

Animals in Africa: Elephants

LENGTH OF LESSON: Two class periods

GRADE LEVEL: K-2

SUBJECT AREA: Geography

OBJECTIVES:

Students will understand the following:

1. Elephants are the largest land animals.
2. Adult elephants are about 11 feet tall, and newborn elephants are about 3 feet tall.

MATERIALS:

For this lesson, you will need:

- String and a tape measure
- A ladder

PROCEDURE:

1. To give students an appreciation for the size of an adult African elephant—approximately 11 feet tall—measure and cut a length of string 11 feet long.
2. Stand up on a ladder, chair, or table; hold the string in your hand above your head, and let it hang down to the floor so that students can see its entire length.



3. Ask students if they can think of an animal that is as tall as the string is long. Depending on how students answer, tell them that a giraffe can grow taller than the length of the string—to 18 feet—and that a camel is shorter—never more than 6½ feet. If students don't immediately identify the target animal as an elephant, give them clues based on other prime characteristics of the animal. You may also make the point that though a giraffe is taller than an elephant, elephants weigh much more. At over 6 tons, the elephant is the largest land animal.

4. Make a project of working with the class to find other objects in the school or outside the school that are as tall as the string is long—or somewhere around 11 feet. Suggestions include cabinets in the classroom or in school offices, the basketball hoop in the gym (if it is at the regulation 10 feet from the ground), decorative or supporting columns inside or on the outside of the school building, and trees in the area.

5. Now work with a string only 3 feet long—the height of a newborn elephant—and do the same comparison activities.

6. Help students make lists of things that are 11 feet tall and things that are 3 feet tall. Put the words *adult elephant* or a picture of one at the head of one list and the words *baby elephant* or a picture of one at the head of the other list.



ADAPTATIONS:

Extend this activity by having students create bar graphs with bars for an adult elephant and for a newborn elephant as well as bars that represent the heights of various objects inside and outside school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the ways that the elephant helps the forest. How would too many elephants harm the forest environment? Discuss ways to maintain a balance between the forest and the number of elephants.
2. Think of the way the elephant lives and its family life. Discuss how this community is similar to and different from human families. Discuss how some human families are headed by females and how some families have many cousins living together. Discuss the similarities and differences with regard to the male (father) in the family.

EVALUATION:

Conduct an informal evaluation of students' language when they make comparisons in this project. If they use double comparisons ("An elephant is more taller than a camel"), make a note to give students practice in correct usage.

VOCABULARY:

Savannas: Vast grassland areas.

- **Context:** Cattle-raising tribes tend their herds in southern Africa's savannas.

Continent: Any of the main large land areas of the Earth.

- **Context:** Africa is the world's second-largest continent.

Lush: Characterized by richness and abundance.

- **Context:** Rain falls on these forests every year, making it a lush and humid home for some of Africa's large and varied wildlife.

Endangered: Faced with danger of extinction or no longer living.

- **Context:** Because of people, elephants have now become an endangered species.

Extinct: No longer existing or living.

- **Context:** African elephants may become extinct in the wild within the next 10 to 20 years.

Matriarch: A female that rules a family, clan or tribe.

- **Context:** Their leader is usually an older female, called a matriarch.

Migration: Moving from one location to another, especially by moving seasonally from one region to another.

- **Context:** The matriarch leads the way in these migrations, with the herd following single file.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Africa

Yvonne Ayo. Photographed by Ray Moller and Geoff Dann. New York: Knopf, 1995

- Learn about the geography of this vast continent and its people. Did you know that this huge continent is a land of deserts, savannas, mountains, waterfalls, and forests?

Africa

Colm Regan. Austin, Texas: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1997

- Study the countries of Africa and learn their geography, their history, resources, environment, and about the people.

The Sahara and Its People

Simon Scoones. New York: Thomson Learning, 1993

- This book will show you what it's like to live in the Sahara desert. Read about the natural environment, how people trade across the desert, how they try to grow crops, and more.

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