



Play  
School

# Story Time

PlayWorld

## Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Luke and Enzo Carroll share 'The March of the Ants' by Ursula Dubosarsky & Tohby Riddle.



### Pedagogical characteristics

Selecting a story for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*

#### Story: The March of the Ants

Written by Ursula Dubosarsky and illustrated by Tohby Riddle

Publisher: Book Trail, 2021

### Pedagogical practices

- Select a story that is enjoyable for children and adults.
- Build drama for the characters in the story.
- Build empathy for the characters in the story.
- Choose a plot that lends itself to introducing a problem situation.
- Be clear about the concept(s) and its relation to the story and play plot to be developed.
- Choose adventures or or journeys that spring from the plot.

### Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- **Story summary:** This story is about a team of ants and the important roles they play. It brings forward the concept of decomposition.
- Develop the drama in the story e.g. going on an expedition, with all of the different ant characters. They have a long way to march.
- Develop empathy with the ant characters who march for days and days. They are tired. Will they reach their destination? Ants don't give up hope. Do the worker ants know how important they are?
- **Concepts:** 1. Decomposition e.g. ants play an important role in breaking down organic matter. 2. The different types of roles in ant colonies.
- **Problem situation:** The ants need the children's help to understand their role in the ecosystem.
- **Possible plot extension:** Introduce the Queen Ant character. She relies on the worker ants to find and bring the food back to the nest. What happens if the ants stopped marching? What would happen to the Queen?

A partnership between



### Pedagogical characteristics

Designing a *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

### Pedagogical practices

- Find a space in the classroom or outdoor area suitable for an imaginary *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story.
- Design opportunities for child-initiated play in ways that develop the play plot further or explore concepts and make them more meaningful.
- Plan ways for children to represent their ideas and express their understandings.

### Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- Turn a section of the outdoor space into an ant nest where the children could pretend to be the ants in the story - little ants, stubborn ants, chief ants, brave ants.
- Pretend to be entomologists in the field. You might need to take your field equipment e.g. a magnifying glass or take maps, tools and books like the characters in the story. Or meet Aunty Fran Bodkin, a D'harawal woman, expert of Aboriginal knowledge and western science [Aunty Fran Bodkin](#). She tells stories of the land with science including ants and what they do when it rains.
- Meet the Queen Ant or larvae, or other worker ants. How would you communicate if you were pretending to be an ant?
- Create a collage of ants underground, digging galleries and tunnels, helping to aerate the soil. Add some food for ants e.g. leaf litter or other insects.
- Have you ever seen or made an ant farm? Also known as 'Formicariums'.

Entering and exiting the *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

- Plan a routine for the whole group to enter and exit the *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story where all the children are in the same imaginary situation.
- Children choose characters as they enter into the imaginary situation.
- Educator is always a character in the story.

- To signify entering and exiting the imaginary situation (e.g. ant nest) pretend to shrink to the size of an ant or march through a tunnel together. Sing the song "*The Ants Go Marching*" by Robert D. Singleton.
- Children and adults can pretend to be entomologists to learn more about the role of ants as decomposers, ant colonies, and nests (e.g. where the Queen lives).
- Or you could pretend to be an ant. What sort of ant would you be? Do you march in a trail like the characters in the story? Do you work in a team? Ants might be small but they have a big team. What job do you have? E.g. Feeding the larvae? Or finding food and defending the nest?
- You could meet other ants. There are many species for you to meet. And 1,000,000,000,000,000 ant friends! Did you know that ants are strong in relation to their size? You could pretend to be ants lifting organic matter e.g. leaves.





### Pedagogical characteristics

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

Planning educator interactions to build conceptual learning in role

### Pedagogical practices

- Problem scenario is not scripted, but a general idea of the problem is planned.
- Problem scenario is dramatic and engaging.
- The problem invites children to investigate solutions to help the play in the *Conceptual PlayWorld*.
- Be clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation, through children's play.

- Educators are not always the same character. Roles are not scripted.
- Plan who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem. Educators can take on different roles for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*. Plan your role to be either **equally present** with the children, or to **model practices** in a role, or to be **needing help** from the children. Your role can also be **together with** the child leading, where educators support children to act out the role or solution together.

### Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- The Queen Ant contacts the children via a Chief Ant, such as *"Hi Children, my Worker Ants have given up. They've stopped marching. They don't know how important their role is. Not just in my ant colony but in the whole ecosystem. I need your help to tell them because I can't leave the nest. Love from the Queen Ant"*
- Visit the ants and tell them about their important role in the ecosystem e.g. decomposition. Or pretend to be an ant and learn how they find food and bring it back to the nest. What do they eat? How do they eat? The colony needs your help. You could also pretend to take food back to the Queen Ant. We need to work together to help.
- Plan for your role in the *PlayWorld* by choosing one of the following:
  1. **Be equally present with older children** - e.g. *"Let's investigate how ants find and bring back food to the nest"*.
  2. **Model practices in a role** - e.g. *"I'm an entomologist and I love ants! Did you know that ants have antennae to find their way?"*.
  3. **Seek help from the children** - e.g. *"I'm an Worker Ant. Why does the Queen Ant need my help?"*.
  4. **Act out the role together with the child leading** - e.g. *"Let's pretend to march one by one. We can go on an expedition together"*.

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