

TEACHER READING GUIDE

Strictly No Elephants

written by Lisa Mantchev
illustrated by Tae Eun Yoo



Essential Question: How can talking about a character's actions help me describe what kind of friend they are?

BOOK SNAPSHOT

Selected from the New Worlds Reading Initiative Booklist

Text Type: Literary

Genre: Narrative Fiction

Themes/Topics: Friendship, Inclusion, Problem-Solving

Lexile: AD490L

SKILLS ALIGNED WITH FLORIDA'S ELA B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

Word Work

ELA.K.F.1.2 (a)

Blend and segment syllables.

Vocabulary

ELA.K.V.1.1

Use grade-level academic vocabulary. (Tier 2)

Comprehension

ELA.K.R.1.1

Describe the main character's actions.

BUILDING BACKGROUND

Engage students in a conversation about how observing others' actions can help us describe the qualities of a good friend. Prompts to guide this conversation might include:

- What does it mean to be a good friend?
- How might someone act to show a friend that they care about them?
- How might someone act if they are not being a nice friend to others?
- Describe a time when you used the actions of a good friend toward someone else.
- Today we will read a story involving an unlikely friendship, where the main character will use actions to show others how to be a good friend.

STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS

Today I am:

thinking about the main character's actions in a story.

So that I can:

describe what kind of friend they are.

WORD WORK — BLEND AND SEGMENT SYLLABLES

Students will orally segment and blend one-, two-, three-, and four-syllable words to strengthen phonological awareness skills. Printable animal word cards have been provided on the last page of this guide.

- Say, “I have picture cards of animals from our story, *Strictly No Elephants*. I am going to choose a card, but I’m not going to show anyone what it is. I will tap out the syllables gently on my chin as I say them out loud, and you will repeat the actions. Then you will blend the sounds together to discover the secret animal word on my card.”
- Say, “The secret animal word on my card has three syllables. I am going to tap my chin for each word part as I say them slowly. *El-e-phant*.” Ask students to repeat orally, segmenting the syllables in *el-e-phant* while tapping their chins.
- Say, “Now I am going to blend these word parts together to say the whole word, *elephant*.” Ask students to repeat orally, blending the word *elephant*.
- “The secret animal word is *elephant*!” Show the animal card.
- Choose another animal card. Continue practicing orally, segmenting and blending the syllables to determine the secret animal word.
- Continue practicing, going through all the cards:
 - *por-cu-pine* (3), *bat* (1), *skunk* (1), *pen-guin* (2), *gi-raffe* (2), *nar-whal* (2), *ar-ma-dil-lo* (4), and *gold-fish* (2)

ELA.K.F.1.2: Demonstrate phonological awareness.

- a. Blend and segment syllables in spoken words.

TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

Tier 2 vocabulary words, paired with student-friendly definitions, can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. It is important to provide background information and learning opportunities to help students make connections to the words.

Examples of Tier 2 vocabulary words for this text are:



strictly (title, p. 12): If something is done **strictly**, it is done in a way where the rules must be followed, no matter what. The children in the Pet Club have a rule that elephants cannot come to their meeting, so they put a sign on the door that says “**Strictly** No Elephants” to show that the rule must be followed.



thoughtful (p. 5): If someone is **thoughtful**, they think about how they can help others. The elephant is **thoughtful** when he holds his umbrella over his friend as they walk together in the rain.



coax (p. 10): When someone **coaxes** something or someone, they gently try to get them to do something. The elephant is nervous about going to the Pet Club meeting, so the little boy **coaxes** him to the door by carrying him on his back and telling him that everything will be fine.



certain (p. 21): When someone is **certain** about something, they know for sure it is true. The little boy looks behind him to be **certain** that his pet elephant is following him down the sidewalk.

ELA.K.V.1.1: Use grade-level academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.

Did You Know?

Explicit instruction of Tier 2 vocabulary words is essential for students because a strong vocabulary directly impacts their ability to comprehend what they read. When students lack comprehension of a word’s meaning, it leads to gaps in their overall understanding of the text.

Vocabulary Extension Activity

To support students in remembering and utilizing new words, encourage them to make personal connections with vocabulary introduced during explicit instruction. Model how to make connections using a new vocabulary word.

- For example, say, “In my home, a rule that must be **strictly** followed is to take your shoes off at the front door when you come inside. What is a rule that must be **strictly** followed where you live?”

READ FOR MEANING – DESCRIBE THE MAIN CHARACTER’S ACTIONS

ELA.K.R.1.1: Describe the main character(s), setting, and important events in a story.

- Clarification 1: In describing the main character, students can describe appearance, actions, feelings, and thoughts of the character. Students will explain what in the text their description is based on.

ELA.K.R.1.3: Explain the roles of author and illustrator of a story.

- Clarification 2: Students should also explain that both authors and illustrators contribute to the meaning of the text.



Before:

Preview the text with students.

