

ELINOR'S TOWN

EP 107 The House that Ants Built

By: Adam Ruben

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

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

Curriculum Goals:

SEP1b. Ask more complex questions about observable phenomena.
ENGINEERING STANDARD. 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. (*Engineering standard from the PBS framework as suggested by Sara.*)

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.

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

Main Characters: Elinor, Hazel, 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

OUTLINE: December 13, 2018

FIRST DRAFT: January 4, 2019

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

Open on an extremely close view of scurrying ANTS, carrying twigs, leaf bits, and dirt in a long line. We hear ELINOR narrating what she thinks the ants are saying, using a different cute voice for each ant.

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1                               ELINOR (V.O.)                               1
                                (a cute ant's voice))
                                I can't wait to build this anthill!
                                Come on, you guys!

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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 giant leaf piece with some difficulty.

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

Another ant enters and grabs the other side of the leaf.

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 leaf.

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: HAZEL 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.

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

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

Ari, nearly invisible behind his tall stack, falls and drops everything onto his head. He pops up from inside the pile.

6 ARI 6
Not to mention most of the
blankets.

7 ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI 7
(Laugh)

8 ARI 8

Is this is enough to build our
couch cushion castle?

9 ELINOR 9
Whoops! I was so busy watching the ants out the window that I almost forgot about our castle.

ANGLE ON: During the next lines of dialogue, ELINOR removes the cushions from the living room couch and stacks them next to Hazel's.

10 ELINOR (CONT'D) 10
I have SO many ideas!

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.

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11                ELINOR (CONT'D)                                11
    It's going to have a slide, and a
    telescope, and a big window for ant-
    watching!

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Hazel walks by balancing a pillow on her head.

12 HAZEL 12
I've got some ideas, too!

HAZEL'S THOUGHT BUBBLE appears, crowding out ELINOR's. It fills with drawings of what HAZEL describes, this time outlined in green crayon.

13	HAZEL (CONT'D)	13
	I want a room for my crayons, a room for my sparkles, and a GIANT BOOK ROOM!	

14 ELINOR 14
You mean a library?

15 HAZEL 15
 (excited)
 Yes! My very own LIBRARY!

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

16 ARI 16
 My turn! My turn!

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

17 ARI (CONT'D) 17
 I want a drawbridge! A racetrack!
 And a BUBBLE FOUNTAIN!

He says this last line with such gusto that he loses his balance on the cushion on which he's standing, and topples off, landing on a pile of more cushions. All three **THOUGHT BUBBLE BURST!**

18 ELINOR 18
 Let's! Start! Building!

We see a series of shots of the three kids building their castles; <AFX: 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 end tables and smiles at his new cave.

ANGLE ON: Hazel 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.

ANGLE ON: Ari stands up a cushion to make a wall next to his table-cave. But when he turns his back to grab another pillow, Elinor takes the pillow he had just stood up.

19 ARI 19
 Uh, Elinor? You just took my wall.

20 ELINOR 20
 Oh! Sorry!

She returns the pillow, somewhat regretfully. Ari smiles at his restored wall, then turns to pick up a cushion triple the size of all the others. (It had been in the living room the whole time and was not one of the ones that he and Hazel carried earlier.)

21 ARI 21

And now to use the biggest cushion
of all: the drawbridge for Castle
Ari!

Ari struggles to lift the cushion, but he can't, and he loses his grip and falls backwards.

22 ARI (CONT'D) 22
 (disappointed)
 Uh-oh! It's too heavy.

ANGLE ON: Elinor balances a cushion to make a slide, but the moment her back is turned, Hazel takes it. Elinor notices.

23 ELINOR 23
Hazel, that's supposed to be my
slide.

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

24 HAZEL 24
But it's the perfect shape for the
wall of my crayon room.

Hazel gives the pillow a small tug, not mean-spiritedly, but she's clearly disappointed that she can't build her castle as planned. But Elinor doesn't let go. Ari pops up in the middle of his friends.

[illegible]

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

26 ARI (CONT'D) 26

Whoops!

Elinor and Hazel look concerned for a beat, Ari jumps smiling.

27 ARI (CONT'D) 27
I'm okay, and I've changed my mind!
Let's fight over the pillows!!!

28 ELINOR/HAZEL/ARI 28
PILLOW FIGHT!

The three kids playfully (and safely) bonk each other with pillows, giggling all the while.

29 ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI 29
 (giggling wildly, ad lib)
 Gotcha/Whoo-hoo/ Take that!

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 HAZEL and ARI on the floor and Elinor atop a pile of pillows.

30 ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI (CONT'D) 30
 (laughter winds down)

31 HAZEL 31
 That was fun!

Ari sits up and looks around - their castle is now just a pile of pillows.

32 ARI 32
 Yeah. But we totally knocked down
 our castles!

33 HAZEL 33
 I couldn't finish mine anyway. You
 two were using the cushions I
 needed.

34 ARI 34
 Neither could I! *YOU* two were using
 the cushions *I* needed.

PAN OUT TO: ELINOR isn't listening. She's back in her original pose, gazing at the ants out the window. HAZEL and ARI notice.

