

The Ant, the Grasshopper and the Garden

A climate assembly about growing food and thinking ahead • Whole School • 25 minutes

Cast • Narrator (Y5/6) • Ant (Y5/6) • Grasshopper (Y5/6) • Ant's Friend (Y5/6) • Farmer (Y4/5) • Young Pupil in the audience (planted, Y1/2) • Optional: chorus of 3-4 Ants Props (all optional) • A seed packet or small trowel for Ant • A musical instrument or sunglasses for Grasshopper • A wilting/bare plant pot and a healthy plant pot • Simple gardening apron for Farmer • SUMMER / WINTER sign on a stick for Narrator	Teacher overview <table><tr><th>Section</th><th>Time</th><th>Focus</th></tr><tr><td>Cast briefing</td><td>Before</td><td>Roles, props, staging</td></tr><tr><td>Scene 1: Summer</td><td>6 mins</td><td>The fable begins; contrast of habits</td></tr><tr><td>Scene 2: The Garden</td><td>8 mins</td><td>Growing food; planning ahead; seasons</td></tr><tr><td>Scene 3: Winter</td><td>6 mins</td><td>Consequences; the shift; no blame</td></tr><tr><td>Closing reflection</td><td>4 mins</td><td>Think-pair-share; whole-school response</td></tr></table> Key facilitation notes • The script is pitched at Y3/4 language. • Grasshopper is not a villain. The assembly works best when Grasshopper is played as likeable and funny, not lazy or bad. The shift at the end is more powerful that way. • The climate angle emerges from the story naturally - do not labour it. The Narrator draws it out gently at the end. • The planted pupil in Scene 3 works well if briefed carefully. Pick a confident Y1/2 child who can ask one question clearly. • The Farmer role can be cut if the cast is smaller - their lines can be given to Narrator.	Section	Time	Focus	Cast briefing	Before	Roles, props, staging	Scene 1: Summer	6 mins	The fable begins; contrast of habits	Scene 2: The Garden	8 mins	Growing food; planning ahead; seasons	Scene 3: Winter	6 mins	Consequences; the shift; no blame	Closing reflection	4 mins	Think-pair-share; whole-school response
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Curriculum links

Subject	Connection
Science (KS1/2)	Seasonal changes; plants and growth; what plants need; food chains and ecosystems
PSHE / RSE	Planning and responsibility; community and shared resources; emotional resilience
English (KS2)	Fables and moral tales; character and consequence; narrative structure; speaking and listening
Geography	Food and farming; local food systems; seasons and climate; environmental change
SMSC	Moral: thinking about the future; Social: community cooperation; Spiritual: wonder at natural cycles
DfE Enrichment	Benchmark 2 - nature and outdoor connection; real-world curriculum enrichment

Cast List & Role Guidance

This assembly needs 5-6 speaking roles, ideally performed by Y5/6 pupils for the whole school. The audience becomes part of the story through two built-in response moments.

Role	Suggested Year	Notes
Narrator	Y6	Confident, warm reader. Speaks directly to the whole school. Guides scene transitions. Tone: curious and calm, never preachy. The Narrator's final lines are the heart of the assembly - they need to land quietly.
Ant	Y5/6	Diligent, cheerful, not smug. Ant genuinely enjoys gardening and growing food. Does not lecture Grasshopper. The warmth between Ant and Grasshopper matters - they are friends.
Grasshopper	Y5/6	The trickiest role and the most important. Grasshopper must be funny and likeable - the audience should enjoy them. Not lazy, just living in the moment. The shift in Scene 3 needs to feel real, not dramatic.
Ant's Friend	Y5/6	Supportive role. Helps Ant in the garden. Can share the physical activity of the growing scenes. Optional doubling point if cast is small.
Farmer	Y4/5	Brief but warm. Appears in Scene 2 to explain why growing your own food matters. Grounded, practical, no jargon. Can be cut and lines given to Narrator if needed.
Planted Pupil	Y1/2	A child briefed in advance to ask one question from the audience in Scene 3: "But why didn't Grasshopper grow any food?" Must be confident enough to speak clearly in a whole-school setting. This moment always lands well.

A note on the fable

Most pupils will know The Ant and the Grasshopper. That's useful. The assembly leans into that recognition and then gently shifts the meaning - from "lazy people don't deserve help" (the harsh original moral) to something more nuanced: that thinking ahead is a skill we can all learn, and that the things we grow and tend to today shape what we have tomorrow. This connects directly to climate thinking without ever using the word "climate" until the Narrator introduces it, carefully, at the end.

