

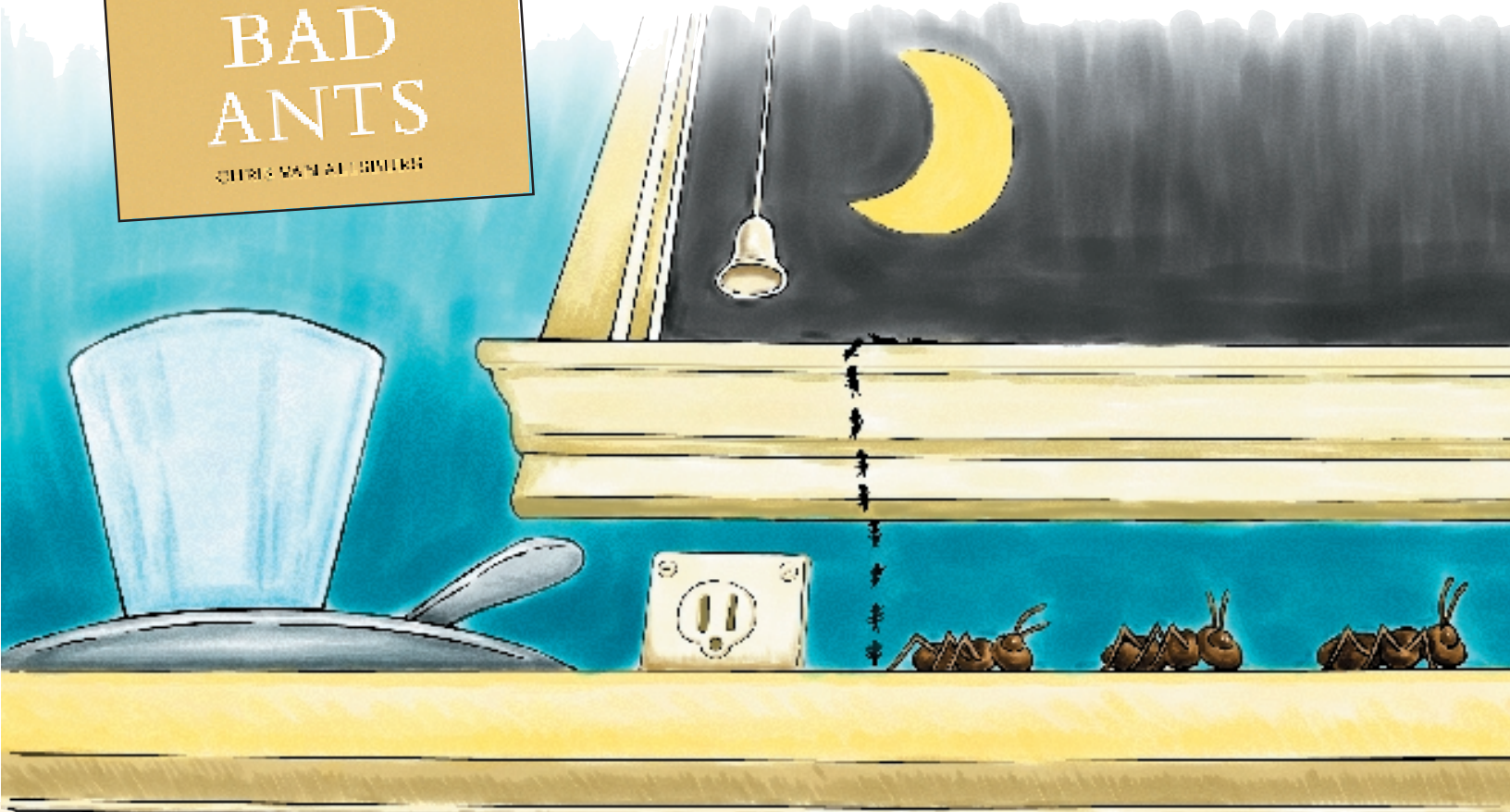
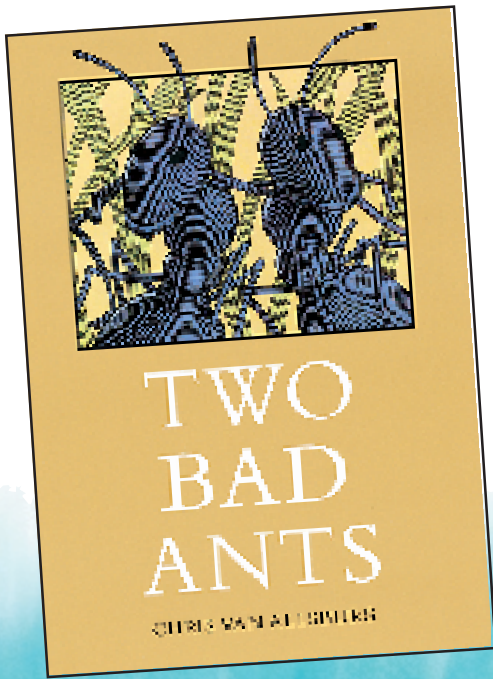
# TWO BAD ANTS

