

# Don't Be Cruel

A Play Production



## Introduction

*Don't Be Cruel* is a play designed to be performed by elementary school classes, particularly students in the 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grades. The older students will have a more polished performance, but don't be afraid to have younger students perform this show. They'll have a great time and parents love to see their children perform!

If you're new to putting on a class show, don't worry. Putting on a play is a wonderful experience for your students and it's not as tough as you think. This guide is designed to provide you with all of the necessary tips for a smooth, exciting and fun experience.

## Getting Started

Figure on 4-6 weeks from the first introduction to final performance. This may sound like a lot of time, but remember, for the first few weeks you're only working for an hour or so a day. As the scheduled date gets closer, you'll want to spend more time rehearsing for a polished and professional performance. Be sure to schedule time for casting and set creation, including props and costumes.

The good news is that this show has been written so you can get out of it what you want. If you would like to work very hard creating props, sets, and costumes, enlist the help of parents and have a blast! Just be sure that the level of activity and stress is something you're comfortable with. You can also choose to go about it a bit easier and have little or no props and costumes. It depends upon your own personality and the students themselves. No matter how you choose to approach it, remember it's the process which is important for the students' education. They'll be reading, listening, speaking and developing self-esteem.

## Casting

*Don't Be Cruel* was written to be performed by a group of about 9 kids, but the show is very flexible. You can always add children. Included in the costumes section are ideas for creating bugs and Bug Savior masks and costumes. It is suggested that you wait until the last week or two before you pick specific children for each part. Let various children experiment with different roles and try out



## Heaven Can Wait Animal Society

different combinations. As you know, some children are a little shy about performing. On the other hand some students are naturals on stage and love the spotlight. Choose your large parts carefully. The last thing you want is to embarrass a child by putting them in a role they're not prepared for. Eventually you'll need to make a choice and probably a student or two will feel hurt by the selection. Try to help them understand that the selection in no way reflects poorly on them.

### **Costumes**

You don't really need any costumes, but most kids (and most audiences) like them. The idea is to keep things simple and comfortable! Ideas for different parts include:

Child 1, 2, 3 and 4: It doesn't get any easier than this....come as you!

Bugs: Copy the heads of the insects on the pages following onto tag board. You can either color them or cover them with felt. Google eyes make good additions as well.

Bug Savior: Purchase rainbow butterfly wings, a pretty rainbow wand, and a halo or antennae from a local costume store or online. Have the young lady wear clothes that compliment the purchased items and voila you have a costume.

### **The Set**

You don't really need a set to put on a successful performance. However, if you choose to, the following ideas will help you. As long as you have a wall behind you, a set will be relatively easy to create. Be sure to enlist the help of parents and students. Divide the space you have on your wall in half. Decorate one half of the wall with butcher paper to look like the outdoors. The other half will be the inside of a home. You can have parents or students decorate the butcher paper to look like the setting. You can make the setting look 3-D by stuffing it with tissue paper. For example, if you have a tree in your setting, cut the trunk out from brown butcher paper. As you staple it on the wall, stuff it with tissue paper to provide that 3-D look. On the side that looks like a home, consider drawing a

window on the butcher paper and surrounding it with fabric to look like curtains. Having a large cot in front of the setting will add authenticity as well.

### **Staging**

If you have access to a real stage, then you can have the actors who are not performing wait off stage until it is time for them to enter. If you are performing in a classroom with a large group and in a constricted space, you will have to keep all the actors on the "stage" at all times. You can have the students sit down until it is their turn to perform.

