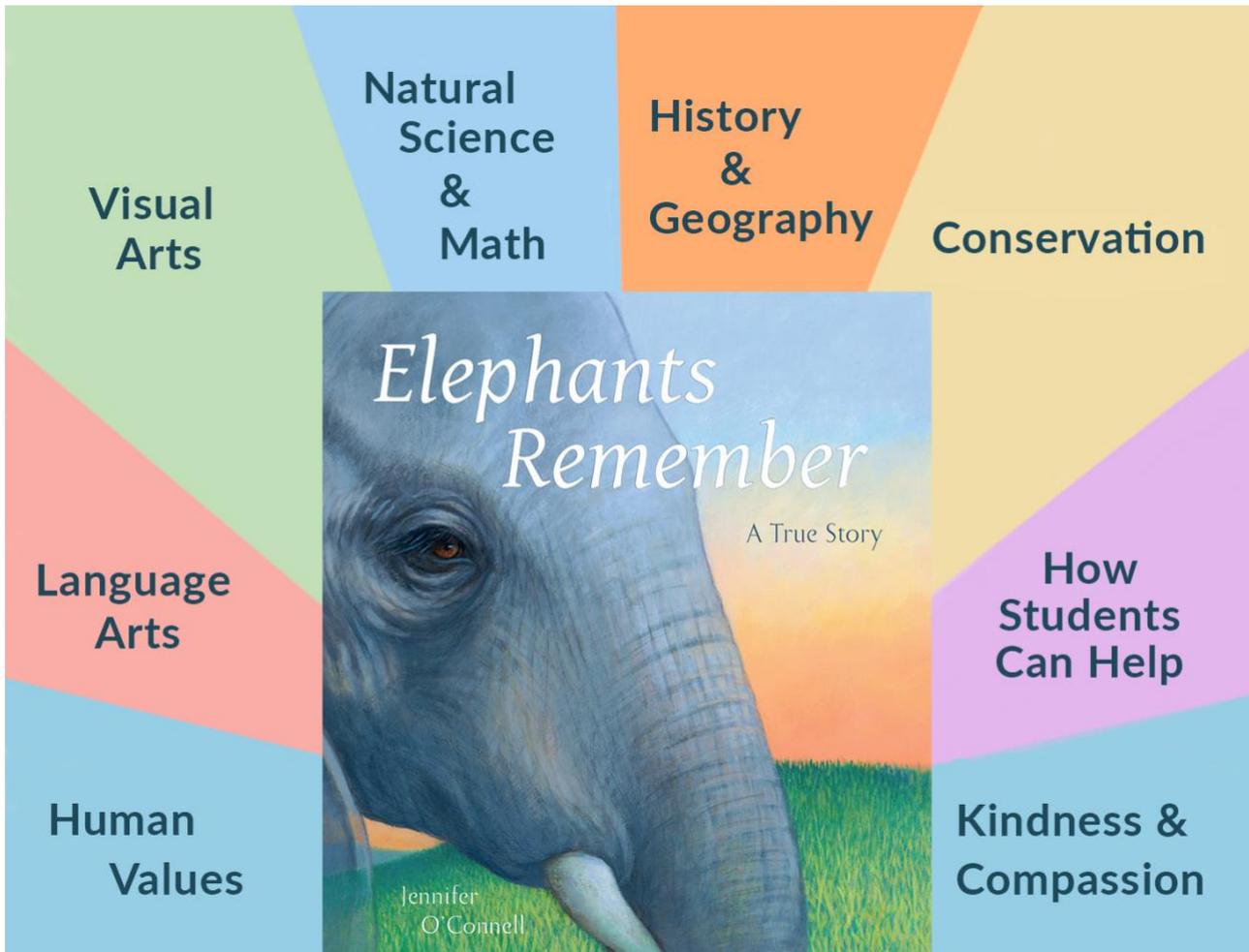


Classroom Ideas for **Elephants Remember**

Written and Illustrated by Jennifer O'Connell



About the Book - 1

Thinking About Kindness and Compassion - 1

Language Arts - 2

Visual Arts - 3

Natural Science & Math - 4

History & Geography - 6

Conservation & Helping Elephants: What Can Students Do? - 6

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About The Book

The seven elephants that were trucked to Lawrence Anthony's reserve in South Africa were full of fear and rage. They had lost family members to poachers and been moved from place to place, escaping from every enclosure. Knowing they would be shot if they broke out again, Lawrence set up camp by their holding pen. As days passed, he talked and sang and listened to the herd, especially to the matriarch, whom he named Nana. Every night when the elephants gathered at the fence, ready to escape, he pleaded with Nana to stay. Gradually she and her herd came to know and trust him, forming a deep bond that lasted a lifetime.