The Script

Stage directions are shown in [grey italics]. Narrator lines are bold. Audience response cues are marked with ►. Approximate scene timings are shown in the scene header.

Before the Assembly Begins

Staging: clear open space centre stage. A small table to one side with two plant pots - one bare/wilting, one with healthy greenery. Narrator stands slightly apart from the action, to one side. Scene transitions: Narrator holds a sign - SUMMER on one side, WINTER on the other. Flipping the sign signals the season change and gives cast a moment to reposition. Brief the planted pupil (Y1/2) before the assembly. Sit them near the front. Their one line: "But why didn't Grasshopper grow any food?" Practise it twice.

SCENE 1: A Summer's Day

Approx. 6 minutes • Narrator, Grasshopper, Ant, Ant's Friend

[Narrator holds up the SUMMER sign. Grasshopper skips or dances on from one side, humming. Ant and Ant's Friend enter from the other, carrying imaginary tools or a seed packet.]

NARRATOR: Once, in a garden not very different from one you might know, it was summer. The sun was warm. The days were long. And everyone had a choice about how to spend them.

GRASSHOPPER: (stretching, delighted) Ahhh. What a perfect day. Not a cloud in the sky. Nothing to worry about. Nothing to do.

ANT: (cheerfully) Morning, Grasshopper! Lovely day, isn't it.

GRASSHOPPER: Gorgeous. What are you doing with all that stuff?

ANT: Planting. We've got seeds for beans, courgettes, tomatoes, and - if we're lucky - some squash.

GRASSHOPPER: Seeds? In this heat? Why not just... enjoy the sunshine?

ANT'S FRIEND: We are enjoying it! We're outside, aren't we?

GRASSHOPPER: (laughing) You two are very strange. It's the middle of summer. It's a holiday. Relax!

ANT: (gently, not lecturing) We'll relax later. There's a good time for everything, Grasshopper. Summer's the time for planting.

GRASSHOPPER: (wandering off) If you say so! I'm going to sit in the sun and play my guitar. See you later!

[Grasshopper exits cheerfully. Ant and Ant's Friend begin mime-planting seeds in a row.]

NARRATOR: And so, while Grasshopper played and sang and enjoyed every sunny moment, Ant and their friend dug, and planted, and watered. Day after day. Week after week.

► **Audience prompt:** Narrator says: "Have any of you ever grown something? A plant, a seed, anything at all? Put your hand up if you have." Pause. "Brilliant. And did it take a long time?" Nod along with answers. "It always does. That's the thing about growing. You can't rush it."

SCENE 2: The Garden Grows

Approx. 8 minutes • Narrator, Ant, Ant's Friend, Farmer, Grasshopper

[The healthy plant pot is moved to centre stage. Ant and Ant's Friend stand beside it proudly. Farmer enters.]

NARRATOR: Weeks passed. The seeds grew into shoots. The shoots grew into plants. And one day, something wonderful happened.

ANT'S FRIEND: (excited) Look! The beans are coming! And the tomatoes - there are loads of them!

ANT: (pleased) I knew they would. We just had to be patient.

FARMER: (looking over) You've done well. Good strong plants. Did you water them every day?

ANT: Most days. And we pulled the weeds out. And we put some compost in.

FARMER: That's it. That's the secret. There's no trick to it. You just have to keep showing up.

ANT'S FRIEND: It's strange though - the food from here tastes different to food from a shop.

FARMER: Because it is different. It hasn't travelled hundreds of miles in a lorry. It was growing right here yesterday. Fresh as it gets.

ANT: And we know exactly what's in it. No mystery.

FARMER: (nodding) Every garden, every window box, every school allotment - it all counts. Food that's grown close to home doesn't need all that packaging and fuel to get here. That matters.

► **Audience prompt:** Narrator says: "Here's something to think about. If you had a small patch of ground - or even a pot on a windowsill - what would you grow? Turn and tell the person next to you. Thirty seconds." Take 2-3 answers after.

[Grasshopper wanders back in, looking hot and slightly bored.]

GRASSHOPPER: Oh wow. Are those yours? Did you actually grow those?

ANT: We did.

