Observing

## Go outside and observe what ants look like and how they behave. Try to find their anthill and see what does it look like.

**Ants and anthills**

Anthills come in different shapes, sizes and locations. There are species of ants that build underground; there are arboreal species, which live inside dead or living plants, while other ants build anthills out of living leaves. There are even ants that do not build anthills (army ants). Ants use a variety of building materials, for example clay or plant debris. Also, they can colonize snail shells, live inside the bones of dead animals, etc.
The anthills of leafcutter ants can reach many meters below the earth's surface and consist of many chambers connected by corridors.

**How much weight can an ant carry?**
Ants are very strong. They can lift 20–40 times their own bodyweight. This means that if an ant was the size of a 9-year-old child, it would be able to pick up an object that weighs as much as a car.

Source: flickr

Talk

# Talk about how an anthill functions: what are the roles of particular ants.

**The ant roles**

An anthill is inhabited by a large number of ants, ranging from a few thousand to as many as several million, depending on the species. Due to their functions, specialized groups of ants are called **castes.** All the ants living in anthills are females. In the summer or at the beginning of the wet season, ants of the opposite sex appear in the colony – these ants have wings. After the mating flight the males die, while the fertilized females found a new colony.

- **Queen** - the most important ant in the colony and the only one capable of laying eggs. Even though she is called "the queen", she doesn't really have any authority.
- **Workers** represent the most numerous caste. They are responsible for collecting food, rearing larvae, maintaining cleanliness in the anthill, etc.
- **Soldiers** - responsible for the safety of the colony.

See the differences between castes in an ant colony in the links below:

1. http://www.reed.edu/biology/courses/BIO342/2011_syllabus/2011_websites/NAEwebsite/images/morphology.jpg
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ant#/media/File:Atta.cephalotes.gamut.selection.jpg