

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP 107 The House that Ants Built

By: Adam Ruben

Elinor's Question: How can tiny ants build such large anthills?

Logline: Elinor, Olive, and Ari disagree about the best way to build a couch cushion castle.

Curriculum Goals:

LS4. Begin to understand that animals and plants depend on other living things and nonliving things in the environment to meet some of their needs. (Elinor observes how the ants use twigs, sticks and dirt to build their nest)

ND3. (RTL Crosscutting concept 'Structure and Function')

Understand that structures and materials in the natural world can be used or can inspire the engineering of structures with similar function in the designed world (Elinor and her friends are

inspired by the ant hill to design their pillow fort)

ET2. b. Use a variety of low-tech tools(Elinor uses her magnifying glass).

ET1. c. Begin to understand that engineering is a collaborative process during which ideas can be exchanged and shared with others while defining a problem and working to design, test and revise a solution. (Elinor and her friend collaborate to figure out a way to build their pillow fort).

SEP1b. Ask more complex questions about observable phenomena. (Elinor and her friends ask more complex questions about the ant hill)

Main Characters: Elinor, Olive, Ari

Secondary Characters: None

Incidental Characters: Ants

Backgrounds - Ant hill in Elinor's yard, Elinor's living room

Props - couch cushions, blankets, magnifying glass, twigs and leaf bits, book, leaf-on-a-stick flag

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1. EXT. ELINOR'S WINDOWSILL (TIGHT) - DAY

Open on an extremely close view of scurrying ANTS (Species: *Formica exsectoides*), carrying sticks, pine needles, and grass stems in a long line. We hear ELINOR narrating what she thinks the ants are saying, using a different cute voice for each ant. *

1 ELINOR (V.O.) 1
(a cute ant's voice)
I just loooove carrying stuff. Come
on, you guys! *

Another ant scurries into view, following the first.

2 ELINOR (V.O.) 2
(another ant's voice)
Stay in line, everyone!

As the first two ants crawl off-screen, a third appears, lugging a stick with some difficulty. *

3 ELINOR (V.O.) 3
(third ant's voice)
(grunting) This stick is too heavy
for me. *

Another ant enters and grabs the other side of the stick. *

4 ELINOR (V.O.) 4
(a low cute ant's voice)
Then I'll help you carry it!

The two ants begin to carry the stick. *

2. INT. ELINOR'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The camera pulls back to reveal that the ants are on the outside of the windowsill, and then we see Elinor, resting on her elbows and staring at the ants. She has been narrating their thoughts all along, and she giggles at the silliness of it.

ANGLE ON: OLIVE and ARI enter the room, each carrying a comically tall stack of pillows and cushions. Elinor is so absorbed in the ants that she doesn't notice. *

Olive drops her cushions in a pile in front of her. <SFX: Plop!> *

5 OLIVE 5
Here they are, Elinor! Every
cushion and pillow in your house! *

	Ari, nearly invisible behind his tall stack, bumps into the now-stopped OLIVE and drops everything onto his head.		*
			*
6	ARI	6	*
	Whoa!		*
	He pops up from inside the pile.		
7	ARI (CONT'D)	7	
	Not to mention most of the blankets.		
8	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI	8	*
	(Laugh)		
9	ELINOR	9	*
	Thanks, Olive! Thanks, Ari!		*
10	ARI	10	
	Is this enough to build our couch cushion castle?		*
11	ELINOR	11	
	I hope so! Let me just get a few more.		*
			*
	ANGLE ON: During the next lines of dialogue, ELINOR removes the cushions from the living room couch and stacks them next to Olive's.		*
12	ELINOR (CONT'D)	12	
	I have SO many different ideas for the castle!		*
			*
	The view of the living room widens to make room for ELINOR'S THOUGHT BUBBLE , which appears next to her, filled with drawings of her plans in red crayon as she describes them.		
13	ELINOR (CONT'D)	13	
	It's going to have a slide...and a telescope...and a big window for ant-watching!		*
			*
	Olive walks by a second time, balancing a new pillow on her head for fun.		*
			*
14	OLIVE	14	*
	I've got some ideas, too!		
	OLIVE'S THOUGHT BUBBLE appears, crowding out ELINOR's. It fills with drawings of what OLIVE describes, this time outlined in blue crayon.		*
			*
			*