Years later, Lawrence was away on a trip and had a heart attack and died. Two days later, Nana led all 21 elephants twelve miles across the reserve to the edge of Lawrence's yard, where they stood, rumbling quietly. For the next two years, the elephants returned, on the same day, at the same time.

"An excellent story, well told. You'll remember it always." – *Kirkus Reviews*

★ "...Her touching story awakens a sense of wonder about elephants as well as curiosity about how they experience the world." – *Booklist, Starred Review*

Thinking About Kindness and Compassion

The story of *Elephants Remember* inspires us to be open to and listen to others who are not like us. We are *all* animals living on this planet. To thrive we must have empathy for others who look and act differently from us and honor and respect other animals.

Explore ways that students can be kind and compassionate in their daily lives.

- Have the students write their names on small pieces of paper, fold them over, and place them in a shoe box. Pull names out of the box two at a time and form students in pairs. Each pair will meet and briefly talk. Making eye contact they will tell each other something kind that they recently did, said or heard about. This exercise can help to bring an awareness of kindness and is a way for students to experience a connection with another student who they might not know well or feel too shy to talk to.

- With the students' names placed back in the "grab-bag" box, have the students each (blindly) pick a name, not telling who the person is. Some time that day or all week, the student will do something kind for their "secret student." It could be giving them a warm smile, helping them carry something, holding the door for them, including them in a playground game, inviting them to a lunch table or helping them with a math problem.

Language Arts

Elephants Remember will help inspire discussions and/or writing exercises:

- How would you describe the two main characters – Nana and Lawrence? For example: their appearance, what they were feeling, how they acted.
- How did the relationship change between the characters?
- How did Lawrence feel when he discovered that the elephants had escaped from the temporary boma pen at his reserve?
- How did Lawrence feel when he stood at the boma fence facing Nana when she was going to escape? What would you have done? Why did Jennifer O'Connell make that picture a vertical spread?
- Why did Lawrence pause when Nana reached out to him through the fence?
- What facts have you learned from the story?
- What would you like to know, find out or research further?
- How did the story make you feel?
- What things or events surprised you?
- Why do you think Jennifer O'Connell put the first scene on page 1, before the title page? This is called "in medias res," which means opening/beginning with a scene from the middle of the story.
- Where did Jennifer O'Connell **show** what was happening in the story with pictures, not words?

(Note: Of course, different grade levels will have different levels of sophistication and complexity in their answers.)

- **Writing Prompt to go with Activity Coloring Page #1:** In Elephants Remember, Nana the elephant and Lawrence Anthony became friends. What animal would YOU like to be friends with and why?
- **Write to politicians to speak out against elephant poaching.** Children can send letters to the Secretary of State on the Wildlife Conservation Society website, to speak out against poaching.

Visual Arts

When illustrating a picture book, the characters need to be consistent and look 'the same' throughout the book as they are shown from different angles.

- **Character Drawing Exercise** – Have a large “grab-bag” or box containing small plastic models of animals and (if available) people. Each student will blindly pick a character from the bag. * The students will then sketch their character with a #2 pencil, from four (or more) viewpoints on an 8 ½ x 11" paper that has been folded both ways to provide 4 areas with: 1 – head-on view, 2 – side or rear view, 3 – from the ground looking up view, 4 – ariel (looking down on) view. * An alternative would be to ask each student to bring in a small figure or a stuffed animal from home. But the 'surprise element' of a grab-bag makes it fun and helps overcome inhibitions and self-consciousness.
- **Sequential Story Drawing** - On a second piece of paper, each student will sketch a comic strip of their character, showing at least 3 frames where the character is in the action of doing something. It could be something funny happening or a job the character is doing, or the character could be eating, playing, fighting, performing, etc. The students should be thinking about the appropriate expression of the character in this sequence of sketches. Is the character happy? Sad? Surprised? Worried? Angry? Each student will determine how many boxes their comic strip will encompass. Characters and stories will emerge!
- **Elephant Masks** – Use a paper plate for the head and cut two ears out of a second plate. Cut a trunk out of card stock paper and paint these parts gray. Cut two tusks. Glue everything together, cut eye holes and poke holes for string on each side. With crayons or colored pencils, give the elephant wrinkles and eye lashes.
- **Creating an Elephant Scene** – Inspired by the landscapes in *Elephants Remember*, the students will be provided with cut outs of elephants and with colored paper, scissors, glue sticks and oil pastels, create their own “elephant scene” on the savannah. This can also be a collaborative bulletin board mural that the whole class works on. Students can research other animals that live on the African Savannah, to include in their scene.
- **Elephant Puzzles using Coloring Pages** - Print out coloring pages and have each student glue stick the page to card stock, then color the picture. They then can cut the picture up into puzzle pieces and challenge fellow students to put together their puzzle. Each puzzle can be stored in an envelope or held with a paper clip.
- **Coloring Pages** – #1 Prompt: Draw an animal who YOU would like to be friends with. #2 Color the elephants running through the village. #3: Hidden pictures.