### **Rehearsals and Assessment**

After the students have learned their parts, and the show has been cast, you can teach them where to stand and how and when to move. You will also need to work on behavior especially when they're not on stage. Remember, this is all part of the learning process, so take advantage the new opportunities for teaching and assessment. Some tips for stress free rehearsals are as follows:

- Don't panic. Rehearsals even up to the day of the performance can sometimes be difficult. Please know that the kids will pull through when it counts.
- Each day have the students critique their rehearsal. What did they do well that day? What do they still need to work on?
- Have more than one full dress rehearsal so students get used to the costumes. Invite a couple of classes to your dress rehearsal so students know what it feels like to perform in front of an audience.
- Consider videotaping a rehearsal and have the students analyze it. Was it good? What could have done better? This is a very valuable tool. When they see themselves fidgeting or "not in character", they will discover what they need to work on.

### **Performance Tips**

One of the challenges in putting on plays is getting the students to use conversational dialogue with their lines, like they talk in real life. The key is to



have the students emphasize the right words and tone; model speaking with expression and ease.

### **Final Performance**

Your most important performance will be for the students' parents and families. If you're new to this, you'll probably be a little nervous. Remember that the parents are there to watch their child perform, not you. Rehearse the play well and all will be fine. If something does happen to go wrong...ignore it! Tell your students they should continue with the play as though nothing was amiss. Often the only ones aware of the mistake are the actors.

### **Last bit of advice...**

Consider printing up a program and or invitation to the play. A cast party is traditional after the last performance of a play. The kids will really enjoy it and it will provide a great chance for the parents to talk with one another. Enjoy the entire experience. It may be rough at times, but the final performance will be worth it!

### **Assessment**

If you'd like to assess your students on their performance, there is a rubric on the following page that can assist you in this process.