15 OLIVE (CONT'D) 15 *
 I want a room for my crayons...a *
 room for my sparkles...and a GIANT *
 ROOM FULL OF BOOKS! *

16 ELINOR 16
 You mean a library?

17 OLIVE 17 *
 (excited)
 Yes! My very own LIBRARY!

The excitement is building for all of them, and ARI starts jumping from cushion to cushion.

18 ARI 18
 Ooh! I have ideas, too! *

ARI'S THOUGHT BUBBLE appears and crowds out Olive's, with his favorite design choices appearing in green crayon. *

19 ARI (CONT'D) 19
 I want a drawbridge...a *
 racetrack...and a BUBBLE FOUNTAIN! *

He says this last line with such gusto that he jumps into the air, landing on a pile of more cushions. All three **THOUGHT BUBBLES BURST!** *

20 ELINOR 20
 (giggles)
 Okay! Let's! Start! Building! *

We see a series of shots of the three kids building their castles; <MFX: FORT BUILDING MUSIC>.

ANGLE ON: Elinor balances cushions by the window, then peeks to confirm she can still see the ants from the cozy nook she's created.

ANGLE ON: Ari drapes a blanket between two pieces of furniture and smiles at his new cave. *

ANGLE ON: Olive lines up books on top of a cushion to make a bookshelf, then holds them in place with her hands while adding another cushion to the top with her trunk. *

Everything is going well for the kids, who are pleased at their progress. But soon they encounter difficulties. *

ANGLE ON: Elinor stacks three cushions of various sizes, looking a little unsure of how to do it, in an inverted triangle. It falls over. She frowns, then attempts it again. The structure stands for a moment, then topples once more. *

ANGLE ON: Ari turns, struggling to pull a cushion triple the size of all the others off of the couch. (It's a big single cushion that runs the length of the couch; the cushions Elinor removed earlier were the individual upright cushions behind it. This cushion had been in the living room the whole time and was not one of the ones that he and Olive carried earlier.)

21 ARI 21
 (struggling to lift the
 cushion)
Augh!

ANGLE ON: Elinor balances a cushion to make a slide, but the moment her back is turned, Olive takes it. Elinor returns with a blanket to drape over her slide, but she notices that the slide is mysteriously gone. She then notices it in Olive's castle. <MFX: FORT BUILDING MUSIC fades.>

22 ELINOR 22
Olive, that's supposed to be my
slide.

Elinor puts her hands on the cushion, but Olive keeps holding it.

23 OLIVE 23
But it's the perfect shape for the
wall of my crayon room.

Olive gives the pillow a small tug, not mean-spiritedly, but she's clearly disappointed that she can't build her castle as planned.

24 ELINOR 24
But I need it for my slide.

Elinor doesn't let go. Ari pops up in the middle of his friends.

25 ARI 25

You guys, let's not fight over the
pillows.

Just then ELINOR loses her grip, and the pillow hits ARI gently in the chest and knocks him into a pillow.

26 ARI (CONT'D) 26
 (effort sound)

Elinor and Olive look concerned for a beat. Ari jumps smiling.

