

Animals in Entertainment

Grades: 3 - 6

Objectives:

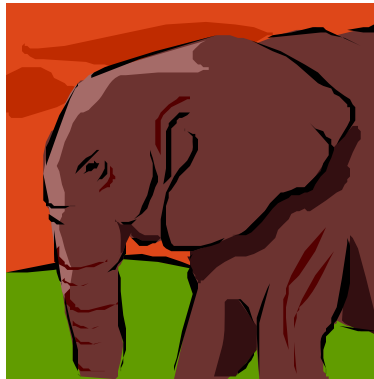
Affective:

- Students will be able to describe how elephants live in the wild and how they live in captivity. Students will be able to describe a variety of points of view about the use of elephants in entertainment.

Academic:

- Students will read and comprehend a non-fiction story.
- Students will conduct research using the Internet and library books.

Materials: Pictures or library books depicting elephants in the wild and in captivity. See “literature for children” listing.



Motivation:

Ask students, “What animals have you seen perform in the circus?”

Procedure:

Mini-Lesson:

- 1) Have students name animals used in the circus and discuss what these animals are expected to do in order to entertain people. Be certain to include elephants. Chart student responses on the left side of a T-chart (see Addendum #2).

- 2) Discuss: What do students know about how elephants live in the wild?
- 3) Have students take turns in oral reading of the accompanying story (see Addendum #1) entitled, "Elephants in the Wild and in Captivity." Have students read segments to answer each of the listed questions.
- 4) Complete the right side of the T-chart.

Small-Group Activity:

- 1) Have groups of students conduct research concerning how people who run circuses think elephants in their care are treated.
- 2) Have other groups of students conduct research concerning how animal advocates think elephants in circuses are treated.
- 3) Visit circus websites including www.ringling.com/animals/elephant, www.circuses.com/complaint, www.circuses.com/ringling/ele2.html

Summary:

- 1) Have groups of students report back to the class concerning their research.
- 2) Have students discuss the differences in (a) what people who use elephants in the circus and (b) those who are animal advocates have to say about how elephants in the circus are treated. List their findings on a chart.
- 3) Have students discuss their opinions -- and the underlying reasons for these opinions -- as to whether or not they feel elephants should be used to entertain people in the circus.

Follow-up Activities:

Social Studies and Geography

Students can use maps to chart the range of elephants. Where did large populations once live? Where do most elephants in the wild live today? What kind of land regions and features are conducive to elephant survival? For additional information, log onto <http://school.discovery.com/specials/aek/graphpopulations.html>.

Communication Arts

Read non-fiction books related to elephants. Read, talk and write about the zoological family Elephantidae and the larger group of 160 related species with a proboscis or trunk. Have students write group or individual reports describing the elephants' trunk, tusks, teeth, eating habits, how elephants help a sick or injured member of their family, elephant mourning of the dead, elephant babies and efforts to save the elephant. See www.geocities.com/Rain Forest/Jungle/3951/eleph.html.

Write to humane groups for information about legislation designed to improve the care of elephants in captivity. Contrast this with information provided by circuses.

Have small groups of students conduct research on how bears, lions and tigers live in the wild. What kind of family life (social structure) do they have? What do they eat? How do they travel? How do they communicate with each other? What are the benefits and problems associated with living in the wild versus living in a circus? Create compare and contrast charts such as Venn diagrams.

How do domesticated animals who are used in the circus (e.g., dogs, horses) live? How might they live if they were not used in the circus? What are student opinions towards having these animals perform in a circus?

Math

Create a time line on which you graph the ever-decreasing number of elephants through recorded history. Have students make predictions about elephant population growth based on literature obtained from groups that are involved in trying to save the elephant as well as groups that think additional legal killing is necessary.

Art

Elephant study lends itself to a wealth of art possibilities. Stick puppets can be made using elephant clip art. Dioramas can incorporate clay figures of elephants in different environments. Masks of elephants can be used as part of a classroom dramatization or bulletin board display. When making masks, encourage students to make the details of each ear slightly different from that designed by other students. Elephant ears are as individual as human fingerprints. The patterns of the veins in the ears and the shapes of the ear edges are distinctive. Two elephant experts, Iain Douglas and Cynthia Moss, have photographed hundreds of elephants and can identify individuals by their ears. See www.mashatu.tv/eleident.html.

