Activities

The Magic School Bus Gets Ants in Its Pants

Grades: PreK–K, 1–2, 3–5

Overview

Kids make a temporary home for ants by putting soil in a jar and scooping up part of an anthill, then covering the jar with black paper. Once each day they remove the paper to observe the ant activity. They put the ants back outside a week later; what happens then?
Field Trip Notes

What project can Ms. Frizzle’s class do for the Science Fair? How about a movie about an ant colony? Keesha is the director in search of a star for the show. When the class shrinks and travels through an anthill, she finds ants doing different tasks. But no one ant seems right for the starring role. By the end of the field trip, the kids discover that ants communicate and work together to help one another live. All the ants are stars!

Be Observ-ANT

What’s the best way to get to know ants better? The Magic School Bus kids try working with the ants. They watch the ants and figure out what they’re doing. Your kids can observe ants doing some tasks by making them a temporary indoor home.

What You Need

- one-quart (or larger) glass jar
- shovel
- anthill
- piece of aluminum foil
- rubber bands or tape
- black construction paper
- cotton ball soaked with sugar water
- bits of fruit or honey-soaked bread
- copies of BE OBSERV-ANT page
Talk About It  Ask children:
What do you think the ants will need to do in their indoor home?

What To Do
• Scoop up part of an anthill and put the soil and ants in the jar. Make sure these are not fire ants or other ants that can hurt you.
• Cover the top of the jar with the foil and secure with a rubber band. Punch pin holes in the foil.
• Put black construction paper around the jar to give the ants a dark environment. Secure the paper with tape or rubber bands.
• Put the cotton ball on the soil. Ask kids: What do you think the ants will do with this sugar watersoaked cotton?
• Place food pieces on the soil. Ask kids: What do you think the ants will do with this food? Put the cover back on the jar.
• Remove the black paper each day so small groups of kids can observe the ants. Keep the ant home for a week, then return the ants to where you got them.

Next Stop
Observe ants outside. Kids can place pieces of honey-soaked bread nearby and see how the ants react.

Subjects:
Biology, Insects, Science, Observation, Communication
Be Observ-Ant

Observe
Write about things you see the ants doing.

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

How are the ants helping one another?

On the back, draw a picture of one thing you saw the ants doing.