27	ARI (CONT'D) (gleefully) Never mind! Pillow fight!!!	27	* *
28	ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI PILLOW FIGHT!	28	*
The three kids playfully (and safely) bonk each other with pillows, giggling all the while.			
29	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI (giggling wildly, ad lib) Gotcha/Whoo-hoo/ Take that!	29	*
This continues for a few seconds, and no one is hit in the head. However, some of the pillows they grab for the fight had been support structures for their castles.			
When the fight is over, the kids collapse, laughing, with OLIVE and ARI on the floor and Elinor atop a pile of pillows next to the window.			
30	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI (CONT'D) (laughter winds down)	30	* *
With a good view of the ants again, Elinor gets distracted and resumes watching them.			
31	OLIVE That was fun!	31	*
Ari sits up and looks around - their castle is now just a pile of pillows.			
32	ARI Yeah, but we haven't finished building our castle!	32	* *
33	OLIVE I think we need more cushions.	33	* *
34	ARI But some of them are too heavy for me to carry.	34	* * *
PAN OUT TO: ELINOR isn't listening. She's back in her original pose, gazing at the ants out the window. OLIVE and ARI notice.			
35	OLIVE What do you think, Elinor?	35	* *
Elinor does not answer, she's too busy looking at the ants.			

36	ELINOR (interested) Hmmm...	36	*
			*
			*
37	OLIVE Elinor?	37	*
			*
	Olive approaches Elinor.		*
38	OLIVE (CONT'D) What are you looking at?	38	*
			*
39	ARI Whoa, are those ants?	39	*
			*
	ANGLE ON: Elinor stares at the ants as before, with Olive and Ari in the background.		*
			*
40	ELINOR Uh-huh. Look! They're all carrying something.	40	*
			*
41	ARI Cool.	41	*
			*
	Ari and Olive come closer to the windowsill.		*
42	OLIVE They're carrying things, just like we were carrying our cushions.	42	*
			*
			*
43	ELINOR I wonder why they're doing that.	43	*
			*
	CLOSE UP: Elinor's face, staring in fascination at the ants.		*
44	ELINOR (CONT'D) Where are they carrying all that stuff?	44	*
			*
	Suddenly she springs up and runs toward the front door, grabbing a magnifying glass on the way out.		*
45	ELINOR (CONT'D) Let's follow them outside. Come on!	45	*
			*
	Ari and Olive share a shrug, then follow Elinor out the door. Ari playfully bounces on a couple cushions on his way out.		*
			*
46	ARI (ad libs bouncy sounds while bouncing, like "boing!" or "pew!")	46	*
			*
			*
			*

3. EXT. ELINOR'S YARD - CONTINUOUS

CU: The ants busily transport useful bits down their line. Behind them, we see ELINOR running up, her face peering over their ranks. ARI and OLIVE soon join her.

ANGLE ON: The three kids studying the line of ants. It's a long, long line!

47 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI 47 *
(ad lib)
Whoa!/Wow!/There are so many!

Excited ad libbing continues as the kids follow the ant line: around Elinor's house, through the garden, up - and abruptly back down - a wall, diverted around a puddle. At one point, they pass the magnifying glass from Elinor to Olive to Ari. Elinor and Olive use it to examine the ant line, while Ari makes a silly face that he magnifies to make Elinor and Olive laugh.

Finally they arrive at the anthill, NOTE: Formica exsectoides do build really huge anthills out of sticks, pine needles and dirt, but we may not want to make our anthill so big it is distracting. Assuming the big anthills start out small, you can basically make this anthill whatever size makes sense for design.

48 OLIVE 48 *
Wow, look at that!

49 ARI 49 *
This is why the ants were carrying all those sticks and leaves! They're building something.

50 ELINOR 50 *
It looks like they're building a hill. But... how can those tiny ants build something so big?

51 OLIVE 51 *
It's an anthill! I read about it in one of my books. I'll go get it!

Olive runs back into the house to retrieve the book. CU: While they wait, Elinor and Ari study the ants entering and leaving the anthill.

52 ARI 52 *
Whoa... Look, you can see the ants going in and out of the hill!

Elinor resumes her ant-narration voice. CU on the ants as their voices are narrated, though not quite as close as before. This way Elinor and Ari can be seen a bit, so it's clear they're narrating the ant voices. *

53 ELINOR 53
(ant voice)
Look at this big hill we built! And *
I'm just a little ant! *

Having heard her ant voice for the first time, Ari giggles.