By Chris Van Allsburg

Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988 • Grades ps-3 • 32 pages  
ISBN 0-395-48668-8

*Two greedy ants are subjected to a series of terrifying mishaps when they trade the security of their ant colony home for all the sugar crystals they can eat. Van Allsburg's subtle lesson on avarice is delivered through detailed illustrations that present the story from the perspective of the ants' scaled-down world.*

by Lucia Kemp Henry, Fallon, NV



## Listening

The ants encounter many unfamiliar and scary things in the world where “it seemed that the sky was gone.” Invite listeners to explore Van Allsburg’s creative pictures with this introductory activity. Create a large sugar-bowl-shaped chart with three columns labeled at the top as shown. Read the book without showing the pictures. Re-read it, again without the pictures, and ask students to listen for the ants’ descriptions of their surroundings. Write the words they hear in the first column of the chart. Invite youngsters to predict the true identity of each described place or item as you write their predictions in the second column.

Next, read the story once more, this time sharing each picture. Encourage youngsters to notice each actual place or item described and compare it to their predictions. Write these observations in the third column. Students will sharpen their listening skills and get a glimpse of the world from the ants’ point of view!

The Author's Words	Our Predictions	Actual Items
sparkling crystals	diamonds, sequins	sugar
a forest	trees, a jungle	lawn
sea of crystals	ocean, lake	sugar bowl
giant silver scoop	shovel, spoon	spoon
terrible, bitter water	polluted water, coffee	coffee

