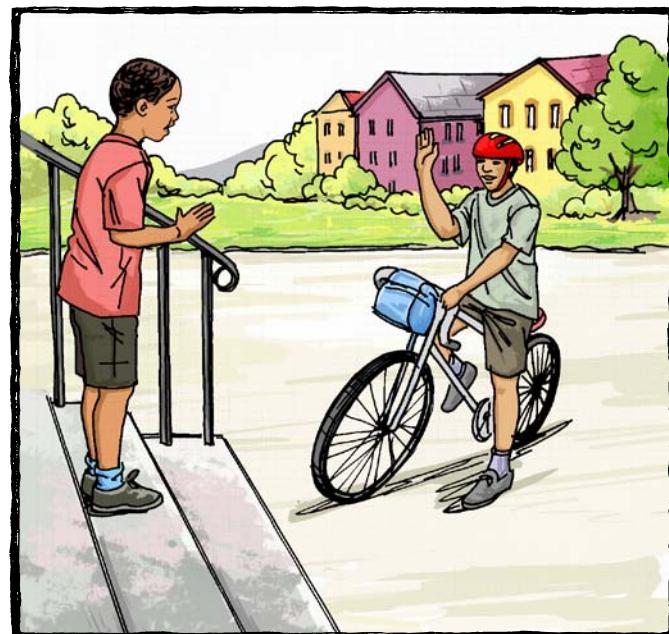


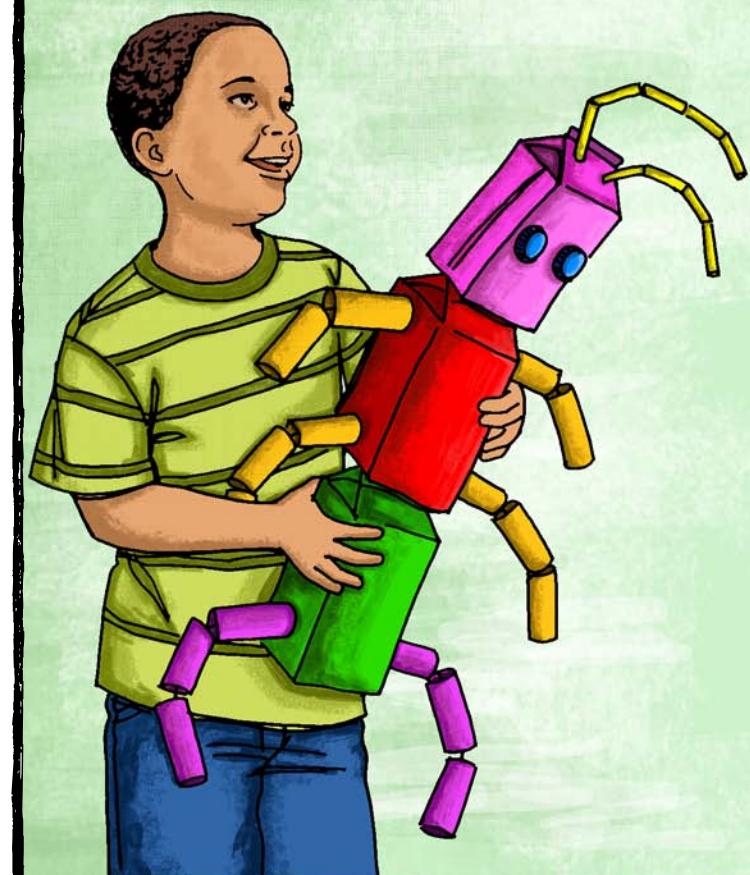
# The Ant in the Photograph

A Reading A-Z Level T Benchmark Book  
Word Count: 1,187



BENCHMARK BOOK • T

# The Ant in the Photograph



Written by Joan Linck • Illustrated by Deborah White

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Level T Benchmark Book  
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## Correlation

LEVEL T	
Fountas & Pinnell	P
Reading Recovery	38
DRA	38

Tonight was Parents' Night for Mr. Casey's third-grade classroom. Daron was excited. He felt like a balloon filled close to bursting. He rushed through his favorite dinner. He did his math homework as fast as he could. He begged his mom to please let him walk the dog *after* Parents' Night. Finally, Daron and his mom arrived at school.