## Oral Presentation Assessment



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Play: \_\_\_\_\_

- Rehearsal  
 Performance

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

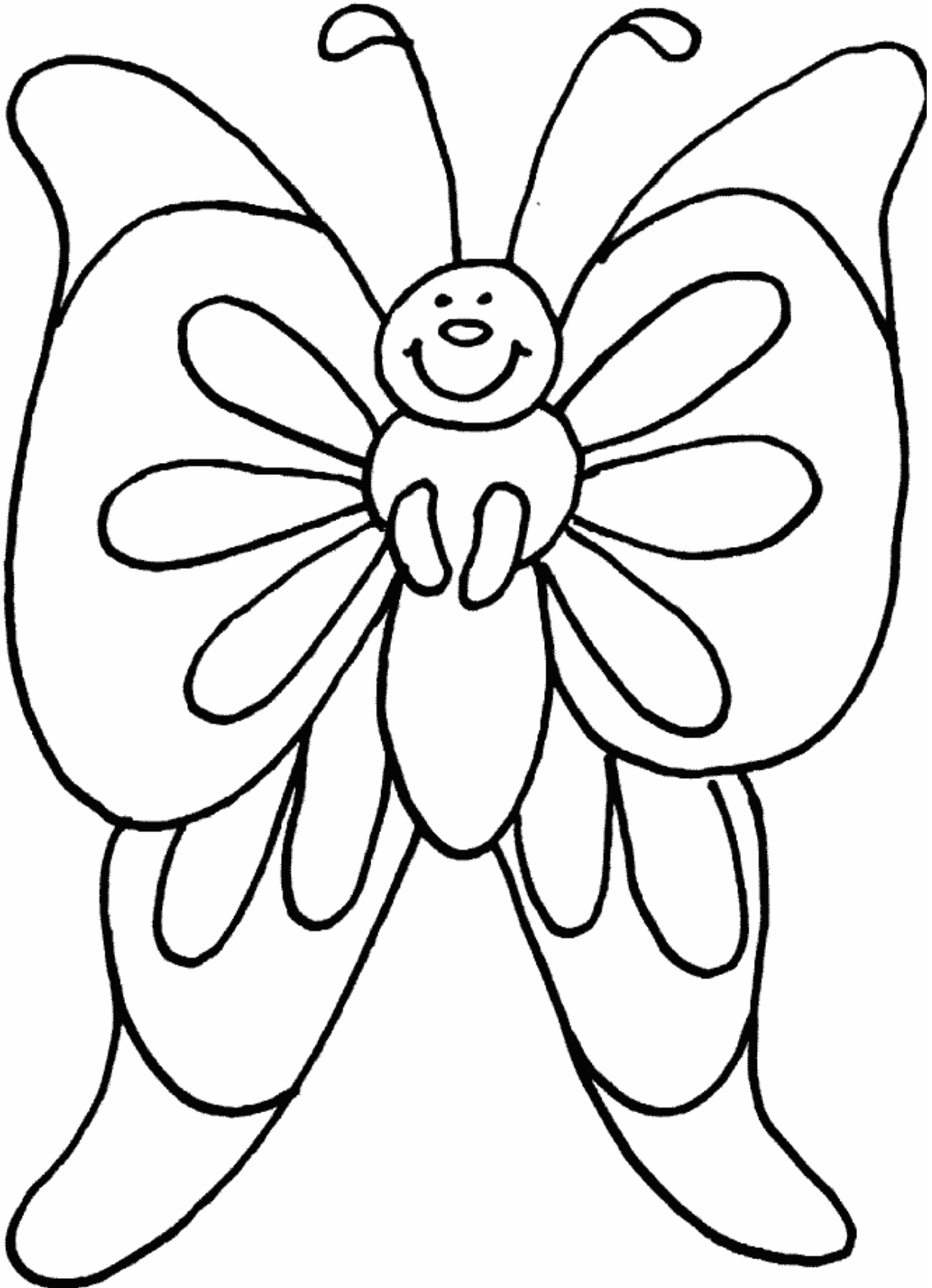
Character Part: \_\_\_\_\_

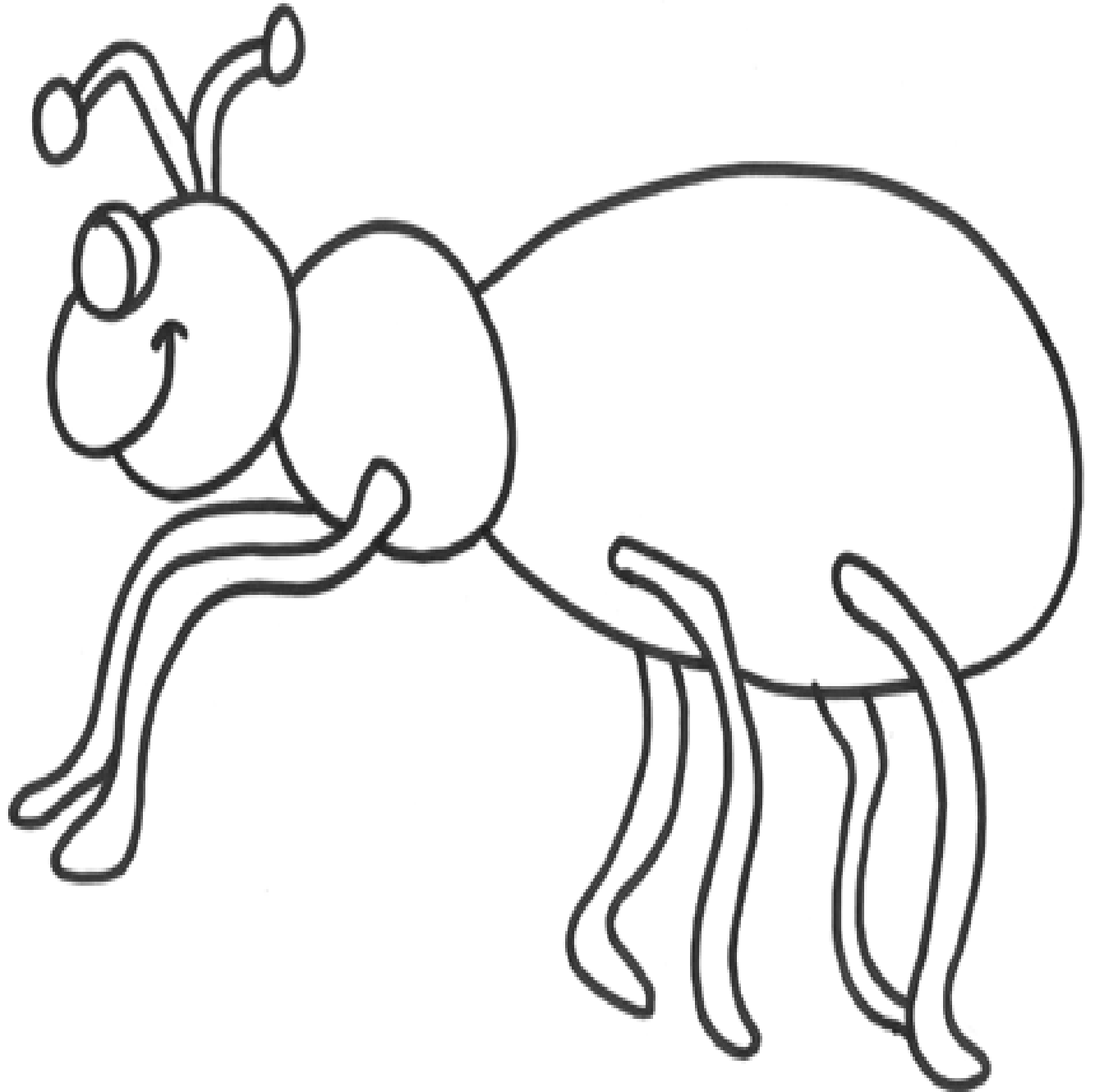
**1 = Excellent    2 = Good    3 = Fair    4 = Poor**

