

Balarama A Royal Elephant

AUTHOR: Ted & Betsy Lewin

PUBLISHER: Lee and Low Books Inc.

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GENRE: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

SUMMARY: Telling of their visit to the Royal Elephants in the Karapur Forest in southern India, the Lewin's explain the history of the Royal Elephants and how they are part of the religious, cultural, and social life of the country. The Lewins return to the area a year later as they want to see the magnificent elephant, Drona, lead the annual parade and carry the golden howdah.

BOOKTALK: Can you imagine being a mahout? You'd live in a forest in India and your lifelong job would be caring for a Royal Elephant. You'd need to teach it to walk in parades while dressed in silks and make sure the elephant stayed calm even with cannons exploding in the background.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Ted and Betsy have written and illustrated many books together and some separately. Betsy grew up in Pennsylvania. Ted Lewin grew up in New York. The Lewins' also collaborate on books, the first of which was *Gorilla Walk*, which came from a journey to Uganda.

Other books written by the author:

Ted won a Caldecott medal honor for *Peppe the Lamplighter* and Betsy won an Caldecott medal honor for *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type*.

For an extensive listing of their work: tedlewin.com and betsylewin.com

Elephant Quest

Gorilla Walk

Horse Song: The Story of the Naadam

Puffling Patrol

Top to Bottom Down Under

CHALLENGING WORDS

There are many challenging words...all defined in the Glossary and Pronunciation Guide at the end of the book.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 What do you think life would be like living near a forest where elephants roam freely?
- 2 Why might the elephants become important in the rituals of the country?
- 3 What do you think is meant by the elephant's aura?
- 4 Compare the parade in India to parades in the United States. How are they similar or different? Are the purposes of parades the same or different?

ACTIVITIES with COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

Social Studies:

1. Using a world map, locate India and the area of the Karapur Forest, as well as any other locations mentioned in the text.

4.RI.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

5.RI.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

6.RI.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

6-8.RH.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts

Language Arts:

1. Write a short research paper about the importance of elephants in the Indian culture.

4.W.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

5.W.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

6.W.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

6-8.WH.8 *Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.*

Life Skills:

Caring
Friendship
Initiative
Pride
Integrity

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals>

More specific information about Asian elephants

www.kamat.com/kalranga/prani/elephants/dasara_elephants.htm

This site has explanations and photos of the elephant parade.

Tedlewin.com

Betsylewin.com