Natural Science and Math

How Big Are African Savannah Elephants?

- **Make a Diagram** - On graph paper, held horizontally, with each square equaling 1 foot, have students mark the measurements of each of the following:
 - An adult male (bull) elephant: 13 feet tall (and 30 feet long, weighing as much as 15,000 pounds).
 - A female (cow) elephant: 9 feet tall, (and 13 feet long, weighing up to 7,000 pounds).
 - A newborn baby elephant (calf): 3 feet tall, (weighing from 220 – 240 lbs.)
 - The student. (Use a tape measure or ruler if needed).
 - With these proportions established, have the students sketch the three elephants and themselves and see the comparison!

Measuring in the Classroom

- With a tape measure and masking tape, measure and mark off:
 - An adult savannah elephant's ear: 6 feet tall x 5 feet wide.
 - An adult savannah elephant's trunk: Can be 6 feet long (and weigh 100 pounds!)
 - An adult savannah male, or bull elephant's body: 13 feet high x 30 feet long.
 - An adult savannah female, or cow elephant's body: 9 feet high x 13 feet long.

Elephants are “keystone animals” and have an important role in maintaining harmony within the ecosystem.

Depending on their size, adult elephants eat up to 400 pounds of plant matter (leaves, bark, grasses and fruit) each day. They poop as much as 300 pounds of dung in a day!

When elephants eat plants and fruits, they don't fully digest this food, and as they walk for miles looking for more food, they excrete seeds in their dung piles. These seeds feed smaller animals and grow into plants that cross fertilize. 90 tree species rely on elephants for propagation – to increase their numbers. Elephants also dig holes with their strong tusks to reach the water in underground springs. This is helpful to smaller animals in need of water during the drier period of the year.

- Research and draw some of the plants and/or animals that benefit from elephants.

What are the Differences between Asian, African Savannah and African Forest Elephants?

- **Create A Diagram:** Divide the long, 11” side of a piece of paper into three columns. At the head of the left column write: African Savannah Elephants, at the top of the middle column: African Forest Elephants and for the right: Asian Elephants. On the far left write: size, backs, ears, foreheads, tusks, trunks, skin and toes and geographic area. Research these three types of elephants and record the differences.

How Do African Savannah Elephants Stay Cool?

With their ears! Elephants fan themselves with their huge ears to stay cool (and keep pesky insects away). The ear flapping also cools their blood as it circulates through the numerous veins in their ears. Then, as the blood re-circulates it cools off the rest of the elephant’s large body.

- **Make a life-size elephant ear:** Cut a large piece of cardboard – 6’ x 5’ into the shape of an elephant’s ear (which resembles the shape of Africa). Fan one another with it and feel the breeze!

With mud! Elephants also use mud to stay cool and protect their skin from insects and sunburn in their warm climate. At water holes elephants roll around in mud and suck it up into their trunks and spray it all over their bodies. This is why they often look light brown (instead of gray) in photos. The cool mud coats their skin and seeps into their wrinkles, which helps to keep them comfortable in the oppressive heat.

- **Cool Off with Mud:** Fill a small tub with mud/wet dirt in the sink and set up a blow dryer across the room at a table. Or if it is a warm day, this can be done outside, with the warm sun, instead of a blow dryer. Have each student stop by the blow-dryer table and feel the warm air on their hand. Then have them visit the mud tub and coat their hand with cool mud then make a fist to emulate an elephant’s deep wrinkles. When they re-visit the blow dryer table or hold their fists up to the warm sun, see if they notice a difference in their body temperature.

