

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

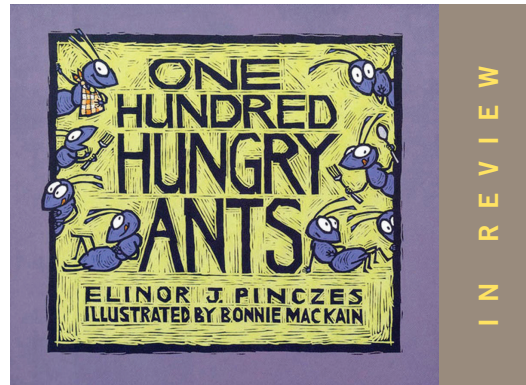
Reviewed by Kateri Miller

One Hundred Hungry Ants

Written by Elinor J. Pinczes

Illustrated by Bonnie MacKain

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1993



“**W**e’re going to a picnic! A hey and a hi dee ho!” What else would ants sing as they head to a picnic feast? And what is the fastest way to get there? The smallest ant has all the answers to the fastest, most direct route. As the 100 ants in one long line head to the picnic, the littlest ant stops the parade to say that if they rearrange into 2 lines of 50 they would “get there soon!” The 100 ants agree and “raced here and there, up, down, and to and fro” and make 2 rows of 50.

As the 2 rows of 50 ants head off to the picnic, the smallest ant once more has an idea to “get there soon!” The ants rearrange again, this time in 4 rows of 25. Time and again, with the urging of the smallest ant, the group rearranges into 5 rows of 20 and finally 10 rows of 10, all to “get there soon!” Meanwhile, the 100 ants pass animals heading back from the picnic with all the food. As you may have guessed, the ants have spent so much time rearranging to “get there soon” they arrive too late and the picnic food is gone. The book ends with 99 hungry ants chasing one little ant.

Elinor Pinczes’ *One Hundred Hungry Ants*, illustrated by Bonnie MacKain, is an imaginative and funny story. Although it does rhyme, the phrasing is not even and practicing the rhythmic flow before reading aloud is suggested. Once the

flow of the rhyme has been mastered, the book is quite engaging and includes many repeated phrases and stanzas. The author is meticulous with her choice of words, and without special attention, the reader might miss the little ant’s voice changes each time it wants to get the attention of the other ants.

The block-print-style illustrations by Bonnie MacKain feature great detail tinted in earthy colors. From the first page, readers can “see the smell” of the picnic food heading toward the animals. Page after page of illustrations show animals with food on their heads, in their mouths, on their backs, and even a donut around a mouse’s middle! MacKain depicts increasing chaos in each change of formation scene, artfully conveying the ants’ building frustration.

Students might act out the story, add an expanded song as the ants march, join in on longer portions of the rhymes, or improvise the rhymes on instruments.

This book can be used in many ways in the Orff classroom, with various levels of student interaction. Younger students can simply join in on “We’re going to a picnic! A hey and a hi dee ho!” with chant or a simple melody. Students might act out the story, add an expanded song as the ants march, join in on longer portions of the rhymes, or improvise the rhymes on instruments. *One Hundred Hungry Ants* is also great for exploring how we use our voices. First

the smallest ant “said” he had an idea; each time afterward he successively “yelled,” “screamed,” and even “shrieked!” Additionally, invite students to consider how the ants’ “hi de ho” singing would sound different as their frustration builds. Exploring these ideas connects to dynamics, how we use our voices, and showcases the use of descriptive language in literature.

Non-musical connections unfold as well. This book is perfect for preparing students for multiplication and division as the ant formations demonstrate the math skill of “repeated addition.” Other discussions about the book might include prediction as students examine the pages and see the other animals running away from the picnic with food while the ants still head toward it. Even predicting the next mathematical formation could be fun. Consider

also a discussion of procrastination or a class discovery of whether rearranging really will get the ants there faster.

The cover of this book with its hungry ants licking their lips promises entertaining activities for your students. You will not be disappointed, however you choose to use *One Hundred Hungry Ants*—it is a great addition to any Orff teacher’s library! ■

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INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

ACEMM	58
AOSA Professional Development Conference	inside back cover
Beatin’ Path	54
Carl Orff Canada	16
McGraw Hill Education.	61
Music Is Elementary	61
Music Rhapsody	58
Peripole	back cover
Quaver	1
SONOR.	inside front cover
Studio 49	2
Teaching With Orff	5
West Music	45

SUMMER STUDY 2020

Anderson University	67
Hartt School/University of Hartford	64
Holy Family College	67
Los Angeles Chapter, AOSA	67
New Jersey Performing Arts Center	62
Portland Orff-Schulwerk Association	68
San Jose State University	65
Smithsonian Folkways	69
Southern Methodist University	66
University of the Arts	64
University of Cincinnati	63
University of Kentucky	69
University of Memphis	65
University of Nevada, Reno.	65
University of St. Thomas	63