35 HAZEL 35
 Elinor? What are you doing?

36 ARI 36
 Are you looking at the ants again?

ANGLE ON: Elinor stares at the ants as before, with Hazel and ARI in the background.

37 ELINOR 37
 Yes. They're building.

38 ARI 38
 Huh?

Ari and Hazel come closer to the windowsill.

39 ELINOR 39
They're carrying things to build an
anthill. Just like we tried to
build our castles.

40 HAZEL 40
Yeah, but they're not having
problems like we did.

CLOSE UP: Elinor's face, staring in fascination at the ants.

41 ELINOR 41
You're right! That is SO
INTERESTING. I wonder why.

Suddenly she springs up and runs toward the back door,
grabbing a magnifying glass on the way out.

42 ELINOR (CONT'D) 42
We need more observations. Come on!

Ari and Hazel share a shrug, then follow Elinor out the door.
Hazel grabs a note pad and pencil on her way out. (This isn't
the first time she's followed an excited Elinor into the
woods, and she knows it's useful to have these.)

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 HAZEL soon join her.

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

43 ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI 43
 (ad lib)
Whoa!/Wow!/There are so many!

They look down the line of ants until they see the nest,
which is huge: a conical anthill made of bits of dirt, with
occasional leaf litter and twigs. This may require a camera
angle from an ant's viewpoint to convey the relative
hugeness.

44 HAZEL 44
Look at the size of that anthill!

45 ARI 45
It's huge!

46 ELINOR 46
How can those tiny ants build such
a big hill?

47 ARI 47
Yeah, and why do they even need one?

ANGLE ON: Ari examines the anthill with the magnifying glass.

48	ARI (CONT'D)	48
	I mean, what's going on in there?	

BACK TO the view of all three kids.

49 HAZEL 49

Wait! That's what one of my books
was about!

Hazel runs back into the house to retrieve the book. CU:
While they wait, Elinor and Ari study the ants entering and
leaving the anthill. Elinor resumes her ant-narration voice.

50 ELINOR 50
 (ant voice)
I don't even know what a book is!
I'm just a tiny ant.

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

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51             ARI
              (trying out his own ant
              voice)
Hello, tiny ant! That must make me
a tiny uncle.

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They laugh, while Hazel returns behind them with the book.

52 HAZEL 52

Got it! Look what was on my
bookshelf! Well, what's left of my
bookshelf after it collapsed.

HAZEL holds up a book with BIG PICTURE OF AN ANTHILL

53 HAZEL (CONT'D) 53
It's a book about life inside an anthill!

ANIMATED STORYBOOK ILLUSTRATION: We pan around a simply animated cutaway of an anthill, showing the various chambers as Hazel narrates.

The illustrations are deliberately anthropomorphic and cute: nurse ants tending little pupae, ants snoozing in tiny ant beds, ants removing foods from an ant pantry.

54 HAZEL (V.O.) 54

The Anthill is a big place! Ants
have rooms for storing their eggs,
raising their babies, sleeping,
storing their food, and even
special places for dumping garbage.
And it's all connected by tunnels!

BACK TO the three kids staring at the anthill.

55 ELINOR 55
Wow! But I can't see any of those things.

56 HAZEL 56

That's because it's all happening
inside the anthill, underground.
It's kind of like we're looking
down at the roof.

57 ARI 57
Yeah, but like a roof with a door
in it.

CU: The anthill, where an ant pokes itself out the top of the opening. 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.

58 ELINOR 58
But I still don't understand how an
ant this small can make something
so big as this anthill!

[illegible]

60 HAZEL 60
 (flipping through the
 book)
 Hmm. I'm not sure.

61 ELINOR 61
Then let's see if we can figure it
out! We need MORE OBSERVATIONS.

They all lie down, elbows on the ground, 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 bits of leaves, sticks, etc.

62 ELINOR (CONT'D) 62
Well, they're all moving in a line
toward the anthill.

[illegible]

64	ARI	64
	Oh! The ants are leaving to get things, and then they're bringing them back.	

[illegible]

CU: An ant enters carrying a giant leaf. It's larger than anything they've seen the ants moving so far.

66 ELINOR 66
Whoa! That leaf is way bigger than
the ant that's carrying it! That
must be the strongest ant ever!

In the background, behind the ants, we see ARI lowering his face to provide a silly ant-narration.

67 ARI 67
 (macho ant voice)
Hey, don't worry about it, guys. I
got this.

ANGLE ON: The kids laugh.

68 ELINOR/HAZEL 68
(laugh)

69 ELINOR 69
Huh. So maybe THAT's how they do
it. The ants are super strong, so
even though they're little, they
can build something big.

Hazel opens her book.

70 HAZEL 70
(reading)
You're right! Ants are so strong
that they can carry things that
weigh ten times more than they do!

Hazel looks up from the book. Her **THOUGHT BUBBLE** appears to illustrate the following.