- *Strictly No Elephants* is about a little boy and his best friend, his pet elephant. The author, Lisa Mantchev, wrote the words in this story to teach readers how people use their actions to help and be good friends to others.
- Explain that throughout a story, good readers pay close attention to the main character’s actions and how those actions help other characters. Exploring these actions helps readers describe what kind of person the main character is.



During:

Draw a chart to record the actions of the little boy in the left column, *how those actions help other characters* in the middle column, and *words to describe the little boy* based on his actions in the right column. Model a think aloud for the first action and record the information on the chart. Use the questions below to guide your discussion with students to complete the chart together.

Character: The Little Boy Describe the Character’s Action	How Does This Action Help Other Characters?	What Words Describe the Little Boy Based on His Action?

Model:

Pause on p. 4 where the little boy is walking his elephant.

- Model a think aloud to describe the actions the boy is taking, and make inferences about his actions (wearing a raincoat, holding an umbrella, etc.).
- Record the action in the left column of the chart.
- Explain how the boy’s actions show he is a good friend for not letting his elephant get wet.
- Record the information in the middle column of the chart.
- Say, “The little boy holds the umbrella over his pet’s head so he won’t get wet in the rain. That tells me that this little boy is **thoughtful** because he thinks about how he can help his friend.”
- Write *thoughtful* in the right column of the chart.

Lead:

Pause on p. 6 – 7 where the little boy carries his elephant over the sidewalk cracks.

- How do you think the elephant is feeling on p. 6? Why is he feeling that way?
- What action does the little boy take on p. 7 to help his elephant when he is afraid? (Record answers on the chart.)
- How does the little boy’s action help the elephant? (Record answers on the chart.)
- When have you helped a friend because they were afraid or nervous about doing something?
- What are some words you could use to describe the little boy (e.g., kind, nice, strong)? (Record answers on the chart.)

READ FOR MEANING – DESCRIBE THE MAIN CHARACTER’S ACTIONS



Pause on p. 10 where the little boy coaxes his elephant to join the Pet Club meeting.

- Review the vocabulary word **coax** and how it relates to the elephant’s nervousness at entering the Pet Club meeting.
- Why do you think the elephant is nervous about joining the meeting?
- Describe the actions the main character uses to **coax** the elephant to join the meeting? (Record answers on the chart.)
- If you had a friend who was nervous about trying something new, what would you say or do to **coax** them to try it?
- How do the little boy’s actions help the elephant? (Record answers on the chart.)
- What are some words you would use to describe the little boy (e.g., encouraging, helpful)? (Record answers on the chart.)

Pause on p. 26 where the little boy creates a club that allows all pets.

- How does the little boy solve the problem of some kids not being allowed to join the Pet Club? (Record answers on the chart.)
- How do you think the kids with unique, or different, pets feel about having a club where they are all welcome to join? Why?
- Which club would you rather join? Why?
- How is the action of the little boy helpful to the other kids? (Record answers on the chart.)
- Based on his actions and how he helps his friends, what words can we add to our list to describe the little boy (e.g., brave, smart, caring)? (Record answers on the chart.)



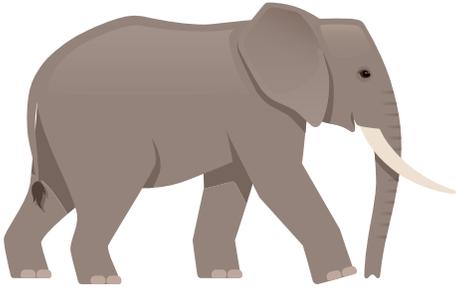
After:

- Review the descriptive words recorded in the right column of the chart to describe what type of friend the main character is.
- Reiterate that the author wrote the story to help readers understand what it means to be a good friend to others.
- Students will select one descriptive word from the right column of the chart. They will use the word to complete the sentence stem: *The main character is a _____ friend.* Students will draw a picture of an action the boy takes in the story to represent the word they selected.

Writing Extension: Ask students to draw a picture of an action they will take this week to help someone else and be a good friend to others.

Did You Know?

Providing opportunities where students can connect reading and writing will encourage deeper cognitive thinking and improve their comprehension of the story’s meaning.



elephant



porcupine



bat



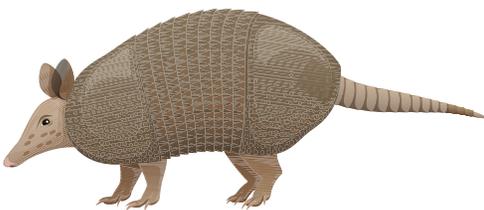
skunk



penguin



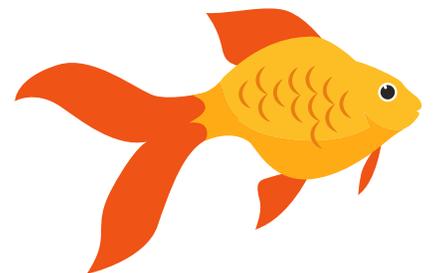
giraffe



armadillo



narwhal



goldfish