54 ARI 54
(trying out his own ant
voice)
If you're an ANT, then I must be an *
UNCLE! *

55 ELINOR 55 *
(giggles, then ant voice) *
Look! I'm waving my ANT-enna! *

56 ARI 56 *
(ant voice) *
And I'm not wearing p...ANTS! *

They laugh, while Olive returns behind them with her satchel over her shoulder. *

57 OLIVE 57 *
I've got it! It's here in my *
Nature Book. *

OLIVE removes a book from her satchel, then holds it up, showing a BIG PICTURE OF AN ANTHILL. *

58 OLIVE (CONT'D) 58 *
There's a part here that's all *
about ants! *

ANIMATED STORYBOOK ILLUSTRATION: We pan around a simply animated cutaway of an anthill, showing the various chambers as Olive narrates. The illustrations are cartoony and fun but not overly anthropomorphic: nurse ants tending little pupae, ants snoozing in a sleeping chamber, ants retrieving food from an ant pantry. *

59 OLIVE (V.O.) 59 *
Lots of ants live in big places *
called anthills. Most anthills are *
made of dirt, but some also use *
sticks and pieces of grass. *
(MORE)

OLIVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Anthills have rooms for sleeping,
rooms for taking care of babies,
and even special places where they
keep the trash.

*
*
*
*

BACK TO the three kids staring at the anthill.

60 ELINOR 60
Wow! Is that all happening INSIDE?

*

61 OLIVE 61
Yup! Most of the anthill is under
the ground. It's kind of like we're
looking at the roof.

*
*
*
*

CU: The anthill, where an ant pokes itself out from between
the thatching on the side. Then a large stick (large to the
ant) is placed gently next to the ant, which regards it
curiously.

*
*

Zoom out to see that Elinor is holding the stick, smiling,
trying to entice the ant to crawl on it. The ant does, then
runs off, which makes Elinor giggle.

62 ELINOR 62
That is SO INTERESTING! But...how
can these tiny ants make such a big
hill?

*
*
*

63 ARI 63
Yeah, especially when WE can't even
build a pillow castle. And we're
BIG!

*

64 OLIVE 64
(flipping through the
book)
Hmm. I'm not sure.

*

65 ELINOR 65
Let's watch the ants, and maybe we
can figure it out! We need MORE
OBSERVATIONS!

*
*
*

They all lie down, elbows on the ground and sharing the
magnifying glass, to observe. ANGLE ON: the ant line in the
foreground with the kids in the background. We see what
Elinor was watching at the beginning: ants scurrying busily,
many of them carrying sticks, pine needles, etc.

*
*
*
*

66 ELINOR (CONT'D) 66
Look, the ants walk in a line to
bring things back and forth from
the anthill.

*
*
*

67	OLIVE	67	*
	They aren't they're bumping into		*
	each other, like we did.		*
	CU: An ant enters pulling on a stick. The stick is larger		*
	than anything they've seen the ants moving so far.		
68	ELINOR	68	
	And look! That stick is way bigger		*
	than the ants!		*
	The kids watch as TWO more ants scurry in and help carry the		*
	large stick together.		*
69	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI	69	*
	Oh!/Look!/She got help!		*
70	OLIVE	70	*
	The ants are helping each other.		*
	More ants means they can carry		*
	bigger things!		*
71	ARI	71	*
	Yeah, I wish someone had helped <i>me</i>		*
	with the big couch cushion before.		*
	It was really heavy!		*
	ANGLE ON: Elinor absorbing all this information.		*
72	ELINOR	72	
	Hmmm.		*
	Ari rises, dusting off his knees, followed by Olive.		*
73	ARI	73	*
	Wow, these guys are f-ANT-astic!		*
	They help each other carry the		*
	sticks...		*
74	OLIVE	74	*
	And they don't fight over the		*
	things they bring!		*
75	ARI	75	*
	They make the anthill TOGETHER.		*
	Elinor's face suddenly lights up and she leaps ups; she has		*
	an idea!		*
76	ELINOR	76	
	That's it! I know how we're going		*
	to build our castle!		*

