

Grade VIII

Lesson 1. The Ant and the Cricket

Poetry

Soul of the Poem

There was a cricket that sang and danced all through the pleasant months of summer and spring. However, when the winter arrived, he became desperate and began to complain. He hadn't saved anything and there was no food at home. Even in the spaces beyond his home, he couldn't find anything that would sustain him. He became worried, not knowing what would become of him and decided to go and meet the ant.

Neither having food nor shelter, he wanted to meet the ant to seek its help. Explaining his situation and circumstances, the cricket requested the ant to give him food and shelter. He also told the ant that if the ant refused to help him, he would die. The ant felt sorry for him, but told him that ants neither borrowed nor lent. The ant asked him what he did during the warm weather. The cricket replied that he sang and danced. The ant asked him to sing and dance through the winter too.

The poet ends the poem with the moral that some human beings are like the cricket, who save nothing for the bad weather. And, therefore, the tale is not a fable but the truth.

Stanzawise Explanation of The Poem

Stanza 1

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.

Reference : The above lines have been taken from the poem, 'The Ant and the Cricket' which is composed by Aesop.

Context : The poet in these lines shows how the happy months of summer flew away in no time. With the coming of winter, the cricket realizes the time which he has lost, which was meant for work.

Explanation : There was a young and silly cricket. He used to spend all his time in singing in the warm summer and spring months. Not realizing, that these months were also meant for work because with the arrival of winter, finding food would become difficult. Therefore, summer and spring were meant for storing food also. But, the cricket spent all the time in vain during the happy months and now his cupboards were entirely empty.

Stanza 2

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?"

Reference : Same as above

Context : The poet in these lines showcases how the cricket had nothing within the house or outside to sustain himself. As he has wasted the summer and spring months only in singing, not working at all.

Explanation : The cricket realizes that the ground was covered with snow and there was not even a crumb to be found. Nor could he see any flowers or leaves on the trees. There was perpetually nothing to eat within the house or outside. He became desperate not knowing what to eat and how to survive. "What will become of me?"

Stanza 3

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

Reference : Same as above

Context : In these lines, the poet depicts how the cricket had to forego his self esteem and go begging before the ant.

Explanation : The cricket was starving due to famine, hunger and no resources to sustain himself during the cold months of winter. The winter had taken a toll of his health. He also had no shelter. He, therefore, set out to meet a miserly ant, hoping that the ant may help him with something that would keep him alive.

Stanza 4

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.

Reference : Same as above.

Context : The poet highlights the cricket's need to borrow grain to keep himself alive.

Explanation : The cricket approaches the ant to seek his help for shelter. The rains made it difficult for the cricket to protect himself from the wet surroundings. He also needed some grains or food to combat hunger and starvation. He informed the ant that whatever help he would take, he would repay it soon. Else, his end had come. He would die of starvation.

Stanza 5

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!

Reference : Same as above

Context : The poet shares the ant's sense of shock that the cricket didn't save anything for winter during the happy months of summer and spring.

Explanation : The ant feels sorry for the cricket. But he tells cricket that the ants never borrow or lend. Perhaps, that is the reason that the ants are self sufficient and need not go begging. The ant asks the cricket if he didn't put aside anything in storage for the winter, when there is nothing much to be found. The cricket answered in the negative. The ant was quite surprised and shocked.

Stanza 6

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"

Reference : Same as above.

Context : The poet shows how the cricket gets mocked by the ant because of his won stupidity.

Explanation : The cricket tells the ant that he was so happy during the happy months of summer that he sang day and night. He was so happy and the nature looked so pleasant that he forgot all about the winter or the difficult times. Hearing this, the ant told him that now he should spend the winter singing and dancing too. The ant tells the cricket that there's no point crying over spilt milk.

Stanza 7

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.

Reference : Same as above.

Context : In the final lines of the poem the poet shares the moral or lesson with his readers.

Explanation : The ant gets irritated and asks the cricket to leave. Those who do not wish to help themselves cannot be saved by others. The poet in the final couplet of the poem tells his readers that though this tale is believed to be a fable, it is no less than truth. Poet calls this the truth because what is true for the four legged cricket is also true for the two legged humans.

NCERT Corner

Working with the Poem

1. The cricket says, "Oh! What will become of me?" When does he say it, and why?

The cricket says, "Oh! What will become of me?" when he realises that the winter had arrived. He says this because he realises that there was no food to be found either in the house or outside.

2. (i) Find in the poem the lines that mean the same as "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" (Shakespeare)

We ants never borrow; we ants never lend."

(ii) What is your opinion of the ant's principles?

