

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: “The Grasshopper and the Ant” by Jean de La Fontaine

Ideas, Values: Cause, Custom & Convention, Friendship, Justice, Opposition

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Write the word *friend* on a large piece of paper and discuss with the entire family group what it means to be a friend. Ask each person to describe one thing that a true friend does which makes him or her a friend. List those actions on the paper along with the original term.

1st Read:

Read the poem aloud while family and/or friends listen. Check for any words that are unknown, to talk about them after you finish reading the poem (see below). Explain that this is the French version of an old fable that also appears in Aesop and (if there are young children in the group) consider showing one of the many cartoon versions of the story).

Vocabulary:

Discuss the unfamiliar words in the poem. Explain what they mean, figure them out from the sentence, or look them up in a dictionary. Be sure to include the following words in your discussion: *gay,* *morsel, saith, bound, quoth, dame, comer*. Provide definitions for archaic terms as needed (*saith, quoth, dame*).

2nd Read:

Have someone else read the poem aloud while two of the family members act out the roles of the ant and the grasshopper. Have adults model for young children as necessary.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
* Based on this fable, is the ant being a true friend to the grasshopper? (vote by show of hands and record votes)
* Why or why not? (spontaneous discussion)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
* What has the grasshopper been doing all summer? Do her summer actions have any practical value?
* According to the tale, the grasshopper offers to repay the loan of wheat “on an animal’s faith, / Double weight in the pound / Ere the harvest be bound”? What do you think the grasshopper means? Do you believe her?
* At the end of the fable, the ant tells the grasshopper she “must dance” for her food. What does he mean by this?
* If the ant and grasshopper are friends (line 15), why does the ant make the grasshopper dance for her food?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
* Is the ant being a true friend to the grasshopper? (again vote by show of hands) Did you change your mind from the first time you voted? Why or why not?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Return to the list of things that friends do (from the *Big Ideas Chat*). Discuss as an entire family whether the ant and the grasshopper really are friends, emphasizing the things that the two characters do and say.

* Writing:

After reading and discussing “The Grasshopper and the Ant” by Jean De La Fontaine, rewrite the story so that it reflects how you think friends should treat each other.

As a group, look back at the list of things friend do and discuss how they could be incorporated into the story of “The Grasshopper and the Ant.” Don’t forget to think about how both characters could be better friends.

Now, have everyone write and share their new versions of the story.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

“The Grasshopper and the Ant”

Jean de La Fontaine

A Grasshopper gay  
Sang the summer away,  
And found herself poor  
By the winter's first roar.

Of meat or of bread,  
Not a morsel she had!  
So a begging she went,  
To her neighbour the ant,  
For the loan of some wheat,  
Which would serve her to eat,  
Till the season came round.  
'I will pay you,' she saith,  
'On an animal's faith,  
Double weight in the pound  
Ere the harvest be bound.'  
The ant is a friend  
(And here she might mend)  
Little given to lend.  
'How spent you the summer?'  
Quoth she, looking shame  
At the borrowing dame.  
'Night and day to each comer  
I sang, if you please.'  
'You sang! I'm at ease;  
For 'tis plain at a glance,  
Now, ma'am, you must dance.'

Translated from French by Elizur Wright in 1841. (Source - http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7241/7241-h/7241-h.htm )