"My project is right over there," Daron said, pulling his mom across the classroom. They wove around rows of desks then stopped in front of the art table.



"Here it is!" Daron proudly pointed to a **sculpture** of a brightly painted, giant ant. "I **recycled** stuff that was being thrown away like milk cartons and bottle caps. Can you tell that the legs are old toilet paper tubes?"

"You did a great job," Daron's mom said. "It's as colorful as a circus clown."

"Thanks. It took me almost a whole week to make it," Daron said.

"Let's take a **photograph** of you with it," his mom said as she pulled her **camera** out of its blue bag. Daron picked up his ant, held it high, and grinned for the photograph.



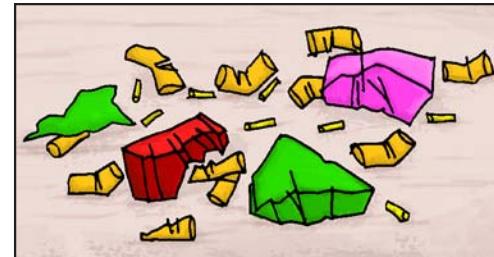
"Be careful with that," his mom warned, placing the camera back in its bag. "I'm not ready to leave yet."

Daron put the ant down and followed his mom as she toured the room.

Returning to his ant, Daron said happily, "I can't wait to show my ant to Dad when he gets home from his business trip." He held his ant high and **admired** it. But in his excitement, Daron didn't notice a book on the floor. When he stepped on it, his feet flew out from under him as if he'd stepped on a banana peel. He and his ant crashed to the floor.



"Oh no,  
it's **ruined**!"  
Daron  
exclaimed  
when he saw  
pieces of his ant



littering the floor. He picked up the flattened milk cartons, twisted straws, and ripped paper that had made up his ant. "There's no way I can fix it," he moaned, "and Dad never saw it."

"I'm sorry, Daron," his mom said, helping him pick up the last pieces of his ant.

"I hope the photograph of it turns out," said Daron.

"Good thinking," his mom replied. "Dad will like to see that." She put the last of the ant sculpture pieces in the wastebasket. "Are you ready to go? We can stop at the house, pick up the dog, and go to Elm Creek Park to walk him if you want."

"I guess," Daron said with a sad shrug.

The next afternoon, the school bell rang and kids piled out of the building. Daron followed the crowd toward the buses but stopped when he heard his name.

"Hi, Mom," he said when he spied her. "What are you doing here? Did you get the photograph from last night?"

"No, unfortunately, I can't find the camera," she said.

"But you're a mom, you never lose things," Daron said.



"Maybe I left it at school last night," his mom said. "Will you help me search the lost and found?" But after digging through mountains of sweatshirts and sweaters, sorting through mismatched mittens and gloves, looking at socks, hats and scarves, they did not find the camera.



"Let's go to the office and ask whether anyone turned it in," Daron suggested, his voice filled with worry. But no one in the office had seen it either.

"What if we never find it, Mom?" Daron asked as they walked to the car. "You don't have your nice camera anymore, and I don't have a picture to show Dad."

"Well," his mom said thoughtfully, "I'll check the apartment one more time. If it's not there, we may just have to hope for the kindness of a stranger."

"Was our name and telephone number on the camera?" Daron asked.

"I don't remember," his mom answered.  
"I sure hope so."



Daron sat at the kitchen table the next evening practicing spelling words with his mom when the telephone rang. He wrote a few words while he waited for her, but it was hard to **concentrate**. A gloomy cloud hung over his head. There was still no sign of the lost camera. He had tried to make another ant sculpture, but the whole thing fell apart when he started to paint it before the glue dried. Now he had run out of time. His dad was coming home tomorrow, and Daron had nothing to show him.

When his mom finished her **conversation**, she made a quick call and then suggested they go outside for a while.

