

The Grasshopper and the Ant: A Fable About Saving

One wondrously sunny day just before the beginning of the new school year, Sam, a very unhappy grasshopper, was frolicking through the neighborhood. He came upon some ants that were busily carrying pennies, nickels, and dimes to the corner bank. It looked like backbreaking work, each ant carrying a load 10 times its own size. "Wow!" said Sam, as he stopped to see if he had enough money to play a video game, "Why would anybody spend such a great day working so hard?"

As he watched the industrious ants, he reached deep into his pocket to pull out his last shiny quarter. He dropped it in the slot and continued his daily quest to break the scoring record. Video games were his passion. Sometimes he played them three times a day.

"Rats!" he exclaimed as a video character met an untimely demise at the hands of an alien creature. "Where can I get another quarter? I bet I can borrow one from Sandra, the ant. She's just putting it in the bank and doesn't need it. Hey Sandra, old buddy, can I borrow 25 cents? I'll pay you back next week."

"Where did all your money go?" asked Sandra as she deposited more money into the Automatic Teller Machine. "You seem to always spend your money on fun and games. Why should I think that you can save your money to repay me next week? Have you saved any money you earned this summer?"



"Hey, I've had the greatest summer ever! I didn't work much, went to the amusement park six times, played video games every day, and stuffed myself with candy all summer. You guys work too hard and don't have much fun. I'm too young to worry about saving money. I get whatever I want. That's what being a kid is all about. What's so great about saving anyway? It just means you can't have the things you want now."

"I'm saving" Sandra said, "so that I can buy some great new school clothes, have enough money for a fun holiday vacation, and do things on the weekend during the winter when I don't have time to work and earn money. And I can tell you another thing that is really great about saving—INTEREST."



"Wait a minute," said Sam. "You think it's interesting to put money in the ATM machine? Well, that may be what interests you, but it doesn't interest me. Having fun interests me, buying stuff interests me, going to the movies with my friends interests me."

"You don't seem to care much about the future," said Sandra. "Have you ever thought about saving for college? By the way, I didn't mean that saving interests me. I meant that I earn interest from the bank when I save."

"Are you nuts?" asked the grasshopper. "I'm too young to save!" he added. "Oh, of course, the bankers are interested in your money. Why wouldn't they be? They get to keep it and use it and you can't spend it."

"Don't you think about all the other things that you could do with the money you spend?" asked the ant. "Do you buy the first thing you see, or do you think about what you give up? And, for your information, I didn't say the bank was interested. I said the bank PAYS interest to me."

"You don't know what you're talking about. When I buy stuff, I'm not giving up anything. I'm getting things," replied the grasshopper. "I don't think you know what you're talking about with that interest stuff either. Maybe you better look that word up in the dictionary."

"When you buy things, you are giving things up," said Sandra. "When you spend a dollar, you don't have that dollar for something else. When you spend a dollar, you don't have it for something you might want in the future. Every choice you make has an opportunity cost. When I save, I know that I'm giving up something that I could have today for something in the future. I also know that when I save the bank pays me interest. I don't have to look that word up in the dictionary because I know exactly what it means. The bank pays me extra money to keep my savings in a bank account. That means I'm getting paid for saving. That's what interest is. Maybe you better visit a bank and learn something besides how to put quarters into video games. I can't chat anymore. I have work to do," said the ant.

As the ant walked away, Sam could be heard mumbling. "Sure, the bank pays you for saving. Ha! And grasshoppers turn into butterflies. Opportunity cost, what's that all about?"

A few months later, Sam was walking through the neighborhood again when he spotted the ant making another trip to the bank. "Hey, Sandra, what are you doing now?"

"I'm withdrawing some of my savings—to go to the movies with my friends this weekend," she replied. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing, I guess," the grasshopper said, longingly eyeing the video game that he couldn't afford to play. "I don't have much fun these days. Now I think I know what you meant about opportunity lost."

"You mean opportunity cost?" asked the ant.

"Yeah, that's it. I guess I got the term wrong. I was hoping that you could tell me some more about saving and interest, too. You talked about those ideas the last time we were together, but I really didn't understand."

"Well, you were close. When you give something up, it is like losing an opportunity," said the ant. "I'd be happy to help you learn about saving and interest. Keep in mind that if you only play for today, you may have nothing for tomorrow."



Questions:

1. What did the ant mean by the advice she gave the grasshopper? Write your answer in a complete sentence.

2. What do you think the moral of this story is? Write your answer in a complete sentence.

NAME: _____ CLASS PERIOD: _____

Plot Diagram for The Grasshopper and the Ant

Who are the characters in the story?
What is the problem in the story?
What actions take place in the story?
What is the climax in the story?
What is the conclusion of the story?

NAME: _____ CLASS PERIOD: _____

The Grasshopper and the Ant: The Next Chapter

Directions: Write another chapter for “The Grasshopper and the Ant” story. You may add other characters if you wish. The chapter should focus on what the grasshopper has learned from the ant about savings, interest, and opportunity cost. Make sure to use correct paragraph form and complete sentences. The first two lines of the story have been started for you.

The next August, the ant was busily carrying her savings to deposit in the bank when she met the grasshopper. “Well, how are you? Did my tutoring help you?” she asked.