GRASSHOPPER: That's... actually pretty impressive. I didn't think seeds really turned into... all that.

ANT'S FRIEND: Did you plant anything this summer?

GRASSHOPPER: (sheepish) I was going to. But then it seemed like a lot of effort. And the weather was so nice...

ANT: (kindly, not smug) There's still time to plant a few things. Fast growers. Radishes, maybe.

GRASSHOPPER: (distracted, looking at the food) Maybe. Hey - can I try one of those tomatoes?

ANT: (laughing) Go on then.

[Grasshopper mimes eating a tomato. Their face changes - it's genuinely delicious.]

GRASSHOPPER: Oh. That is really, really good.

NARRATOR: Summer carried on. Ant kept tending the garden. Grasshopper kept enjoying the

days. And slowly, without anyone quite noticing, the light started to change.

SCENE 3: When Winter Came

Approx. 6 minutes • All cast, planted pupil, Narrator

[Narrator flips the sign to WINTER. Cast pull on scarves or mime being cold. The bare plant pot moves to centre. The healthy one is moved aside. Grasshopper enters looking cold and uncertain.]

NARRATOR: Winter arrived. And with it, something Grasshopper hadn't quite thought about.

GRASSHOPPER: (quietly) It's... cold. And the shop is expensive. And I don't have very much left.

[Grasshopper looks at the bare pot. Then at Ant's full store.]

GRASSHOPPER: I thought the summer would last longer. I didn't really think about... after.

ANT: (gently) It's hard when you haven't done it before. You don't know what's coming.

GRASSHOPPER: I think I do now.

[A pause. Then the PLANTED PUPIL calls out from the audience.]

PLANTED PUPIL: But why didn't Grasshopper grow any food?

[Narrator steps forward to answer, speaking to the whole school.]

NARRATOR: Good question. Why do you think?

[Take 2-3 audience responses. Welcome them all - there is no wrong answer here.]

NARRATOR: Grasshopper wasn't bad. Grasshopper just... didn't think far enough ahead. And that's something all of us do sometimes - we think about right now, and not so much about later.

ANT: (to Grasshopper) Here. Take some of ours.

GRASSHOPPER: (surprised) Really?

ANT: We grew plenty. That's why we grew plenty. So there'd be enough to share.

GRASSHOPPER: (quietly) Next summer... I'm going to plant something.

ANT'S FRIEND: We'll help you.

[All cast hold still. Narrator steps forward for the closing address to the whole school.]

Closing Address (Narrator, 3-4 minutes)

► **Step 1 - Connect to the fable:** "You probably know this story. It's one of the oldest stories in the world - The Ant and the Grasshopper. But today we've given it a garden. And a slightly different ending. Because in our version, Ant doesn't turn Grasshopper away. Ant shares. That's important."

► **Step 2 - The bigger idea:** "Here's what the story is really about. Our planet is a bit like a garden. It grows things for us - food, clean air, water. But it needs us to look after it. And some of the choices we make now - the food we eat, how far it travels, what we grow and what we waste - those choices affect what's there for us later. And for the people who come after us."

► **Step 3 - Something real:** "Growing food - even a tiny bit of it - is one of the most direct things any of us can do. You don't need a big garden. A pot on a windowsill works. A school planter works. A single seed in a cup of soil works. The point is: you're paying attention to where food comes from. And that matters."

► **Step 4 - The close:** "Grasshopper didn't think ahead. But Grasshopper learned. And next summer, Grasshopper is going to plant something." [Pause.] "So are we."

Teacher Guide: Learning Moments

The assembly overview and facilitation notes are on the front page. The detail below maps what to watch for scene by scene, and what the assembly is doing beneath the surface.

Scene 1 - The contrast is the lesson

- Learning moment: The assembly does not tell the audience that Ant is right and Grasshopper is wrong. It shows two ways of spending a summer and lets pupils sit with both. This is deliberate. Younger pupils enjoy Grasshopper. Older pupils start to notice the consequences coming.
- Facilitation note: The show-of-hands moment (has anyone grown something?) grounds the story in real experience from the start. Take a moment with it - ask a follow-up if you have time.
- Watch for: pupils who laugh at Grasshopper with affection. That means the casting is working.

