



Ella – Teacher notes

Title: Ella

Author: Nicole Godwin

Illustrator: Demelsa Haughton

Publisher: Tusk Books – www.tuskbooks.com

ISBN: 978-0-9945314-0-7

Publication Date: August 2016

Links to Australian school curriculum topics of English (Learning F-2 and 3-6), cross curriculum priority of sustainability and the general capability of ethical understanding.

Synopsis

Ella tells the story of a baby elephant who was taken from her mum to entertain tourists. The book follows her grand escape in search of her mum. A double page of facts highlighting issues facing elephants in the world today is included at the end of the story.

The book's back blurb:

Little Ella the elephant dreams of seeing her mum once again. But can she escape? Is she even brave enough to try?

Join baby Ella on her heart-wrenching quest for freedom, happiness and love.

This captivating picture book provides a glimpse into the lives of elephants being used in the tourism industry. A story that helps plant seeds of compassion for animals, it also highlights our planet's desperate need for conservation.

Themes

Ella is a book that will captivate and resonate with children as they sympathise with her plight. Its key themes are elephant conservation, compassion and advocacy. Other underlying themes include perseverance, friendship and emotions.

About the Author and Illustrator

Nicole Godwin lives in Canberra, Australia, with her husband, three children and many ants that won't take the hint that their home is outside (that's the ants not the children ☺).

Nicole is on a mission to tell the stories of animals who don't have a voice of their own. After visiting Thailand and meeting elephants who had suffered terribly throughout their lives, telling the story of these beautiful creatures was something she knew she needed to do.

Demelsa lives in England. She painted all of the magical pictures from *Ella* on a digital tablet. Her artistic creations are guaranteed to make you smile and see the world a bit differently.

Questions/comprehension

Teachers can ask students the following questions to gauge comprehension of the story.

- Why wasn't Ella happy?
- What started Ella's grand escape?
- What does the heart on Ella's tail show?
- How did you feel as you read the book?
- When was Ella saddest? Why?
- When was Ella happiest? Why?

Activities

A range of activities are listed below suiting different year levels. We'd love to see some of your student's work. Feel free to send some student work through to hello@tuskbooks.com or post them on the Tusk Books facebook page (www.facebook.com/tuskbooks/).

1. Chicken character

Ella and her chicken friend are always together. Go through the book again and see what the chicken is doing on each page. Talk about what the chicken may be thinking or feeling.

We'll let you in on a secret. The chicken's name is Charlie. Her name was included in the story when it was first written, but it didn't make the final version. When author Nicole Godwin and illustrator Demelsa Haughton talk about the chicken they always refer to her as Charlie.

2. Draw a picture of life in a sanctuary

Draw Ella living in the sanctuary with her mum. Think about the things that are important to include in her new home to make her happy.

3. Make an Ella heart

You will need paper (coloured or white) and scissors. Alternatively you could draw a heart on a balloon for this activity.

Draw a heart and cut it out. On the heart, write a message that you want to share with others about elephants. Write it from the elephant's perspective. The message might be a fact you have learned from *Ella's* facts page, or something else you know about elephants in the world today. Here are some ideas for starters 'Don't take our tusks. We need them.' Or 'Our trunks have 100,000 muscles' or 'Don't ride on elephants'.

4. Watch life in an elephant sanctuary live

There are some wonderful elephant sanctuaries around the world. One of the world's biggest sanctuaries is in Tennessee in the USA. This sanctuary has an elephant camera where you watch what the elephants are doing in real time. Visit <https://www.elephants.com/#elecarn> to see (note: with time zone differences, make sure you check in during daylight hours or you'll be looking at the dark night and not elephants).

5. How did Ella make you feel?

Children reading *Ella* feel a lot of different emotions. Pick up to five pages from the book and write down what emotion you feel for each page and then make up an emoji for each emotion.

You might feel sad, happy, hopeful, scared or excited.

To ensure a variety of emotions, the suggested double pages are:

- The first page that starts with the text, "Ella's heart is broken..."
- The page where Ella's chicken friend is sitting on her head. It starts with the text, "Her one and true companion..."
- The page where Ella is lying on the ground below the statue. The text starts with, "It's just a mighty statue..."
- The page after she has been dropped off at the sanctuary and feels something coming. It starts with the text, "And then a small vibration..."
- The page before the facts page that starts with the text "Her mother stands before her..."

6. Favourite page writing exercise

Pick your favourite double page from the book and write about why it is your favourite. You might want to say how it made you feel, what you liked about the illustrations and what made this page stand out for you.

7. What is going on in the background?

Have a look at all the things happening in the background illustrations. Are there things you didn't see the first time you read the book? Can you see lots of black cats? Can you find a little girl being lifted up by balloons? What else can you see?

8. What do elephants eat?

You can either write out a list or draw pictures of 10 things that you think elephants might eat. Remember they are vegetarians.

If you were an elephant, what would your favourite food be?

9. Write a book review

Write a book review. You may wish to use the following as a guide of things to include:

- Name of book, author and illustrator.
- Short overview of story (known as a synopsis).
- Your opinion on the plot, characters (what do you like about them), illustrations (style, colours, emotions conveyed), text and overall.
- What you loved most or if you didn't like it, what didn't appeal.
- Depending on the book, you might ask yourself questions such as:
 - How did the book make you feel?
 - Did you learn anything new?
 - What would you rate it out of 10 and why?
- Price

Make sure you send your reviews through to hello@tuskbooks.com as some reviews may be posted on the Tusk Books Facebook page and website (www.tuskbooks.com).

10. Write and illustrate your own picture book that gives a voice to a different animal

Choose an animal that you would like to create a book about. Think about what animal you want to give a voice to. Think about what this animal may be thinking and feeling and about the problems they may face. Remember that a story usually has a quest or a mission. For Ella it was finding her mum. For others it might be to find a new home, meet other animals or to live in safety.

The list of animals to choose from is endless as most animals will face issues small or large – rhinoceros, tigers, cats, koalas, dogs, pigs, orangutans, whales, chickens, gibbons, dolphins, bears, horses, sharks, seals, chimpanzees, cows, ducks, giraffe, lions, kangaroos, rabbits and so on.

11. Spread the word

As Ella says at the end of the facts page, if you want to help elephants one of the best ways is to spread the word. You can do this in many ways such as:

- talking about elephants with family and friends
- choosing elephants as your topic in a school speech
- planning an event for World Elephant Day each year (it is on 12 August)
- organising a fund raiser such as a cake stall to raise money for elephant sanctuaries
- performing *Ella* as a play at a school assembly (note: we'd love to hear if you are doing this).

Some of the important things that you can talk to others are about are listed below.

- To ride elephants or for them to do tricks (such as painting a picture or kick a ball), they have been through training that hurts them greatly.
- If you ever want an elephant experience there are wonderful sanctuaries that put the elephant first and help them live in a natural environment.
- Elephants are being killed for their tusks in Africa.
- At the current rate elephants are being killed, they will be gone in our lifetime.