Name: _____ Date: _____

The Grasshopper's Summer

Reading level 9 (5th grade) · 684 words

The meadow was at its best in the middle of summer. Bees hummed in the clover, and the long grass swayed in the warm wind. A brook ran past, bright as a ribbon, and on a tall stalk beside it sat Grasshopper, tuning his little fiddle and humming to himself while the sun climbed higher.

Grasshopper loved music more than anything else in the world. He played for the butterflies, and they fluttered in time. He played for the daisies, and they nodded their heads. When he finished a song, he bowed low to the whole meadow, and the crickets in the hedge clapped their legs together as loudly as they could.

Not far away, a long line of ants was marching through the grass. Each ant carried a heavy grain of wheat or a seed twice as big as her head. They climbed up a bumpy path and over every pebble, and one by one they vanished into a small round hole in the ground, as if the earth had swallowed them.

"Hello, friends!" called Grasshopper. "Put down those heavy things and come to my concert. It is far too lovely a day for carrying, and the sun is warm." The last ant in the line stopped and wiped her forehead with one tiny leg. "I would love to," she said kindly. "But there is simply no time to spare today."

"We are filling our storehouse before the cold comes," she explained. Grasshopper laughed so hard that he nearly dropped his fiddle. "The cold? It is the middle of summer! You worry far too much, little ant. This meadow is full of good things to eat, and it always has been, for as long as anyone can remember."

The ant only shrugged and hurried after her sisters. Grasshopper went on playing, and the summer went on being warm and sunny and long. Day after day he nibbled whatever was nearest. Day after day the ants came and went with their loads, and their storehouse deep under the hill grew fuller with every trip.

Then, little by little, the wind began to change. The mornings grew chilly, and the clover turned brown and dry. One by one the flowers closed, the bees went home, and the brook slowed to a trickle. Grasshopper played a little less, because his fingers felt stiff, but he did not think about it much.

One gray morning he woke up, and the whole meadow was white. Snow had fallen softly in the night and covered every stone, every stalk and every leaf. Grasshopper hunted under every leaf for a seed or a crumb, but the ground was hard and frozen. His fiddle was silent, and his stomach made a long, sad grumble.

He trudged through the drifts until he saw a small door in the side of a hill. Smoke curled from a chimney, and warm yellow light shone through a tiny window. With cold, shaking knuckles he knocked. "Please," he said, "I am so hungry. Could you spare me just a little something to eat, even a crust?"

The ant from the meadow opened the door. "Well, if it isn't our musician," she said. "What were you doing all summer, while we worked?" Grasshopper looked down at his feet. "Playing music," he said quietly. "Then you can dance now, to keep warm," she answered, and she did not smile at all, not even a little.

Grasshopper's ears drooped, because he knew she was right. But the ant's face softened when she saw him shiver. "Come inside before you freeze," she said. "Our storehouse is full, and there is plenty for a guest." She led him down a stair to a snug room with a crackling fire and a row of little beds.

That night the ants gave Grasshopper warm soup and fresh bread, and he played his fiddle for them by the fire. They tapped their feet and swayed, and the whole hill felt happy. Grasshopper promised himself that when summer came, he would gather a store of his own, and he would still make time for music.

Questions

1. Where did Grasshopper play his fiddle?

A. In a barn
B. Inside the ants' house
C. On a tall stalk by a brook

2. What were the ants doing all summer?

A. Dancing
B. Filling their storehouse
C. Sleeping in the sun

3. What changed the meadow at the end of the summer?

A. The weather turned cold and snowy
B. A flood
C. A big storm

4. What does "snug" mean in this story?

A. Warm and cozy
B. Cold and dark
C. Big and empty

5. What does this fable show about the summer?

A. It lasts forever

B. It is only for playing

C. It is the time to get ready for hard days

Words to know

storehouse: food room

tuning: getting notes right

stalk: plant stem

drifts: piles of snow

snug: small and cozy

Answer key: The Grasshopper's Summer

1. C. On a tall stalk by a brook
2. B. Filling their storehouse
3. A. The weather turned cold and snowy
4. A. Warm and cozy
5. C. It is the time to get ready for hard days