

Icky Ants

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Mary hated ants very, very much.

They were gross little creatures. They had creepy legs and evil-looking mouths. Their bites stung and they crawled all over the place.

Then there were the colonies. Those were the worst. You could be walking along and kick your feet through the grass and suddenly there would be hundreds of ants scurrying around. They would swarm over your feet and bite your ankles. It made Mary shiver to think about it.



Mary's father found her stomping on ants on the driveway. He shook his head. "Why are you doing that?"

"I hate them, so I'm getting rid of them!"

"You know you could spend all day killing them and they'd be replaced by tomorrow, right?"

Mary paused. "What?"

"Their colonies have thousands of ants, sometimes tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands. Killing a few dozen doesn't really make a difference when they lay hundreds of eggs at a time."

"That is so gross. It makes my skin crawl."

"That's just the ant crawling up your shin."

Mary screamed and bounced around. She slapped at her legs and shook like a wet dog trying to get dry. When she finally stopped, her father laughed. "There wasn't anything on you. I was just joking."

"That's not funny, dad." Mary sniffed, near tears.

"Ants aren't that fun to get bitten by, and your mother hates getting them in the kitchen, but they do help out."

"How?" Mary asked.

"Ants are nature's garbage men." Father explained. "They eat dead stuff and keep some other pests down. They're not entirely bad."

"I guess that's not too bad, but they have all those legs and those antennae on their heads. It's icky."

"Everything that seems bad sometimes has a purpose."

"Except for liver and onions, right?"

"Well, maybe not that." Mary's father agreed.

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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What does Mary hate?
 - A. Spiders
 - B. Scorpions
 - C. Cats
 - D. Ants

2. What does Mary's father find her doing?
 - A. She's stomping on ants.
 - B. She's dancing in the street.
 - C. She's spraying the house for bugs.
 - D. She's singing to her sister.

3. Why does father say it's a waste of time to stomp on a few ants?
 - A. They like it.
 - B. There are too many of them.
 - C. They run away too fast.
 - D. None of the above.

4. Why does father say ants are useful sometimes?
 - A. They're cute.
 - B. They eat cats and dogs.
 - C. They're nature's garbage men.
 - D. They make good pets.

5. How do you think Mary feels about ants after talking to her father?
 - A. She doesn't like them much, but she understands they have a purpose.
 - B. She loves them now and wants to protect them.
 - C. She likes them a lot now, because they're pretty.
 - D. She isn't sure if she should like them or not.

Icky Ants – Answer Key

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