

Respond to the word!

Level: All

Age: 4-12

Organization: whole class, groups

Aims: To be reminded of a story through listening attentively and responding to specific words; to develop concentration skills; (to scan a text for key words).

Language focus: *In the example: ant, grasshopper, work, play, food*

Alternatives: any key words in the story chosen

Materials: *Essential:* a copy of the story for you, e.g. The ant and the grasshopper, a version of Aesop's fable / *Optional:* a copy of the story for each child

The Ant and the Grasshopper

One summer day, there was an ant and a grasshopper in a field. The ant worked very hard collecting food for winter and the grasshopper played. The ant said, 'Grasshopper, why do you play all the time? You should work and collect food for winter like me.' The grasshopper laughed and said, 'I don't like work. It's much more fun to play. I can work and collect food tomorrow'.

Every day of summer was the same. The ant worked and worked collecting food for the winter. The grasshopper played and played. He didn't collect any food. Soon it was winter. There was snow in the field and it was very cold. The grasshopper went to see the ant and said, 'Hello ant. I'm hungry and it's cold. Please share your food with me.' The ant said, 'No, grasshopper. Sorry. You had a chance to work and collect food in the summer. But you only played. I collected food for myself. I don't have any food for you.' The grasshopper walked away sadly and thought, 'Oh, dear. What a fool I am! In the summer I played and played. Why didn't I work like the ant? Where can I find food now?'

Procedure

1. Use this activity to remind children of a story they have already listened to once. Select key words that are repeated several times in the story, e.g. *ant*, *grasshopper*, *work*, *play*, *food*.
2. Divide the children into five groups and assign one word to each group. Teach the children to respond to the words they have been assigned in the following way:

In response to ant children should say: busy, busy, busy

In response to grasshopper: hop, hop, hop

In response to food: yum, yum, yum

In response to play or played: hee, hee, hee

In response to work or worked: sigh, sigh, sigh.

3. Say, *Ant!* / *Food!* etc. in random order and practise getting the children to respond in chorus with their group quickly and rhythmically.
4. Explain that you are going to tell the story again. Ask the groups to listen and respond every time they hear their word in the story. Put a slight emphasis on the words at first.
5. Ask the children how many times they think they heard their word in the story and listen to their response. Either tell the children the answer or, with older children, if you have copies of the story, ask them to scan the text to find and underline their words and then count them to check the answer (grasshopper 8; ant 8; food 10; work 8; play 8) This can then act as a lead-in to further detailed comprehension work on the story.

Comments and Suggestions

- This activity is an enjoyable way of retelling a story. As children respond to the key language by saying their three words in a rhythmic way, the effect can be dramatic as well as humorous.
- As a variation, children can respond to key words or names of characters in the story with mimes or actions instead of verbal responses. When retelling *Little Red Riding Hood*, for example, the children can be divided into three groups: for *wolf* they make a pouncing action, for *Little Red Riding Hood* they pretend to hold a basket and skip on the spot, and for *Granny* they pretend to knit.