Scene 2 - Food and where it comes from

- Learning moment: The Farmer's lines carry the key factual content - food miles, freshness, packaging, fuel. These are delivered conversationally so they land without feeling like a lesson. The phrase "you just have to keep showing up" is worth returning to in a follow-up class.
- Learning moment: Grasshopper's response to the tomato is important. Grasshopper is genuinely impressed and genuinely curious. This keeps Grasshopper sympathetic and plants the seed (literally) for the ending.
- Facilitation note: The "what would you grow" prompt works well with all ages. KS1 pupils say strawberries and sunflowers. KS2 pupils often surprise you.

Scene 3 - Consequences without blame

- Learning moment: Ant shares the food. This is a deliberate departure from the original fable, where Ant often refuses. The climate message is not "you will suffer if you don't act" - it is "we grow enough to share, and we share it." Community over punishment.
- The planted pupil moment is one of the most effective devices in the whole assembly. A small child asking a sincere question from the audience breaks the fourth wall gently and invites the whole school to think. Brief the child carefully - they just need one line, clearly.
- Facilitation note: When Narrator takes audience responses to "why didn't Grasshopper grow any food", welcome all answers. Common ones: "didn't know how", "was too busy having fun", "didn't think it would matter". All of these connect to real climate psychology.
- Watch for: the moment Grasshopper says "next summer I'm going to plant something." If the casting is right, this will feel earned rather than tacked on.

The closing address

- The Narrator's closing moves from the story to the real world in four steps. Do not rush them. Each step is a breath.
- "So are we" is the final line. It should be spoken quietly and directly. Not a rousing call to action - more like a quiet decision being made out loud.
- For whole-school assemblies, older pupils (Y5/6) often respond more to this moment than younger ones. That's fine. Plant the seed.

Extension: One Lesson to Follow

From Seed to Plate: Where Does Our Food Come From?

1 lesson (45-60 minutes) • KS2 Y3/4 primary, adaptable up to Y6 • Geography / Science / PSHE

What Pupils Will Do

Pupils trace the journey of a common food item from farm to fork, compare locally grown vs imported food, calculate simple food miles, and decide what they would grow if they had a small plot - then plan a class seed-planting project.

Starter (5 mins): The tomato question

- Hold up (or show a picture of) a supermarket tomato. Ask: where did this come from?
- Take answers. Reveal: most UK supermarket tomatoes come from Spain or the Netherlands, travelling 1,000-2,000 km.
- Ask: what does a tomato need that Spain has more of than the UK? (Sunshine.) So why might that be a problem as the climate changes?

Main Activity 1 - Food Miles Map (15 mins)

- Give pupils a simple world map and a list of 8-10 common foods with their most common country of origin.
- Pupils draw lines from each country to the UK and estimate the journey in km (approximate is fine).
- Total them up. How far has their imaginary lunch travelled?
- Y4 extension: which food on the list could be grown in the UK? Which could be grown in your local area?

Main Activity 2 - Plan Your Plot (15 mins)

- Give each pupil a simple grid (representing a small raised bed or a collection of pots).
- They choose what to plant from a list of easy-to-grow UK crops, considering: season, space, how long it takes.
- Suggested crop list: tomatoes, beans, courgettes, radishes, salad leaves, herbs (mint, basil), sunflowers, potatoes.
- Pupils label their grid and write one sentence about why they chose each plant.

Plenary (10 mins): Class Seed Project

- Introduce the idea of a class seed project. Even one pot per classroom, tended weekly, changes how pupils think about food.
- Vote on what the class will grow together. Radishes and salad leaves are fastest and most reliable for indoors.
- Assign roles: waterers, measurers, photo-documenters, recipe researchers (what will we do with it when it's ready?).
- Optional link: connect to school eco committee, school garden, or a local allotment visit.

Resources Needed

- Simple world map (printable, blank outline is fine)
- Food origins list (teacher-prepared or use the Eatwell Guide as a starting point)
- Grid template for the plot plan
- Optional: seed packets to look at and handle
- Optional: a pot, some compost, and one packet of radish seeds to start the class project there and then

Teacher Notes

This lesson works at any point in the year but is particularly effective in late winter/early spring when the seed-planting timing is real and immediate. If your school has a garden, allotment, or even window boxes, this lesson feeds directly into that provision and gives it genuine curriculum weight.

The food miles activity is deliberately approximate. The point is not precision - it is scale and surprise. Most pupils are genuinely astonished by how far ordinary food travels. That astonishment is the lesson.

Not Yet Zero • Ground Level Assembly Pack

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