



A guide to using *An Anty-War Story* by Tony Ross in the classroom

Including lesson ideas for Key Stages 1 - 2

An eye-opening allegory about the optimism and vulnerability of ordinary people during the First World War

Provides an important anti-war message, in a way that is both understandable and enjoyable for children

The only ant with his own name, Douglas is born into the wonderful Antworld and dreams of one day joining the line to hunt out food. But his superiors have other plans for him: Douglas is to be a soldier. They tell him his job is all about parading, waving flags and wearing a uniform, but Douglas is about to discover that there is no glory in war. A humbling perspective on the First World War from master-storyteller Tony Ross.

Introducing the story

- Teacher will introduce the book to the children and encourage discussion based on the front cover.

What do you think the story may be about?

Does the picture remind you of anything you have seen before?

Who is the author/illustrator of the book?

- Teacher will draw the children's attention to the title *An Anty-War Story* and explain the meaning (anti means against something, but the word is spelt 'anty' to represent the ants in the story).

What do you think the story may be about now?

Do you think the ants are against war? Why do you think that may be?

- Teacher will read the blurb to the children and encourage discussion.
- Teacher will read the story to the children; drawing their attention to the pictures and asking questions based on the story:

Where did the ants build their Antworld? Do you think ants live in houses? Why/ Why not? Where do ants normally like to live?

Do you think Antworld was a happy place?

Would you like to live in Antworld? Why/ Why not?

What name would you use for an ant baby?

Why do you think the ants walk in a line? Is their line the same or different to our class line?

Years 1 - 2

Exploring the Story

- Teacher will continue to read the story; focusing on the theme of war and peace.

Why did Douglas go to the Chief Ant? What did the Chief Ant say Douglas would be?

How do you think Douglas felt when the Chief told him he was going to be a soldier?

Do you think the 'ant soldiers' will make Antworld a safer place for everyone? Why/ Why not?

What do you think made the big 'bang' noise at the end?

Do you think the little ants were safe? Do you think war keeps everyone safe? Why/ Why not?

- Teacher will explain to the children that a special day: 'Armistice Day' is on the 11th of November. It marks the day World War One ended, at 11am on the 11th day of the 11th month, in 1918.
- The teacher will brainstorm with the children; how to make 'Antworld' a safer place without war. Teacher will encourage the children to compare their school and classroom environment with 'Antworld'. Teacher will write the children's ideas on the whiteboard/flipchart.
- Teacher will ask the children questions based on this:

How do you think the ants could make 'Antworld' a safer and happier place, without war?

How do we make our classroom a happier and safer place?

Do you think it would help if the ants used kind words, when speaking to each other?

Applying the Story

- The children will create their own 'Anty-War' poster for the ants; by drawing a picture and writing some kind and encouraging words. The aim of the poster will be to encourage the ants to use different ways to make 'Antworld' a happier place for everyone (instead of war).



Years 3 - 4

Exploring the Story

- Teacher will continue to read the story, focusing on the theme of war and peace.

Why did Douglas go to the Chief Ant? What did the Chief Ant say to Douglas? How do you think Douglas would have felt when he heard this?

What is a soldier? Do you think soldiers are important people? Why/Why not?

Do you think the 'ant soldiers' will make 'Antworld' a safer place for everyone? Why/why not?

What did the Chief Ant mean, when he said that Douglas's job was 'to defend Antworld'? Do you think the use of rifles and other weapons, is a good way to defend a country/place?

What do you think, made the big 'WHIZZ-BANG' noise at the end? Do you think the ants were safe? Do you think war benefits everyone? Why/why not?

Do you think this story has a happy ending? Why/why not?

- Teacher will draw the children's attention to a poster/ picture of World War I and encourage the children to compare parts of the story with the historical evidence.

Applying the Story

- The teacher will brainstorm with the children; other ways to defend a country/ Antworld against threats. The children will be encouraged to think of ways they can protect a place and community, without violence.
- The children will write a persuasive letter to Chief Ant, persuading him to use alternative methods to war; to protect his ants and to ensure 'Antworld' is safe. In the letters, they will outline a plan of action for the ant community to defend themselves against outside threats.
- The children will share their letters with the rest of the class group.
- Extension Activity: Teacher in role as Chief Ant; the children will present their arguments and try to convince them to choose an alternative method to war.



Years 5 - 6

Exploring the Story

- Teacher will continue to read the story, focusing on the theme of war and peace.

Why did Douglas go to the chief Ant? What did the Chief Ant say to Douglas? How do you think Douglas would have felt when he heard this?

What did the Chief Ant mean, when he said that Douglas's job was 'to defend Antworld'? Do you think the use of 'rifles' and other weapons, is a good way to defend a country/ place?

Do you think war benefits everyone? Why/Why not?

Do you think this story has a happy ending? Why/Why not?

What message do you think the author Tony Ross wanted to portray, through the story?

The illustration on the last page, although quite poignant, has an element of humour to it. Can you find it?

- Teacher will explain to the children that 'Armistice Day' is on the 11th of November. It marks the day World War One ended, at 11am on the 11th day of the 11th month, in 1918. An 'armistice' (an agreement) was signed by Germany and the Allies to put an end to the four year war.
- Teacher will encourage the children to discuss the topic of World War One and to link it to the story.

Applying the Story

- Teacher will introduce a historical newspaper article from World War One (based on Armistice Day), to the class group. The children will discuss this article and will highlight important elements of the language and vocabulary used.
- The children will then write their own newspaper article based on the war in the story, from 'an AntWorld perspective'.
- Children will share their articles with the rest of the class group.