Science Research

Obtain literature from encyclopedias, books, the Internet, animal-welfare, animal-rights, elephant protection societies as well as zoos and circuses. Visit the website <http://www.umkc.edu/imc/elephant.html>. Compare and contrast the information gathered as to the treatment of elephants in captivity including:

- What are the physical, behavioral and social needs of elephants? Describe their activities, habitat and family groupings in the wild versus in captivity. How are their needs met in captivity?
- Describe the ways in which elephants communicate in the wild.
- What problems might elephants living in the wild encounter?
- Describe the deaths and injuries of elephant keepers and trainers as well as precipitating factors. Describe stereotypic behaviors of elephants in captivity.
- Describe the methods used at circuses for "training" and caring for elephants.

- Visit a circus or traveling zoo. Evaluate it in terms of meeting the physical, behavioral and social needs of elephants. Document your evaluation with an observational journal, photographs and video.

Special Education and English and a Second Language:

- Employ Total Physical Response (TPR) in describing elephant behaviors. That is, the teacher and students should act out behaviors such as ear flapping.
- Vocabulary words: mammals, herbivores, tusks, calves, species, roaming, enclosures, extinct. Use these words in varied contexts.

References and Literature for Teachers:

- Derby, Pat & Stewart, Ed, *Everything You Should Know About Elephants*, Performing Animal Welfare Society, 1996
- Laub, Thomas & Shannon, Pamela & Smythe, Victoria, *The Live Elephant Book: A Teacher's Guide to Fun and Learning With Elephants*, Live Elephant Inc., 1993
- Masson, Jeffrey, *When Elephants Weep*, Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1995
- Moss, Cynthia, *Elephant Memories: Thirteen Years in the Life of an Elephant Family*, University of Chicago Press, 2000 (for adults)
- Payne, Katy, *Silent Thunder: In the Presence of Elephants*, Penguin USA, 1999 (for adults)

Resource Organizations:

- Center For The Study of Elephants, PO Box 4444, Carson, California 90479
- Elephant Alliance, 6265 Cardeno Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037, phone # 619-454-4959, www.elephantalliance.org
- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, 501 Front Street, Norfolk, VA 23510, phone # 757-622-7382, www.peta.org
- Performing Animal Welfare Society, PO Box 849, Galt, CA 95632, phone # 209-745-2606, www.pawsweb.org
- Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, www.ringling.com
- Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, New York 10460, phone # 718-220-6876, <http://wcs.org>

Literature for Students:

- Denis-Hout, Christine, *The Elephant*, Charlesbridge Publishing, 1992

- Goodall, Jane *Elephant Family*, Madison Marketing Limited, 1991
- Moss, Cynthia, *Little Big Ears; The Story of Ely*, Simon & Schuster, 1997
- Pringle, Laurence, *Elephant Woman: Cynthia Moss Explores the World of Elephants*, Atheneum Press, 1997
- Redmond, Ian, *Eyewitness Books: Elephant*, Alfred Knopf Publishing, 1993
- Steward, Melissa, *Elephants* (True Books: Animals), Children's Press, 2002
- Taylor, Barbara, *Elephants* (The Nature Watch Series), Lorenz Books, 1999
- Travers, Will, *The Elephant Truck*, Millbrook Publishing, 1995

New York State Standards Addressed:

ELA Standard 1 – Language for Information and Understanding:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

Listening and Reading

1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

Speaking and Writing

1. Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly.

ELA Standard 3 - Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Listening and Reading

1. Listening and reading to analyze and evaluate experiences, ideas, information, and issues requires using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives and recognizing the difference in evaluations based on different sets of criteria.

MST Standard 4 – Science:

Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

The Living Environment

7. Human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environment.

MST Standard 7 – Interdisciplinary Problem Solving:

Students will apply the knowledge and thinking of mathematics, science, and technology to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

Connections

1. The knowledge and skills of mathematics, science, and technology are used together to make informed decisions and solve problems, especially those relating to issues of science/technology/society, consumer decision making, design, and inquiry into phenomena.

**Addendum #1:
Elephants in the Wild and in Captivity**

Elephants are the largest land animals on earth. They are mammals and herbivores. The two species of elephants are the African elephants and the Asian elephants. Each of these species is different in appearance. African elephants are larger and have larger ears. Both males and females have tusks. The Asian elephant is smaller and has smaller ears. Male Asian elephants have tusks, but female Asian elephants do not. African elephants can weigh up to 16,500 pounds and their Asian cousins can weigh up to 11,000 pounds.

A typical family unit consists of the oldest female, other elephants of her generation, their young adult daughters and all their young offspring. There are usually ten to twenty members in a group. The oldest female in the group leads the family. She decides where the family will eat, drink and rest. A baby elephant, or calf, spends much of her/his time walking and drinking her mothers' milk. The calf must learn not to trip over her trunk and how to use it. Male elephants leave their family unit about the time of maturity which is between 10 - 15 years. Elephants live to be about 65 years of age.