71 HAZEL (CONT'D) 71
Whoa. That would be like me picking
up a car!

Ari's **THOUGHT BUBBLE** appears next to hers.

72 ARI 72
Or me picking up ten Aris!

In Ari's thought bubble, he muscularly holds up ten Aris.

73 ARI (CONT'D) 73
Just think of the castle I could
make if there were TEN of me!

Elinor's **THOUGHT BUBBLE** appears next to the other two, showing their three previously imagined castles.

74 ELINOR 74
But super strength won't help us
build our castles, Ari. The problem
was that we kept taking pillows
from each other.

CU: The ants continue to carry the giant leaf, which suddenly rotates to reveal that it's not just one ant doing the work-- it's three ants!

ANGLE ON: Kids looking at ants.

75 ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI 75
Oh!/Look at that!/There are three
of them!

76 ARI 76
The ants ARE super strong, but I
guess it takes more than one to
move a leaf THAT big.

77 HAZEL 77
Interesting. They're helping each
other.

ANGLE ON: The three kids stand up and dust off their knees.

78 ELINOR 78
 (disappointed)
 And we didn't do that.

79 HAZEL 79
 Helping each other is the only way
 these tiny ants can build this
 amazing anthill.

80 ARI 80
 They also SHARE their building
 material.

81 ELINOR 81
 We didn't do that, either. We tried
 to build too many things, and we
 ended up taking from each other
 instead of helping each other.

82 HAZEL 82
 So what do we do?

Elinor's face suddenly lights up; she has an idea! Mirroring
her sudden run out the door, she suddenly runs back inside.
Ari and Hazel 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, HAZEL, and ARI once more stand in ELINOR's living
room, next to the pile of cushions.

83 ELINOR 83
 O-kay!

A single **THOUGHT BUBBLE** appears, with trails to all three
kids. Inside the thought bubble are Elinor's original planned
castle in red crayon, Hazel's original planned castle in
green crayon, and Ari's original planned castle in blue
crayon. The three drawings are in different parts of the
thought bubble, not touching each other.

84 ELINOR (CONT'D) 84
 This time, let's work together.
 Just like the ants! We can't all
 make exactly what we want because
 we don't have enough pillows...

As she says this, portions of each crayon drawing fade,
leaving about a third of each.

85 ELINOR (CONT'D) 85
...but if we change our plans, and
help each other, we can make one
amazingly awesome incredible mega-
ANT HILL CASTLE!

The remaining portions of the drawings slide together to make a multicolored, multifaceted castle that doesn't look as stylistically coherent as before, and in fact looks a little like an anthill.

Ari and Hazel are thrilled and high-five.

86 HAZEL/ARI 86
ANT HILL CASTLE WHOO-HOO!/ AMAZING
PLAN!

87 ELINOR 87
First we'll build your library,
Hazel.

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88              HAZEL
              (jumping for joy)
      Yes!

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89	ARI	89
	Ooh! Then can we make my drawbridge next?	

90 ELINOR 90
Sure! And then we'll make my slide!

COOPERATIVE CASTLE BUILDING MONTAGE

The kids sing as we show a montage of them working together on their castles: helping each other lift cushions, placing books in the library, getting ideas for the drawbridge, miming gentle suggestions about cushion placement, etc. At one point, Ari opens the door to grab a large leaf and stick from outside, then pretends to crawl like an ant, pretending to struggle to carry them with one hand, which makes the others giggle and then come pretend to help him lug them across the floor.

It's a fast-paced song, sort of doo-wop, maybe with "shoo-be-doo-be"-type syllables after the first two lines of each verse.

91 ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI 91
(singing)
ELINOR: When your castle is a
hassle, grass'll be the place to
go.
(MORE)

90.

ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI (CONT'D)

HAZEL: Be a tourist in the forest,
it's the surest way to know.

ARI: We see nature at a glance.

HAZEL: And we decide to take a
chance

ELINOR: Because we learned a lesson
from the ANTS!

ALL: Let's work together!

Let's work together!

That's the way do it better.

Let's work together!

Let's work together!

ELINOR: To build the best hill ever
known,

HAZEL: A hill of dirt and twig and
stone,

ARI: An ant can't do it all alone.

(big finish)

But we can do it if we work
TOGETHER!

END MONTAGE: When the song ends, the castle is nearly
finished, and they look at it proudly, hands on hips.

92	ELINOR	92
	Ants, we've got one more leaf 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	HAZEL	93
	Make that two more leaves!	

Hazel pulls out the leaf and twig ARI had been pretending to
lug during the montage, ties the leaf stem to the twig, and
attaches it to the castle as a flag.

94	ELINOR	94
	Perfect! Good thing you carried in that leaf, Ari!	

95	ARI	95
	Well, I had some help.	

96	HAZEL	96
	From your ant-friends!	

97	ELINOR	97
	All ants into the castle!	

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The kids laugh, then eagerly play in their new castle.

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ELINOR, HAZEL, ARI
(ad lib sounds of playing)

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FADE OUT, THE END