The ant's principles seem quite fair. The ants are self sufficient and they have managed to do so because of sheer hard work. They consume what is required and store the remaining. Therefore, they are never required to borrow. For the same reasons, they do not wish to lend because that might lead to depletion of their resources.

3. The ant tells the cricket to "dance the winter away". Do you think the word 'dance' is appropriate here? If so, why?

Yes, the word 'dance' seems quite appropriate in used in a sarcastic manner these lines. The cricket had fun during the happy and pleasant months of summer. The ant tells him that he might as well have fun in the winter, without any food or shelter.

4. (i) Which lines in the poem express the poet's comment? Read them aloud.

"Folks call this a fable. I'll warrant it true
Some crickets have four legs and some
have two."

(ii) Write the comment in your own words.

These lines state that for many this is just a fictional tale with animal characters. However, the problem faced by the cricket is something that makes it true especially for humans. Like the cricket, humans too forget to save for the difficult times.

Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. When did the cricket realise a change in his circumstances?

The cricket realised a change in his circumstances when he saw that his cupboards were empty and the winter had come.

2. Why is the adjective 'gay' used to describe summer and spring?

The adjective 'gay' is used to describe summer and spring because these were the warm and sunny months and food was to be found in abundance. There was no shortage of any kind.

3. What all did the cricket seek from the ant?

The cricket asked for shelter and a handful of grain from the ant in order to survive.

4. The ant refuses to help the cricket because of a principle. What is that principle?

Ans. The ants neither borrow nor lend.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Describe the sufferings of the cricket.

The cricket suffered a great deal as the winter set in. He realised that he had no food. His cupboards were empty. Even the nature had nothing to offer. There were no flowers or leaves on the trees. The cricket was starving under these circumstances and felt that he might die if the ant refuses to help.

2. How different are the ant and the cricket from each other?

The ant called himself a friend of the cricket. However, both the friends were very different from each other. The cricket was silly and foolish. He did no work during the summer and the spring and didn't store anything for the winter. The ant, on the other hand, worked according to principles. He worked hard during the summer and the spring and created a store house on which he could depend during the winter.

3. Does the poet criticise the ant for his unhelpful behaviour?

The poet doesn't say anything about the ant, except that the ant was a miserly ant, but he surely doesn't glorify the cricket's behaviour. Through the cricket's example, he extends the moral of the tale. Human beings should work hard and save for the bad times rather than depending on the others. The critique of cricket's ways doesn't justify ant's unhelpful behaviour, but it surely details that ant's way of living was better than that of the cricket.

Value based Questions

1. Discuss the moral lesson imparted by the poem.

The poem showcases how the cricket is left with nothing to sustain itself as it spent all the time in merry making without worrying about the future.

In order to sustain itself, it is now dependent on begging and asking for merry of fellow creatures like that of the ant.

Extract Based Questions

Extract 1

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.

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.

1. Who sang day and night?

- (a) The poet (b) The cricket (c) The ant (d) The singer
(b) The cricket

2. Who saved nothing for the winter?

- (a) The poet (b) The cricket (c) The ant (d) The singer
(b) The cricket

3. What does the ant tell the cricket to do?

- (a) Dance (b) Sing (c) Die (d) Beg
(a) Dance

4. Why did the ant ask the cricket to “dance the winter away”?

The ant asked the cricket to dance the winter away because all through the winter he had done nothing but had fun. He might as well have fun in the winter too.

5. What were the consequences of the cricket’s actions during the warm weathers?

The consequence of the cricket’s actions during the warm weather were that during winter he had no food, no shelter and he was starving.

6. Explain the meaning of the phrase, “lay nothing by.”

“Lay nothing by” means saved nothing. This is the questions that the ant asked the cricket.

Exact 2

Directions (Q.Nos. 1-6) Read the extract given below and answer the following questions.

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 he could se,

Not a leaf on a tree.

Oh! What will become, say the cricket, of me?

1. What does the poet call the cricket?

- a. Silly b. Gay c. Foolish d. Empty

Both 'a' and 'c'

2. The word 'accustomed' means?

- a. Habituated b. Uncomfortable c. Favourite d. Forgetful

a. Habituated

3. What emotion to these lines indicate?

- a. Happiness b. Worry c. Horror d. Humour

a. Habituated

3. What emotion do these lines indicate?

- a. Happiness b. Worry c. Horror d. Humour

b. Worry

4. Why does the poet call the cricket silly?

The poet called the cricket silly because he hadn't saved anything for the winter.

5. Where all did the cricket look for food?

The cricket looked for food in his cupboards. But the cupboard was empty. He also couldn't find anything on the trees or the ground outside.

6. What was the weather during the winter?

During the winter, the ground was covered with snow. Also, there were rains.



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