

Title: Crickwing
Author: Janell Cannon
Grade: 2nd Grade



SUMMARY

Crickwing is a cockroach who is tired of being bullied by his predators! So when he sees an opportunity to pick on someone smaller than him, he can't seem to stop...until a few leaf cutter ants show him some kindness. Then, he realizes the ants are in big trouble. Your family will love how he devises a plan to help save the leaf cutting ant colony. Through the story, readers will also see the impact of bullying and learn how bullies can become friends. Your child will learn how the author's powerful word choices make the world of insects come alive! Your family will enjoy reading the dialogue between the insects and following Crickwing's development as the main character in this book. You can learn a lot more fascinating details about cockroaches and ants by reading the notes at the end of the book.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- toil (pg. 2)
- predators (pg. 4)
- ravenous (pg. 4)
- cowering (pg. 6)
- masterpiece (pg. 8)
- massive (pg. 10)
- crevice (pg. 12)
- dastardly (pg. 18)
- winding corridors (pg. 24)
- stunned (pg. 30)
- lieutenant (pg. 33)
- agitated (pg. 33)
- conquest (pg. 35)
- loomed (pg. 37)

You might use a question like:

What does the word crevice (on page 12) mean? How do the surrounding words and illustration on page 13 help you to understand this word?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

- 1) Crickwing's name is important to the story. Talk with your child about how Crickwing got his nickname and how he feels about it.
- 2) What does Crickwing mean when he says, "I don't know if I can take this much longer?"
- 3) Throughout the text, the illustrator includes full-page illustrations in color, and small black and white drawings on the pages with text. Why do you think the illustrator made this choice? Do you notice a pattern in the types of images used for the large pictures or the small pictures?
- 4) When Crickwing comes across the ants he says, "There's something about these teensy critters that just bugs me. Why isn't anyone bothering these little twerps?" How does Crickwing respond to these feelings? What led Crickwing to make this choice?
- 5) Together with your child, compare Crickwing's responses toward predators' attacks with the ants' responses to Crickwing's attacks. How are their responses to bullies similar and different?
- 6) Throughout the text, the author builds anticipation through her word choices. Have your child find a few pages where the author does this. What impact does it have on the way the story is told?
- 7) How does the problem between the leaf cutting ants and the army ants develop? How does Crickwing help the ants resolve this problem?



- 8) We can learn many lessons from Crickwing's experiences in this story. Describe one of these themes. How does the author develop this theme throughout the story?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- 1) At the end of the text, the author includes "notes" (facts) about cockroaches and ants. Read through these notes and then reread the text. What evidence is there in the illustrations and text of Crickwing that the author used facts about cockroaches and ants to write this story? Now, as a family, practice drawing these bugs based off of the information in the text!
- 2) Crickwing is a book about insects, but it's also about bullying. Discuss with your child whether bullying happens at his or her school. How can Crickwing serve as a positive example for change at the school? What sorts of emotions does Crickwing go through that students at school might also experience?