

## **The March of the Ants** - Written by Ursula Dubosarsky Illustrated by Tohby Riddle

### **Synopsis**

The ants are heading out on a very important expedition. What will they need to take with them? It's a wild journey! And in the end, it's the littlest ant who leads the others to discover the most important thing of all. A book about a very special book.

### **Themes**

*The March of the Ants* raises many concepts for young readers. It is a celebration of the magic of stories. It explores the importance of reading and storytelling. The littlest ant is passionate about taking her book on the journey, even in the face of the Chief Ant questioning her choice. When the ant army is struggling the littlest ant is able to encourage and inspire them to continue on their journey and not give up. It is because of her resilience, persistence and her belief in the power of stories that the whole army finds the resolve to continue their journey.

### **Writing Style**

*The March of the Ants* employs quality language and utilises a range of language techniques to engage the reader. Language techniques include: repetition, descriptive language and rhetorical questions. The extensive use of dialogue makes it ideal for Readers' Theatre or drama work.

### **Author Motivation – Ursula Dubosarsky**

When I was appointed the Australian Children's Laureate at a ceremony at the National Library in Canberra, I was asked to give a short speech. I knew that most of the audience would be children and I thought rather than giving a speech, I would read aloud a story, because a story would have much more meaning to the children. The mission of the Children's Laureate is to celebrate reading, so I decided to write a fable about how wonderful and important reading is in all our lives. I wanted the characters to be animals, like an Aesop's fable but I'm not sure how I found the little ants! Like most children I loved ants as a child and always found them very brave and touching, full of solidarity and individuality. The story was written to be read aloud and like a fable, had to be short and packed with meaning, but light in tone, with a sense of discovery.

### **Author:**

Ursula Dubosarsky was born and lives in Sydney. She wanted to be a writer from the age of six. She is now the author of over 60 books and has won several national prizes, and has been nominated internationally for the Hans Andersen and Astrid Lindgren awards. She was appointed the Australian Children's Laureate for 2020-2021 at a ceremony at the National Library of Australia. Her latest book, "*Pierre's Not There*", is a fantasy adventure about a puppet show.

## Illustrator:

Artist and writer Tohby Riddle is the multi-award-winning creator of numerous picture books and illustrated books, which have been widely recognised in Australia and overseas for their quality and originality. This includes one of the world's greatest living writers Haruki Murakami translating Tohby's book *My Uncle's Donkey* into Japanese after discovering it in a Melbourne bookshop in 2018. *The March of the Ants*, written by Ursula Dubosarsky, is Tohby's first picture book collaboration in over two decades.

## Marketing and Promotion

*The March of the Ants* is published by Book Trail Press and will be marketed heavily to schools and the community via local press, magazines and social media. Plans are in place to launch *The March of the Ants* at the State Library of NSW, Marrickville Library and at Pinerola. *The March of the Ants* will be distributed Australia-wide by Peribo.

## Study Notes - Recommended Reading Level: Lower/Mid Primary

- Before reading, look at the cover artwork and the title of the book. Ask students what they think the book might be about?
- Look at the endpapers used in the book. Discuss with students why the illustrator might have chosen this design for the endpapers.
- Do stories need to have heroes? Who is the hero in this story? Why?
- What are some words you could use to describe the Littlest Ant's character? Why would you choose these words?
- Where has the illustrator positioned the littlest ant in the line of ants at the beginning of the book? Does this change throughout the book? Why?
- Stories come alive with the use of various language techniques.
  - \*Ask the students to find three examples of repetition used in the story
  - \*Ask the students to find an example of alliteration.
  - \*What is the impact of asking a question of the reader during the story – "Would they ever reach their destination?"
- *The March of the Ants* is about a journey. How does the illustrator use colour to chart this journey?
- Discuss how the story raises ideas about the following issues:
  - \*the Power of Reading
  - \*Persistence
  - \*Resilience
  - \*The importance of story
- Imagine you were going on an expedition. Apart from a book, list 5 objects you would take. Why would you choose these objects?
- Ask students to write a creative story using one or all of the objects the ants take on their journey. Where are you going? How do you use these objects/tools?