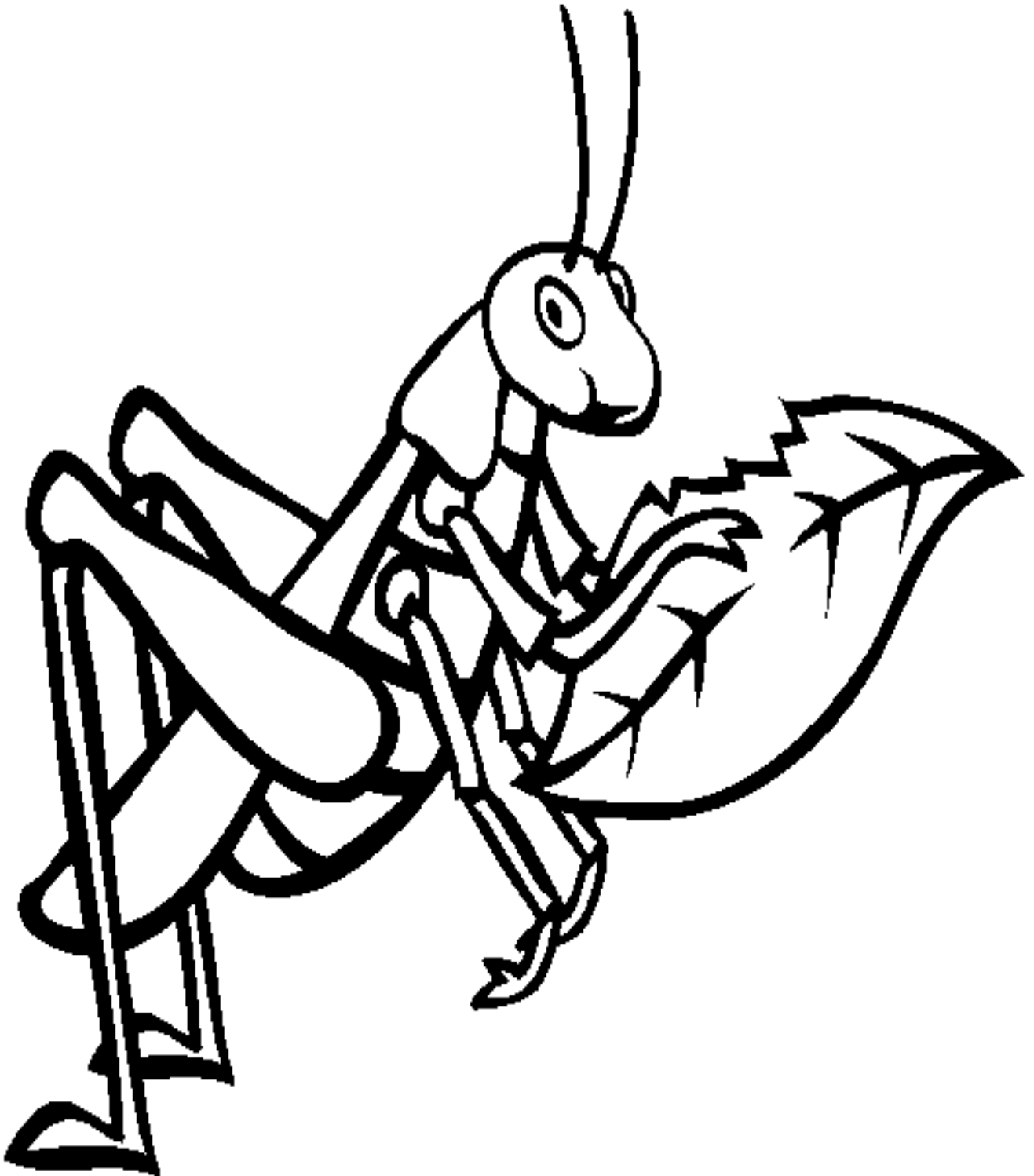
- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Student speaks clearly.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Student speaks at appropriate pace.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Student speaks fluently, using appropriate intonation, expression, and emphasis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Student enlivens reading with gestures and facial expressions.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Student prepared and used appropriate props.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Student participated in this production appropriately.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Overall Grade for Performance:** \_\_\_\_\_