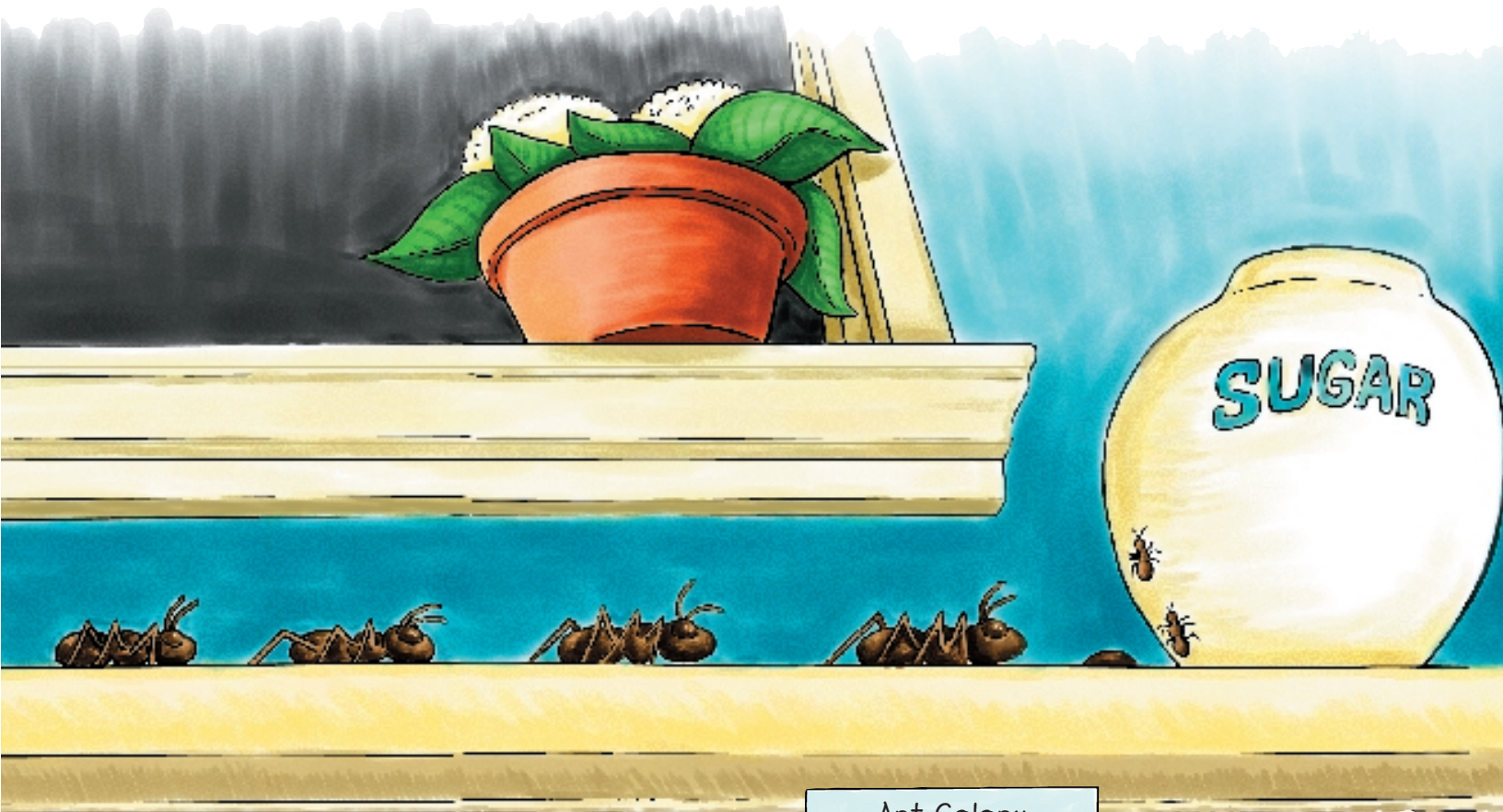


# Writing

When the two ants decide to remain behind rather than return to the ant colony, they put their lives in danger. After sharing the book aloud, discuss the ants' decision by asking students questions such as the following: Why do the two ants decide to stay behind in the sugar bowl? Are they being greedy? What happens as a result of their greed? What is the ants' motivation?

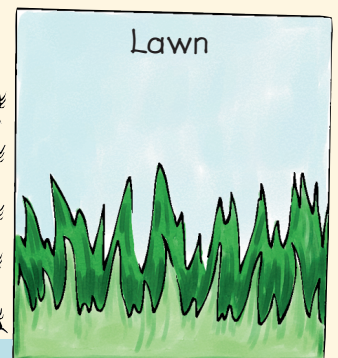
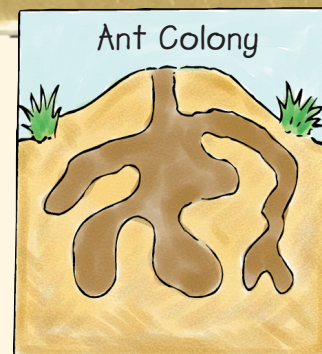
Next, ask students if they have ever made a bad decision and then had to suffer the consequences. Give each child a copy of page 31. Provide time for each student to complete the page. Then have volunteers share their experiences.

As a humorous follow-up, read *The Book of Bad Ideas* by Laura Huliska-Beith (Little, Brown and Company, 2000; 32 pages; ISBN 0-316-08748-3). Afterward, discuss the bad ideas presented in the book and the lessons learned. As students compare the book's events to their own experiences, remind them that we all can learn from our mistakes.