77	OLIVE	77	*
	How, Elinor?		*

How, Elinor? *

78	ELINOR	78	*
	We have to act like ants!		*

We have to act like ants! *

Mirroring her sudden run out the door, she suddenly runs back inside. Ari and Olive once again look at each other, smile, and shrug, then follow Elinor back inside. *

CROSSFADE TO:

4. INT. ELINOR'S LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

ELINOR, OLIVE, and ARI once more stand in ELINOR's living room, next to the pile of cushions. *

79	ELINOR	79	
	Okay, ANT BUILDERS! Let's build our		*
	castle!		*

Okay, ANT BUILDERS! Let's build our castle! *

COOPERATIVE CASTLE BUILDING MONTAGE *

The kids sing as we show a montage of them planning and working together on their castles. They also do a few silly things, like pretending to crawl in a line while carrying pillows on their backs.

ANGLE ON: Elinor revisits her three couch cushions of
different sizes. But before stacking them, Olive shows her a
small drawing she made of the three cushions stacked in a
triangle. Olive helps Elinor stack the cushions the new way,
and this time the cushions don't topple.

80	ELINOR (CONT'D)	80	*
	(singing)		*
	It's everyone, it's not just me		*
	who builds a castle carefully.		*

(singing) *

It's everyone, it's not just me
who builds a castle carefully.

81	OLIVE	81	*
	(singing)		*
	'Cause when you stop and think it		*
	through, it helps to know just what		*
	to do.		*

(singing) *

'Cause when you stop and think it
through, it helps to know just what
to do.

ANGLE ON: Ari once again tries to remove the giant cushion
from the couch, but he can't - until Elinor and Olive come
over. Together, the three of them carry the cushion and place
it as a wall in the castle.

82	ARI	82	*
	(singing)		*
	So if I need the biggest cushion,		*

(singing) *

So if I need the biggest cushion, *

83	ELINOR, OLIVE (singing) We'll be helping you with the pushing.	83	* * * *
84	ARI (singing) 'Cause doing it together's fun	84	* * *
85	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI (singing) And three ants can lift more than one!	85	* * * *
ANGLE ON: The three kids draw their castle together on a single piece of paper, gesturing at each other's contributions with excitement. We can't see what they're drawing yet, but it's evident that they're working together on a single design.			* * * * * *
ALL: Let's work together! Let's work together! That's the way we do it better. Let's work together! Let's work together! ELINOR: To build the best hill ever known, OLIVE: A hill of dirt and sticks and stone, ARI: An ant can't do it all alone. (big finish) But we can do it... TOGETHER!			* * * * * * *
END MONTAGE: When the song ends, the castle is nearly finished, and they look at it proudly, hands on hips. (Note: The final shot of the song is deliberately a tight shot on the three kids that doesn't allow us to see the castle yet.)			* * *
86	ARI We worked together just like the ants!	86	* * *
87	OLIVE Yeah! We helped each other, and we shared the pillows...	87	* * *
88	ELINOR ...and we made an amazingly awesome incredible ANT HILL CASTLE!	88	* * *
We reveal their castle, which looks a bit stylistically incoherent, but still magnificent! In fact, it looks a little like an anthill!			* * *

