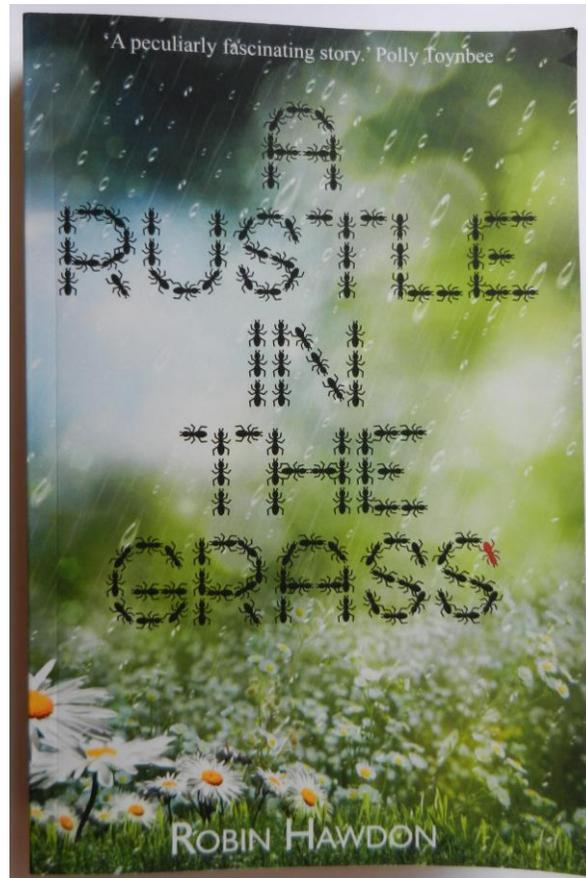


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A Rustle in the Grass

Robin Hawdon

Introduction

Robin Hawdon is a writer and a famous British Playwright. He has written many plays that have been shown all over the world. Robin Hawdon's rich writing style brings to life his first novel, *A Rustle in the Grass*, a unique and fascinating story filled with excitement and adventure following the lives of a colony of ants and their struggles.

About the book

A peaceful colony of black ants awakens from the winter to sunshine and bright days but as the little ants begin their duties they discover that their great leader has not made it through the winter. The ants are in a flurry over the death and must call a council meeting to decide on who will be the next leader. Not only is the very structure and way of life of their colony in disarray, an old worker named Five Legs has plans of his own that will further disrupt the order of the colony. Even more bad news arrives as Dreamer, a curious soldier ant, comes across an ant from a sister colony that tells of how his colony was destroyed by strange beastly red ants. Black Sting, a seasoned soldier ant, sends three of his soldiers with the task of investigating the red ants. Uncertain of what they will find or if they will return, Snake's Tongue, as the leader, Joker, and Dreamer set out on the long important journey to find the red ants that sends them further than any ant of their colony has ever gone.

While the three soldiers are on their journey, the colony faces its own problems. Unrest and a revolt is echoed throughout the colony as worker ants are pushed to their limit on repairing the mound from a devastating bird attack. Five Legs urges for his plan but the council won't listen to the workers' plight until something drastic happens. Facing a giant spider, hunger, and the fierce red ants, the three soldiers travel into uncharted territory and come upon something greater than they ever could have imagined. Dreamer must push himself to the brink if he will survive the red ants and save his colony.

Discussion Guide:

1. What do ants use to recognize each other (p19)? What is the ants' most important feature that they use to sense the environment around them? What senses do ants have? What unique feature does Dreamer have that eventually lends him the name Quick Feelers? How does this feature help him on his journey and throughout the story?
2. What are the different castes of an ant colony? Which one is most dominant? What is the society structure of an ant colony? Who ultimately rules the colony?
3. What was Five Legs trying to accomplish by going into the council meeting where he was not welcome as a worker ant? Was his motive a good one? Explain why this was or wasn't good idea. What eventually causes Black Sting to use Five Legs' idea?
4. How do the black ants use their stings to defend themselves? How do the red ants use their stings? Which is more effective? What type of ants do you think the black ants are similar to in real life? What about the red ants?
5. How do the black ants rule their colony? How do the red ants rule their colony? Which way do you think is better and why? Are either like a real ant colony?
6. Why was Black Sting elected as the new ruler? Do you think Black Sting is a strong leader? When the colony was under attack by the Tawny Killer-Bird, how did Black Sting manage to get the bird to leave? Were his actions brave or reckless? What choices did Black Sting face throughout the book? How did his decisions affect his own life and the lives of everyone in the colony?
7. How do the dreams Dreamer has help him? Do his dreams have any influence on his actions? Who was the voice in his dreams? Did his dreams help him learn about himself?

Do you think Dreamer developed as a character throughout the book? What evidence is there of his growth as a character?

8. On what important mission were the three soldier ants, Snake's Tongue, Dreamer, and Joker, sent? Did they accomplish their goal? What sacrifices did they have to make to accomplish that goal? How did Dreamer, Snake's Tongue, and Joker escape from the red ants? Did they have any trouble with their plan? Why do you suppose Fleet didn't do anything when he spotted them escaping with the forage party?
9. Throughout the book, the ant Still One tells various stories. Do you think Still One's stories have meaning? What kind of influence do you think Still One's stories have on the ants? Are they helpful or harmful? What does Still One's story of the aphid bugs do for the ants in the final meeting about how to save the colony? Do you think the story helped the ants make the right decision? Why or why not?
10. How did Dreamer save the colony from the red ants? Do you think it was a good strategy? Do you think there was another way the colony could have been saved? Was the end of the book satisfying? Do you think the ants were an accurate example of a real ant colony? How are real ant colonies different? Or the same? What did you learn about insects and entomology in the book?