

JUDE T. JONES KID EXPLORER

IN AN ANT COLONY

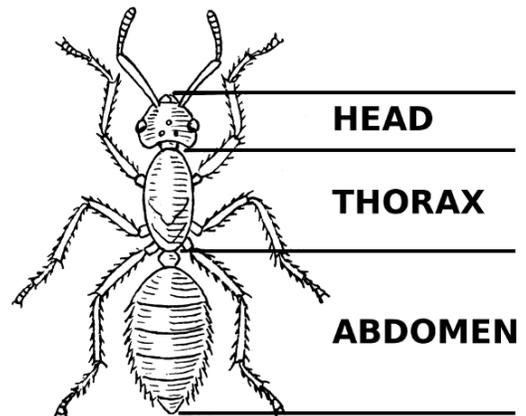


Jude T. Jones was no ordinary 7 year old boy. He had magic powers. He could transform into any creature. One day, he was watching a line of ants walking back and forth between some cookie crumbs he had dropped on the ground and a hole in the ground. The hole was the ants' home called a **colony**. Jude knew a little bit about ants. But he wanted to know more. He decided to transform into an ant.

Jude was a little worried about becoming an ant. There can be thousands or even millions of ants in a colony. He didn't want to get lost. He also knew that ants have a special **odor** or smell that lets other ants know they belong to that particular colony. If an ant with a different odor tries to enter the colony, it will be killed.

He thought it would be best to become a **worker ant**. All

worker ants are female. They spend their days **foraging** for food. This means they go and look for food and then bring it back to the colony. "I wish to become a worker ant that belongs to this colony," he said, while pointing at the hole in the ground. He immediately transformed into a worker. He felt kind of funny being a girl ant.



Now that he was an ant, his body had three main parts: **head**, **thorax** and **abdomen**. He also had two **antennae** or **feelers**. The feelers can feel, smell, and taste. He had an **exoskeleton**, which is a skeleton on the outside of the body. The exoskeleton is kind of like a suit of armor. He also had a strong **mandible** or jaw. He would need a strong mandible to carry food.

He watched the ants surrounding the piece of cookie. He found a crumb and picked it up. "How do I find the hole," he wondered. "It is so far away when you're tiny." Then he smelled something. "That's right," he said. "Ants follow a **scent trail** between a piece of food and their colony." So, Jude the ant followed the scent trail. It took a while but he made it to the entrance.



A new ant colony is being built

He suddenly felt nervous. He hoped he had the correct odor to get past the soldier ants guarding the entrance. Luckily, he walked past without any difficulty. He was amazed by the colony. It was filled with **chambers**. Each one had a purpose. He walked past the **queen ant**, who was laying eggs in one chamber. The eggs turn into **larvae**. The larvae become **pupae** and the pupae become adult

ants. Jude remembered that this process is called **metamorphosis**. A metamorphosis is a change from one thing to another.

Each ant in a colony has a specific role. This is called a **caste system**. Ant colonies have three castes. There are queens that lay eggs, workers and winged males. Each worker ant had a specific job to do. Some workers forage for food. Some take care of the queen. Some take care of the developing ants. Some build chambers and tunnels. Some guard the colony.

Jude took his crumb to one of the food storage chambers. Then he left the colony with other worker ants that were on their way to gather more food. He followed the scent trail to the cookie crumbs.

As he watched the worker ants toiling away, he decided that being an ant was too much work. It was more fun to be a 7 year old boy, even if that meant school and chores. He wished to be Jude T. Jones again. He transformed back into a boy and continued to watch the busy ants at work.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STORY

Why was Jude worried about becoming ant?

What did Jude need to safely enter the ant colony?

What was Jude's ant body like?

What did Jude see in the ant colony? Can you describe it?

What is a caste system in an ant colony?

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