In the wild, elephants walk many miles each day. They eat between 200 to 500 pounds of greenery and drink about 50 gallons of water daily per adult.

Elephants are loyal. Members of a family will work together to lift a sick elephant and attempt to support it. They have been seen carrying off bones and tusks of their dead and burying them.

Elephants communicate using a variety of sounds as well as body language. After elephants have spread out for feeding, they often come together, greeting each other by raising their heads, lifting and spreading their ears and making loud sounds while flapping their ears. Elephants rest in a tightly knit group touching and leaning on one another. The mother elephant makes soft humming sounds to her calf. In times of distress, the baby will let out a loud cry which will bring immediate attention and assistance. Elephant sounds range from high pitched squeaks to deep rumbles. Some sounds that elephants make are too low in frequency for humans to hear.

At one time, over thirty species of elephants existed. Twenty-eight species are now extinct leaving only two: the African elephant and its smaller Asian cousins. Populations of both species have been severely reduced because of hunting -- mainly for their ivory tusks -- and because forests have been cut down in their natural habitats to make room for growing human populations.

An elephant's skin is very sensitive. Elephants in the wild use leaves as well as mud to cool the body and retain the skin's moisture. In the wild, they also bathe frequently in mud and water. Elephants are very susceptible to sunburn and can often be seen in the wild seeking shelter under trees and in thickets during the daytime hours. Mud bathing and dusting help to cover the skin and protect it from the harmful rays of the sun. Dust bathing also helps protect the skin from insect bites.

Elephants who live in circuses, zoos, carnivals, and various sorts of traveling shows experience very different lifestyles than their wild cousins. While keepers and trainers say that circus elephants have good, healthy lives, some animal advocates say that circus elephants often live in small enclosures, are chained and harshly disciplined.

A circus website, for example, states that their animal care professionals “believe that a positive, healthy environment is the only acceptable and successful method of working with animals. The animals are fed, watered, groomed and cleaned daily. Trainers teach animals routines that showcase their physical abilities and beauty, as well as their distinctive behaviors.” They say that, “their training methods are based on food rewards and words of praise” and that “verbal or physical abuse and the withholding of food or water are strictly prohibited.”

An animal advocacy website, on the other hand, states that that elephant trainers often “use sharp, metal bullhooks and whips to punish elephants and make them perform physically strenuous tricks.”

A circus website states that their “animal enclosures are specially designed to meet the unique needs of each individual species. The enclosures provide room for ample freedom of movement and appropriate social interaction with other animals, proper ventilation, and protection from the elements.”

In contrast, an animal advocacy website states that, “Elephants in the wild spend much of their time foraging, roaming and bathing.” Elephants in circuses “are packed tightly into hot, reeking boxcars and shackled by four legs for long journeys across the country. Between shows, the elephants remain shackled or confined to tiny pens.”

In Defense of Animals, an animal-protection organization, states that, “Children do not learn how animals live and behave in their habitats while watching them perform unnatural, confusing tricks on command in an arena. Students do not learn that elephants walk 20 miles per day, care for their children for life, and even bury their dead.”

Some humane organizations and individuals are working to ensure that animals in circuses receive better treatment. Other humane organizations are working so that elephants and other animals such as bears, lions and tigers are not allowed in circuses but allowed to live their natural lives with their families in the wild. Some cities and towns in the United States, such as Boulder, Colorado and Stamford, Connecticut and Hollywood, Florida and Greenburgh public property), New York currently do not allow performances by circuses that have animals acts. For a complete list see www.circuses.com.

Have children read the previous selection to the point at which they are able to answer each question in turn:

1. Name and describe two species of elephants that exist today.
2. What does a typical family unit look like in the wild?
3. What evidence do we have that elephants are loyal to their family groups?
4. Why have elephant populations in the wild gotten smaller?
5. How do elephants in the wild protect their skin?
6. What do people who use elephants as circus performers say about their treatment?
7. What do animal advocates say about the treatment of animals in the circus?
8. What do think about using elephants in the circus and why?
9. What are humane organizations working for?

Addendum # 2: Elephant T-Chart

BEFORE UNIT:	I	
	I	AT THE END OF THE UNIT:
	I	
What Do You Know About Elephants in the Wild?	I	What Have You Learned About Elephants in the Wild?
	I	
	I	
	I	
	I	