"I don't feel like it," Daron muttered.

Mom smiled and gently tugged Daron to the door. "Come on. A surprise is coming."

Daron flopped on the front steps and waited, but nothing happened. "This isn't a very good surprise, Mom," he sighed. "Can I go back inside?"

His mom laughed, "You'll miss the fun if you leave now, look."



An older boy riding a bike came toward them. "Are you Daron?" he asked.

"Yes," Daron answered slowly.

The boy got off his bike, put down his kickstand, and extended his hand toward Daron. "Hi, I'm Michael." Daron hesitated, and then shook his hand. "I think this belongs to you," Michael said and pulled a blue camera bag from his handlebars.

Daron's eyes opened wide, his jaw nearly fell to the front steps. "Our camera? Thanks! Where did you find it?"

"I found it in Elm Creek Park, by a park bench," Michael replied.

"I remember now," said Daron's mom, "we took a break from walking the dog and sat on a bench for a while. We must have forgotten to take the camera with us when we started walking again."

Daron unzipped the bag, pulled out the camera and turned it around, looking for something. "We don't have our name on this. How did you know it was ours?"

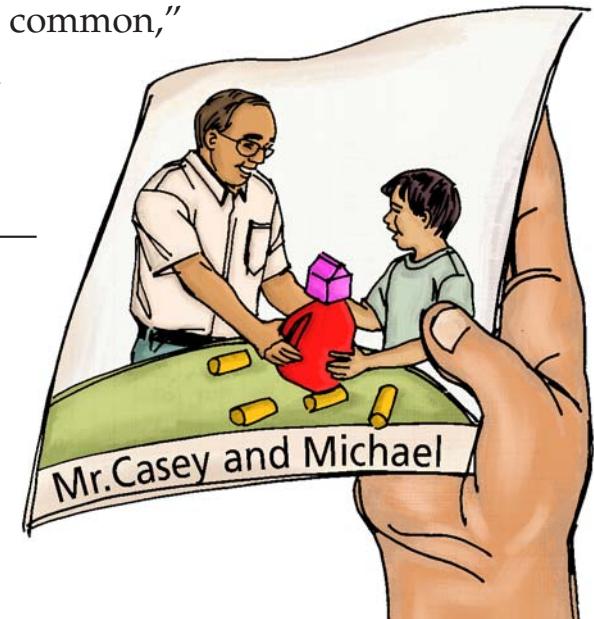


"I discovered that you and I have something in common," said Michael.

Daron gave Michael a puzzled look—he couldn't imagine having anything in common with this tall boy. Michael

explained, "I printed the pictures in the camera hoping one of them would give me a clue about the people who owned the camera. I saw the one showing you in your classroom with your ant sculpture. And guess what?" Daron shrugged his shoulders. "We had the same third-grade teacher. I'm in tenth grade now, but I remember doing the same project in third grade. Mr. Casey always has his students make sculptures out of recycled stuff."

"Really?" Daron asked.



"But yours was better than mine. I made a dog, but the nose was so long everyone thought it was an anteater," Michael laughed. He pulled the photographs out of his backpack and handed them to Daron. "I took the pictures to school and showed them to the secretary. She recognized you and called your mom to give her my telephone number. Then your mom called me."

"Now I can show the ant to Dad," said Daron happily. "Thanks, Michael. I guess sometimes people can count on the kindness of a stranger."



## Glossary

**admired** (*v.*)

appreciated or warmly approved of a person or a quality (p. 5)

**camera** (*n.*)

a device used to record images for photographs or motion pictures (p. 4)

**concentrate** (*v.*)

to gather all of one's thoughts or efforts (p. 10)

**conversation** (*n.*)

the act of talking to someone in a relaxed way (p. 11)

**photograph** (*n.*)

a picture made using a camera (p. 4)

**recycled** (*v.*)

used over again (p. 4)

**ruined** (*adj.*)

caused to be broken or destroyed (p. 6)

**sculpture** (*n.*)

three-dimensional works of art using flexible or hard materials (p. 4)