	Elinor runs to her slide.		*
89	ELINOR (CONT'D)	89	*
	I got my slide!		*
90	OLIVE	90	*
	I got my library!		*
91	ARI	91	*
	And I got my drawbridge!		*
92	ELINOR	92	*
	Ants, we've got one more piece to move!		*
	She indicates the largest pillow (the one ARI couldn't lift before), and together the three of them hoist it on top of the castle: the roof!		*
93	OLIVE, ARI	93	*
	(ad lib)		*
	Perfect! / This is awesome!		*
94	ELINOR	94	*
	All ants into the castle!		
	The kids laugh, then eagerly play in their new castle.		
95	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI	95	*
	(ad lib sounds of playing)		*
	SEGMENT 2.		*
	1. INT CLASSROOM -- DAY		*
	Ms. Mole and Elinor are chatting in the classroom. The scene opens as they are mid conversation.		*
	Ari rushes into the frame.		*
96	ARI	96	*
	Elinor, Ms Mole! Guess what? I was showing my sister how cool ants are, and she tried to eat one!		*
	Elinor shivers in disgust, and Ms Mole shakes her head.		*
97	MS. MOLE	97	*
	Oops! Eating ants is not the best idea. BUT it reminds me that it's time for our story, which is all about ANTS and SISTERS!		*

	Ari looks surprised.		*
98	ARI	98	*
	What? Ants have sisters too?		*
	Olive and Tito Mouse come to join them. Ms Mole turns to her desk, and we see a really long book lying closed with drawings of ants on the cover.		*
			*
			*
99	OLIVE	99	*
	Wow, I've never seen a book that big before!		*
			*
100	MS. MOLE	100	*
	Yes, it has lots of ANTS-ers in it.		*
	The kids giggle. Tito and Ari help get the book open. Tito Mouse ends up holding on to the edge and gets lifted into the air as it opens.		*
			*
			*
	On the first page of the book, we see the top of an anthill above ground.		*
			*
101	ARI	101	*
	Why is the book so big, Ms. Mole?		*
102	MS. MOLE	102	*
	To show you how big anthills are under the ground!		*
			*
	Ms. Mole reaches under the page, and the long page unfolds down, revealing a cutaway view that shows the vast underground tunnels leading down. The kids <OOHHH...>		*
			*
			*
103	MS. MOLE (CONT'D)	103	*
	Anthills are really big! There is room for THOUSANDS of ants.		*
			*
	ANGLE ON: The book illustration animates and we see lots of little ants scurrying around. The ants are realistically depicted.		*
			*
			*
104	ELINOR	104	*
	Wow! There are SO many!		*
	We zoom in on a room with one ant that's bigger than the others by 2-3x.		*
			*
105	MS. MOLE	105	*
	But there is one special kind of ant called the QUEEN ANT.		*
			*

106	OLIVE	106	*
	Is she in charge of the other ants?		*
	Like a real queen?		*
	The other ants crawl all around her.		*
107	MS. MOLE	107	*
	Sort of! She's the mother of most		*
	of the ants that live in the		*
	anthill. They actually help take		*
	care of her!		*
	We see the little ants bringing her food.		*
108	ARI	108	*
	All those ants are... brothers!?		*
109	MS. MOLE	109	*
	And sisters! They are one BIG		*
	family.		*
	The ants snuggle in a bit to the queen.		*
110	ELINOR	110	*
	Why is the Queen Ant so much bigger		*
	than the other ants?		*
	We see a sideways view that shows the queen ant 2-3x larger		*
	than the other ants. Ref:		*
	https://www.terro.com/media//articles/images/421/19-queen-		*
	ants.jpg		*
111	MS. MOLE	111	*
	She has to be big enough to lay all		*
	the eggs. That's where her children		*
	come from!		*
	Back to the kids:		*
112	ELINOR	112	*
	I wonder what it's like to have so		*
	many brothers and sisters.		*
113	ARI	113	*
	I really love my sister.		*
114	OLIVE	114	*
	Do you want a thousand more		*
	sisters?		*
	Ari ponders this for a moment.		*

115

ARI

I'd rather have a thousand sisters
than eat one ant.

115

*
*
*

*

*

They all giggle.

FADE OUT, THE END.