# Reading

Before the ants' return to the safety of their underground home, their unhappy escapade includes many stops. After reading *Two Bad Ants*, ask students to recall each story setting in sequential order as you list it on chart paper (see the list at right). Then assign one setting to each small group of students. Provide a 12" x 18" sheet of white construction paper for each group and instruct members to illustrate their assigned location. Collect the completed illustrations and display them in random order at the front of the room. Hide the chart you made earlier. Then challenge the students to rearrange the illustrations in sequential order. Staple the correctly ordered illustrations onto a bulletin board titled "The Journey of Two Bad Ants" and use a black marker to add a trail of ants. What better way to keep students on the path to comprehension!



## Story Settings

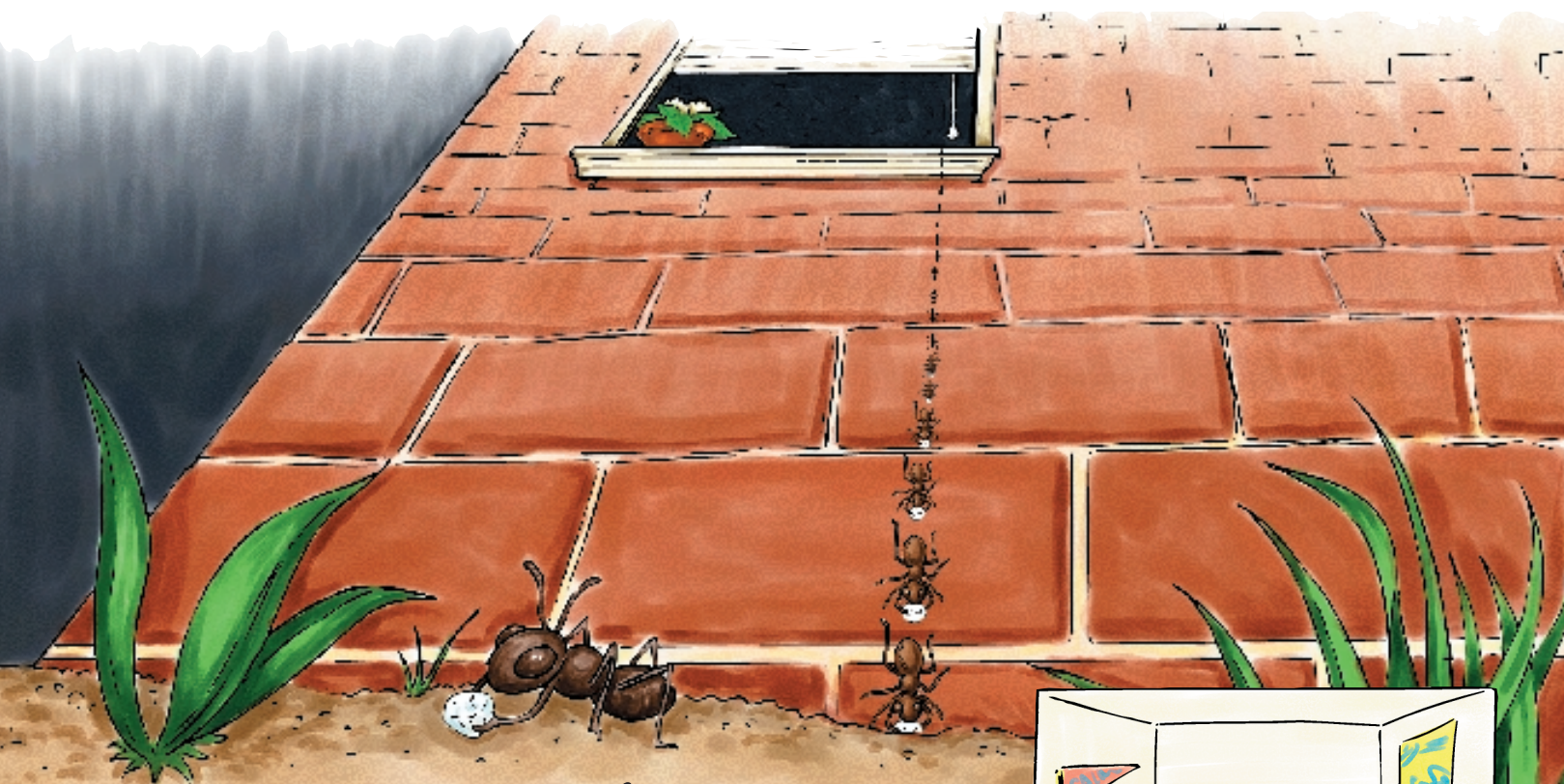
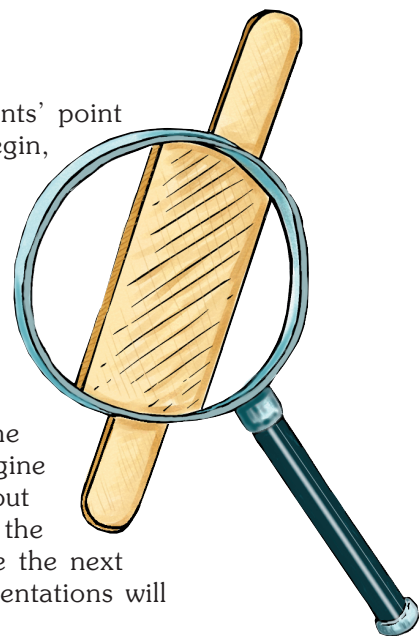
- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. ant colony     | 7. toaster          |
| 2. lawn           | 8. faucet           |
| 3. sugar bowl     | 9. garbage disposal |
| 4. spoon          | 10. electric outlet |
| 5. coffee         | 11. ant colony      |
| 6. English muffin |                     |



