

Spirit Play Lesson

The Persevering Ant

(adapted from the retelling by Sophia Lyon Fahs in *From Long Ago and Many Lands*)

Materials:

- One white felt underlay
 - Ten picture pieces:
 - Ant
 - Snow
 - Sun
 - Cloud
 - Wind
 - Wall
 - Rat
 - Cat
 - Tiger
 - Person
 - One box or basket to house the story
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When the children are ready and attentive, begin with the box near you. This story comes from native people of Brazil.

Let's start with this white piece here. I wonder what it could be. What things are white? Snow? Clouds? Cotton balls? Bedsheets?

Lay out the white felt underlay.

For this story, let's have it be snow. Here is a little more snow, and this is where we begin our story of the Persistent Ant.

Place the snow piece on the felt underlay. The subsequent pieces will be laid out in a circle, moving clockwise. The Ant will move within this circle as new pieces are added to the story.

Long, long ago, a little Ant went out into a snowy field. She found that she could not crawl, for the Snow held her feet fast and she was stuck.

Place the Ant piece on top of the Snow piece.

“Snow, you are very strong,” the Ant said. “You hold my feet so stuck that I cannot move. You must be the greatest, most powerful thing in all the world.”

“I am great,” said the Snow, “but I am not the most powerful thing in all the world. The Sun above is stronger than I, for it simply shines down on me and I melt away and can do nothing about it.”

Place the Sun piece next to the Snow piece, in a clockwise fashion.

The Sun came out and melted the Snow just enough so the Ant could move freely.

Move the Ant next to the Sun.

The Ant went up to the Sun and said: “Sun, you are very powerful, for you can melt away the Snow that holds my feet. You must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

The Sun said, “I am great, little Ant, but I am not the most powerful thing in all the world for a Cloud can come along and cover my face and I can do nothing about it.”

Place the Cloud piece next to the Sun. Move the Ant next to the Cloud. As the Ant retells the chain of her story, point back to each piece as it is mentioned.

The Ant went to the Cloud and said: “Oh, Cloud! You are very powerful for you can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that can hold my feet fast. Surely you must be the greatest thing in all the world!”

And the Cloud replied, “I am powerful, little Ant, but I am not the greatest thing in all the world, for the Wind may come along and blow me away, and I can do nothing about it.”

Place the Wind piece next to the Cloud. Move the Ant to the Wind.

The Ant went up to the Wind and said: “Oh, Wind! You are very powerful for you can blow away the cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that can hold my little feet so fast. You must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

And the Wind said, “I am powerful, little Ant, but I am not the greatest thing in all the world, for if I meet a Wall, it can break me and I cannot get by.”

Place the Wall piece next to the Wind. Move the Ant to the Wall.

The Ant went up to the Wall and said: “Oh, Wall! You are very powerful for you can break the Wind that can blow away the Cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that could hold my feet so fast. Surely you are the greatest thing in all the world!”

To which the Wall responded: “I am powerful, little Ant, but I am not the greatest thing in the world for the Rat can gnaw a hole right through me and I can do nothing about it.”

Place the Rat piece next to the Wall. Move the Ant to the Rat.

“Oh Rat!” said the Ant. “You are very powerful for you can gnaw through the Wall that can break the Wind that can blow away the Cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that could hold my feet so fast. You must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

The Rat said, “I am powerful, little Ant, but I am not the greatest thing in the world, for the Cat can catch me and eat me up and I can do nothing about it.”

Place the Cat piece next to the Rat. Move the Ant to the Cat.

“Oh Cat!” said the Ant. “You are very powerful, for you can catch the Rat that can gnaw through the Wall that can break the Wind that can blow away the Cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that can hold my feet so fast. Surely you must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

“I am powerful,” said the Cat, “but I am not the greatest thing in all the world, for the Tiger can catch me and eat me up and I can do nothing about it.”

Place the Tiger piece next to the Cat. Move the Ant to the Tiger.

The Ant went up to the Tiger and said, “Oh Tiger, you are very powerful, for you can catch the Cat that can catch the Rat that can gnaw through the Wall that can break the Wind that can blow away the Cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that can hold my feet so fast. Surely you must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

“I am powerful,” said the Tiger, “but I am not the greatest thing in all the world, for a Human can shoot me with an arrow and kill me and I can do nothing about it.”

Place the Person next to the Tiger. Move the Ant to the Person.

The Ant went up to the Human and said, “Oh Human, you are very powerful, for you can kill the Tiger that can catch the Cat that can catch the Rat that can gnaw through the Wall that can break the Wind that can blow away the Cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that can hold my feet so fast. Surely you must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

“I am powerful,” said the Person, “but I am not the greatest thing in all the world, for there is something greater than me, greater than all things that live and die, greater than all things in the sky and on the earth. God is the greatest thing of all.”

Place the Ant in the center of the circle created by the other pieces.

The Ant said to everything and to nothing in particular, “God! You are very powerful! You are greater than the Person who can kill the Tiger that can catch the Cat that can catch the Rat that can gnaw through the Wall that can break the Wind that can blow away the Cloud that can cover the face of the Sun that can melt the Snow that can hold my feet so fast. Surely you must be the greatest thing in all the world.”

And the God replied, in a voice that was everywhere and nowhere, “You are right, little Persevering Ant.”

Wondering Together

I wonder what part of the story you liked best?

I wonder what part is most important?

I wonder where you are in the story?

I wonder if there is any part of the story that we can leave out and still have all the story we need?