identifying specific parts of the picture. Have students work with a partner to review the photograph on page 5 and its labels. Ask students: *How do the labels in the photograph support the main idea of this section? How do labels clarify visual information? Why are labels important tools for classifying objects?* Have students review other photographs in the book and discuss in groups where they would add labels and why. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Skill Review

- Have students refer back to the KWLS chart on the board. Ask students to review their questions recorded prior to reading the book. Have them circle any questions that were answered and record this information in the *L* section of the chart. Ask students to share what they learned with a partner. Have students share new questions and write them in the *W* section of the chart. Point out that effective readers continually create new questions as they are reading in order to stay engaged with the text.
- Review with students the idea that every book contains a main idea, or what the book is mostly about. Reinforce that each section of a book also contains a main idea and supporting details.
- Model identifying main idea and details.
Think-aloud: *The book is providing me with many details about ants’ lives: how they communicate, how they build colonies, and so on. I know that the main idea of the book is that ants are fascinating and amazing insects. Each section of the book supports this main idea, and each contains its own main idea and supporting details. For example, the main idea of the section “A Little History” is that ants have been able to survive for millions of years because of their bodies and how they live. Details that support the main idea include that ants were alive during the time of dinosaurs and that ants live on every continent except Antarctica. Pausing*

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

to identify the main idea and supporting details of each section helps me remember and understand what I have read.

- Have students work in small groups to reread the section “Body Parts” and identify the main idea and three supporting details. Invite groups to share their findings with the class.
- Model how to complete the [main-idea-and-details worksheet](#). Have students identify details from the book and circle them.

After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer: **Main idea and details**

Review the main-idea-and-details worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work in groups. Invite volunteers to share with the rest of the class the details they chose.

Comprehension Extension

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided for extension activities.

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Answers will vary. Reasons should include characteristics that make ants amazing. Sample: *Ants are about 100 million years old and were living during the time of dinosaurs, they can carry over twenty times their weight, they hear through vibrations, and they can create bridges with their bodies to cross over water.*)

Comprehension Checks

- [Book quiz](#)
- [Retelling rubric](#)

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: **Conjunctions and, but**

- Explain that a *conjunction* is a word that links and relates two parts of a sentence together. Discuss with students that the words *and* and *but* are examples of conjunctions.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Ants don't have ears, but they have the ability to detect sound by feeling vibrations through their legs.* Beneath this sentence, record the following: *Ants don't have ears. They have the ability to detect sound by feeling vibrations through their legs.*

Read each sentence aloud to students. Have them turn to a partner and discuss why the author might choose to link the sentences together rather than have two repetitive sentences. Invite students to share their insights.

- Reread page 11 with students and have them identify the sentence containing the conjunction *but*. Invite them to turn to a partner and create two separate sentences from the sentence containing the conjunction. Discuss as a class why the author chose to use a conjunction rather than two separate sentences.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students reread page 12 independently and underline the sentences containing a conjunction. Invite students to share their findings with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [conjunctions worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: **Synonyms and antonyms**

- Write the word *strong* on the board and read it aloud with students. Ask them to suggest a word that means almost the same thing as *strong*. Explain that a word that means the same or almost the same as another word is called a *synonym*. Write the word *synonym* on the board and have students read it aloud. Then have students offer words that mean the opposite of strong. Explain that a word that means the opposite of another word is called an *antonym*. Write the word *antonym* on the board and have students read it aloud.
- Write the following words on sentence strips: *tiny, different, many, old, large*. Invite volunteers to hold the sentence strips and stand in the front of the room. Invite students to line up behind a student holding the sentence strip when they have a synonym or antonym to share. Have each student identify whether his or her word is a synonym or antonym when he or she shares with the class, and have students give a thumbs-up signal if the student is correct.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in pairs to use a thesaurus to identify synonyms and antonyms for the following words: *tiny, strong, easy*. Invite students to share their findings with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [synonyms-and-antonyms worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.