Sneha Tharayil

Ms. Tharayil

English 7

Period 1

17 April 2014

No Matter How Small

**Thesis statement:** The conflict in the story, the characters’ attitudes toward each other, and the symbolism of various objects in the movie depict the message that even one life can make a big difference, and therefore each life holds worth.

Although at the surface, A Bug’s Life might appear to be a simple and entertaining children’s animated film, upon closer inspection one can see that it actually possesses a complex plotline which revolves around two crucial, meaningful, and parallel conflicts. The more apparent conflict in the story is that a tyrannical gang of grasshoppers oppress a humble colony of ants, enslaving them for their own selfish needs. This is immediately established in the beginning scenes of the movie. The movie begins with a busy colony of ants that are scrambling to harvest an enormous pile of seeds. After Flik’s (the film’s protagonist) over-zealous attempt to help his colony in their harvest goes awry, Hopper and his menacing gang descend upon a terrified colony of ants and dictate that they must not only fulfill the original food ration the ants collect for them but they must collect double that ration to account for the lost food as well as to ensure next season’s harvest. The rest of the movie then unfolds around this central problem and at its climax, the movie’s underlying commentary that each life makes a difference is made clear. The pinnacle point of this conflict comes when Flik musters up enough courage to stand up to Hopper, calling his bluff and revealing that Hopper knows that even if one ant rebels against him it shows his weakness and his implicit fear that the ants are actually stronger than him. In this way, Flik’s courage to face his foe demonstrates that it takes just one to overcome oppression and to influence others to do the same.

The second conflict of the film lies in Flik’s inherent struggle to fit in with his colony while still maintaining his own unique identity. Again, this is also established in the beginning of the film. The audience is introduced to Flik’s character while’s out in the field with a seemingly bizarre contraption, which he invented, on his back in a vain effort to more efficiently fulfill his share of his harvest. Flik’s clumsiness and awkwardness also get in his way and those of others, disrupting the precious line’s flow, and earning him looks and comments of disgust and frustration from his fellow ants. Flik’s clumsiness also ultimately causes him greater troubles as he accidentally loses the colony’s entire harvest to the pond. As a result, Flik is essentially discreetly isolated from the colony under the guise that he must go find a group of warrior bugs to save them from the grasshopper gang, while in reality this mission is simply a ploy by the colony to remove Flik from them. Thus, through this conflict it becomes clear that Flik’s own society does not value him as an individual and see him as dispensable. However, by the end of the movie, Flik proves his individual worth by standing up to Hopper and rallying both the members of his ant community and the circus bugs to work together to overcome the enemy.