## Don't Be Cruel

### *Cast*

Child 1

Child 2

Child 3

Child 4

Bug Savior

Butterfly/Grasshopper/Ant 1

Butterfly/Grasshopper/Ant 2

Butterfly/Grasshopper/Ant 3

Butterfly/Grasshopper/Ant 4

*The scene opens on a group of kids in a huddle.*

**Child 1:** Let's pull the wings off this butterfly and see what happens.

**Child 2:** Cool! Oh man...look, it's just flopping around. Let's go find some grasshoppers.

*The same group looks around and forms a huddle in a different part of the stage.*

**Child 3:** I found one. Let's pull its legs off one by one and see what happens.



## Heaven Can Wait Animal Society

**Child 4:** It can still move pretty well with 5 legs. Let's pull another one off and see what happens.

**Bug Savior:** What are you doing? Stop it! That is so cruel!

**Child 1:** It's not cruel, it's fun. Wanna try? (*Child 1 holds the bug up to her face while the others laugh.*)

**Child 2:** Yea, come on. You're not scared are you?

**Bug Savior:** I would NEVER hurt another creature that's smaller than me. You're being SO mean. How would YOU like it if a creature that was bigger than you tortured you by pulling off your legs?

**Child 3:** Oh, sure! That's going to happen! (*Child rolls his eyes while the others laugh.*)

**Child 4:** Run along, little girl. Go play with your dolls or something.

**Bug Savior:** You may laugh now, but believe me...YOU'LL BE SOOORRRRY!  
(*The Bug Savior smiles and winks at the audience*)

**Child 1:** Well, I better get home. It's almost time for dinner

**Child 2:** Yea, me too. See ya!

**Child 3:** Let's meet back here tomorrow and see if we can find some ants.

**Child 4:** I'll bring my magnifying glass.

*All the kids laugh and say their goodbyes.*

*Bug Savior takes center stage. She looks at the audience and then casts her humanitarian spell.*

**Bug Savior:** Insects of the world unite. Make these children's dreams a fright! (*She smiles and winks at the audience again.*)



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*Enter Child 1 yawning.*

**Child 1:** *Good night Mom and Dad. (He lays down on the cot and goes to sleep.)*

*Enter large butterflies talking in high pitched pretty voices.*

**Butterfly 1:** Oh, he looks so peaceful when he's sleeping.

**Butterfly 2:** That's true, but we know better. Let's do our work!

**Butterfly 3:** *(In a loud voice.)* Let's pull every hair out of his head one by one and see what happens!

*(The boy starts to twitch in his sleep)*

**Butterfly 4:** *(In a loud voice.)* Okay let's get started. *(Butterfly 4 leans over and pulls a hair.)*

*The boy jumps up, looks at all the butterflies, and runs screaming for his Mama. The butterflies high five each other.*

**All Butterflies:** Mission accomplished!

*Enter Child 2 Yawning.*

**Child 2:** *Good night Mom and Dad. (He lays down on the cot and goes to sleep. He starts to snore softly.)*

*Enter large grasshoppers hopping over to where he's sleeping.*

**Grasshopper 1:** He doesn't look so tough when he's snoring.

**Grasshopper 2:** Even bullies have a soft side! Now let's get to work!

**Grasshopper 3:** *(In a loud voice.)* Do you think he could still walk if we pulled off one of his legs?

*Child 2's eyes pop open and he sits up looking scared.*



**Grasshopper 4:** Well, boys, we'll never know until we try! (*All grasshoppers move in on Child 2.*)

*The boy jumps up, looks at all the grasshoppers, and runs screaming for his Mama. The grasshoppers high five each other.*

**All Grasshoppers:** Mission accomplished!

*Enter Child 3 and 4 yawning.*

**Child 3:** Good night Mom and Dad. Thanks for letting \_\_\_\_\_ spend the night. (*Speaking to Child 4*) Let's go right to sleep. I'd like to see if we can find that big ant hill tomorrow.

**Child 4:** Yea, I packed my magnifying glass. We'll be able to turn those little biters into crispy critters. (*Both boys laugh.*)

*The boys lay down on the cots and go to sleep.*

*Enter large ants talking excitedly.*

**Ant 1:** (*Hands on hips.*) It just disgusts me that there are still bullies like this in the world.

**Ant 2:** That's why the Bug Savior called us in. Everyone knows that ants are the hardest working insect on the planet. (*Ant 2 lifts both arms and kisses his muscles one at a time.*)

**Ant 3:** (*In a loud voice.*) Did you bring your magnifying glass, Adam? It looks like we'll be able to cook up a couple of 'em tonight. Good thing it's a full moon!

*Both boys sit up quickly and look at each other with looks of horror!*

**Ant 4** (*Holds up a large magnifying glass.*) Let's get 'er done boys! (*Ants advance on the boys.*)



## Heaven Can Wait Animal Society

*Boys run screaming from the room.*

*The ants high five each other.*

**Ants:** Mission accomplished!

*The Next day: The boys, looking a little unsure, all meet up at the park.*

**Child 1:** Hey guys, I brought my mitt and glove. What do you say we just play a little baseball today?

**Child 2:** *(Looking relieved)* Yea, great idea!

**Child 3:** *(Also looking relieved)* Baseball season is coming up. I need the practice.

**Child 4:** I forgot my magnifying glass anyway.

*The boys run off to play.*

*Bug Savior and one of each insect enter the stage.*

*She speaks to the audience.*

**Bug Savior:** Boys and girls. Remember these lessons and never hurt any helpless creature. After all, you never know who is watching.

*Bug Savior winks at the audience and skips off.*