How Elephants Communicate

Elephants can trumpet, roar, grunt, rumble, purr, shriek and scream to express what they are feeling and to “talk” with one another. Elephants’ rumbles are like a drumming sound made in their throat. These sounds can be so low that human ears cannot hear the “infrasounds,” but elephants can hear them, sometimes up to six miles away. Elephants can also use their feet and trunks to feel the ground and understand

vibrations or “seismic signals” created by loud rumbles from other elephants many miles away. Elephants use their trunks to touch and communicate with other elephants. They also use their ears and body movements to convey meaning.

- **Rumble Like an Elephant** - Have everyone in the class close their mouths and with a hand on their throat make low humming sounds. Ask the students if they can feel the vibrations.

History and Geography

How long have elephants been on the earth?

From discovering and studying fossils, ancient bones and teeth, scientists learned that other large mammals, with long trunks and tusks, like today’s elephants lived millions of years ago.

- Research what these early elephants looked like and what they are called. The best known are mammoths and mastodons, but there were many more.

Where do Asian and African elephants live?

- On the internet or in books, look to see where these two elephant species live. Find two maps – one that shows the numbers of elephants and where they lived hundreds of years ago, and one that shows the numbers and where they live today. Is there a difference?

What are the threats that elephants face?

- Have the students form into small groups, each group researching one of the threats that elephants (in Asia as well as Africa) face today. Each group will then present their findings to the rest of the class.

These threats include: poaching, habitat loss, human-elephant conflict, mistreatment in captivity, and more.

Conservation & Helping Elephants – What Can Students Do? *

- **Participate in World Elephant Day (August 12)** – “...which focuses on raising awareness to help elephants. African and Asian elephants face many threats including poaching, habitat loss, human-elephant conflict, mistreatment in captivity, and more.”

- **Be a part of eco-tourism** - which is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education. Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests.” – *The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), 2015.*
- **Start a study group** - Meet with fellow students at your school to brainstorm ideas about what can be done about the plight of the elephants to make sure that they survive for years to come.
- **Don't buy ivory or other wildlife products** - Elephants are killed by the thousands for their ivory tusks, which are teeth that grow out of each side of the elephant's upper jaw. The ivory is then sold illegally to be used for jewelry and decorative objects.
- **Learn about how/why elephants are a crucial keystone species** – how they have a key role in the environment and relationships with plants and animals.
- **Adopt an elephant** - The class can hold fundraisers to raise money to contribute to an elephant orphanage. The donation will help to pay for milk, vitamins, medicine and much more for the orphans. The orphanage will email a photo of the “adopted elephant” and give updates on the calf's progress.

These organizations have elephant adoption programs:

Game Rangers International

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

World Wildlife Fund

- **Volunteer, donate and get involved** - These organizations are dedicated to protecting elephants and other endangered animals and the natural environment:

Game Rangers International – <http://www.gamerangersinternational.org>

Volunteers can get involved with orphaned elephant observations, education, wildlife research and working with communities.

Roots & Shoots – <http://www.rootsandshoots.org>

Based on the vision of Dr. Jane Goodall, this worldwide program has local chapters. Children of all ages and adults can participate in projects and activities, including educating others and protesting the use of ivory. Classes and schools can participate and help by raising awareness and funds.

The David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation – <http://www.davidshepherd.org>

This organization works to protect critically endangered mammals in their habitat and to benefit local communities that share their environment. The mission is to: **Fight, Protect, and Engage** on behalf of endangered wildlife around the world. There are many ways to get involved: by buying lovely wildlife art and gifts, by donating money, by fundraising, volunteering or “adopting” endangered animals by raising and donating money to organizations dedicated to their protection.

Born Free – <http://www.bornfree.org.uk>

A nonprofit organization whose mission is to end suffering of wild animals in captivity, help and rescue individual animals in need, protect wildlife in their natural habitats and encourage compassionate conservation globally. The organization’s programs include wildlife sponsorship and you can support it through an online gift shop.

World Wildlife Fund – <https://www.worldwildlife.org/> This organization has an adoption program, and offers other ways to get involved – by donating directly, becoming involved in a local chapter, fundraising, learning and spreading the word.

The South African Conservation Fund – <https://www.saconservaion.fund/>.

The official nonprofit organization of Thula Thula, founded by Lawrence Anthony’s wife, Françoise Malby Anthony. This organization sponsors a center for orphaned and wounded wildlife and a volunteer camp where people can come to live and learn about conservation, the African bush, and ways to help our planet.

*Much of this information was found on the World Elephant Day website.

