

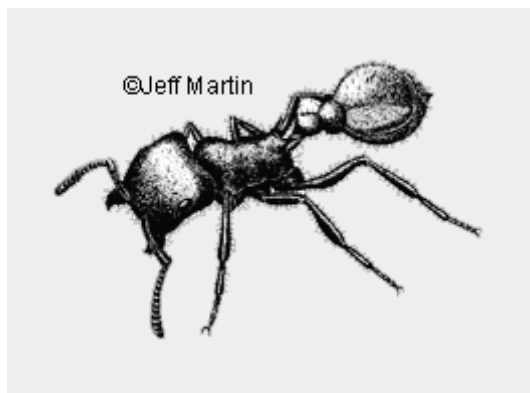


## Teacher Background

### Ants

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Ants are familiar creatures. Although they are small as individuals, they are social, living in cooperative colonies, and these colonies are huge. Ant colonies are made up entirely of females, and include one or more queens and many workers. All of the ants streaming in and out of a nest entrance are workers, who protect the colony, collect food, and care for the larvae. Even though the workers are females, they lack the reproductive abilities of the queen, who lives deep within the nest and does little besides produce eggs.



All ant bodies are divided into three parts. The head includes the antennae that detect smells, compound eyes, and capable jaws. All legs are attached to the mid-section, called the thorax. The gaster is the last segment and contains most of the internal organs, including defensive organs, including the glands that produce formic acid. When working with ants, beware the gaster!

Ants are most closely related to wasps. Imagine a wasp without its wings—it looks like an ant. Flying ants (the new queens and males) are often mistaken for wasps.

[http://www.desertmuseum.org/books/nhsd\\_ants.php](http://www.desertmuseum.org/books/nhsd_ants.php)