# Speaking

The ants' unique perspective of the world is worth talking about! Explore the ants' point of view and strengthen students' descriptive language skills with this lesson. To begin, take another look at perspective by sharing *Look Book* by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow Books, 1997; 32 pages; ISBN 0-688-14971-5). As you hold the book for the class to see each photo, invite student volunteers to stand and share their predictions about the identity of each one. Encourage each volunteer to give details that support his prediction. Then turn each page to reveal the mystery.

Next, fill a paper sack with a class supply of common household objects, such as a key, a ladle, and a bobby pin. Pair students. Without revealing the object to the rest of the class, give each pair a small magnifying lens and one item from the bag. Instruct the partners to look at their object through the lens in order to imagine how it would look to an ant. Then have them write a description the object without naming its identity. Finally, invite the partners to orally share their description as the audience tries to guess the item's identity. Let the pair who guesses correctly take the next turn. Continue until each pair has had a turn. Any way you look at it, these presentations will put students' speaking skills in perspective!

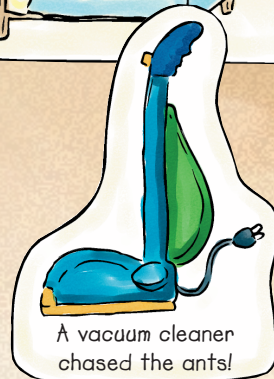


## Extension

Would the unfortunate ants have had as much trouble if they had chosen to explore a different room in the house? Challenge students to explore the changes that a different setting would have made to the story's outcome. To begin, tape two lengths of butcher paper side by side to create a large mural. Sketch the outlines of a child's bedroom on the mural.

Next, have the class list the dangers that the ants might run into in a child's room, such as a vacuum cleaner, a curious cat, or a sticky ball of clay. Continue brainstorming until there is one idea for each student. Give each student one of the listed ideas, a sheet of 9" x 12" white construction paper, crayons, scissors, and glue. Instruct her to illustrate the idea and write a sentence under it describing the ants' encounter with the supposed danger. Direct the child to cut out her drawing and sentence and then glue it to the mural. When the mural is complete,

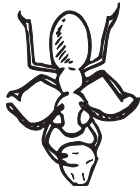
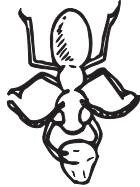
**30** invite each child to stand and read her sentence to her classmates.



A vacuum cleaner  
chased the ants!

## Decisions, Decisions

The trouble begins for the ants when they make the decision to stay in the sugar bowl. Think about a time when you made a bad decision. Then answer each question below.



1. What was the decision you made? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What were the results of your decision? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What did you learn that will help you make decisions in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

