

# Plot, character and setting

SECTION

4

## Thinking

**Objective:** To give some reasons for why things happen in a story or why characters change.

**What you need:** Copies of *Elmer*; photocopyable page 16; scissors; glue.

### What to do

- Working in pairs, ask the children to read the text on Spreads 3 and 4. Ask: *Had anything happened to upset Elmer?* (No, he simply ‘felt tired of being different’.)
- Let the pairs discuss what the elephants think of and expect of Elmer, and what he thinks and expects of them.
- Give out copies of page 16 for the children to sort the statements into the respective thought bubbles.
- Encourage them to read to the end of the story to remind themselves what happened next and gather more insights into Elmer’s friendship with the other elephants.

- Bring the class together to share their opinions. Invite individuals to select quotes directly from the book to support their views.
- Do the children think Elmer is happier at the beginning or the end of the story? Is he thinking the same ‘think’? Is he happy ‘in his own skin’? How do we know? (The elephants were sad in his absence; they were laughing *with* not *at* Elmer; Elmer’s sense of humour needed an outlet; he wanted to make them laugh again; he knows he belongs with them.)

### Differentiation

**For older/more confident learners:** Draw two large thought bubbles for the children to write in statements of their own, instead of sorting those on the photocopyable page.

**For younger/less confident learners:** Arrange for an adult to read with the children and guide their discussions, relating their talk to evidence in the text.

## Contrasts

**Objective:** To engage with books through exploration and interpretation.

**Cross-curricular links:** PE; drama.

**What you need:** Copies of *Elmer*; a tambourine.

### What to do

- Explore the illustrations in the book. Suggest that Elmer not only looks different, but he behaves differently from the other elephants too. He first appears facing in the opposite direction to the herd shown on the previous page.
- Explain to the children that they are going to act out the story’s contrasts of character, action and interaction.
- Establish a signal, such as holding the book above your head, for the children to stop and change, as they act out:
  - Grey elephants keeping very still.
  - In groups of six, working together to make balancing shapes.

- Using body language to demonstrate laughter (such as rolling, rocking to and fro).
- In groups of six, one role-playing Elmer, sadly walking off alone, the others asleep.
- Elmer shaking the tree, then rolling in all directions until covered in juice.
- Now ask all the children to form a group (a herd of elephants), close together but not touching. Allow them to take turns to be Elmer ‘working his way’ into the middle of the herd.
- Ask the children to act asleep, ready to bounce in all directions on a call of ‘BOO!’
- Finally, ask them to parade. Use a tambourine to provide different tempos and rhythms.

### Differentiation

**For older/more confident learners:** Ask the children to develop facial expressions to match their actions.

**For younger/less confident learners:** Limit and guide the actions to very simple contrasts.