

If an Elephant Went to School

BY ELLEN FISCHER * ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA WOOD

Trot! Hop! Buzz! Little hands will be turning the page to find out what animals really learn! Would an elephant study the ABCs if she went to school? No way! Join an assortment of animals as they learn unique skills in this charming picture book.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ellen Fischer grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, but has been a North Carolina Tar Heel for over 30 years. She has taught elementary age children for over 20 years and is the mother of three. She is also the author of *If an Armadillo Went to a Restaurant*; *Latke, the Lucky Dog*; and several Sesame Street books, including *Grover and Big Bird's Passover Celebration*; *It's a Mitzvah, Grover!*; and *The Count's Hanukkah Countdown*.

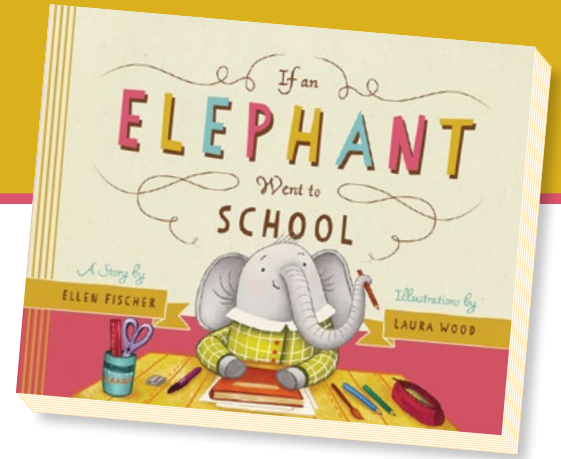
ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Laura Wood is a freelance illustrator currently living in England. She was born and raised in Italy and received a bachelor of cinema and multimedia. She likes to combine both digital and traditional dry media to create childlike pictures with a sunny style and a folksy feeling. Laura Wood is also the illustrator of *If an Armadillo Went to a Restaurant*, *Lucy in the City*, and *The Cow Tripped Over the Moon*.



EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



Read It!

ABOUT THE BOOK

What would an owl learn in a classroom? What would a bee study at school? Through a series of questions and answers, readers learn about animals and their unique behaviors. And in the end, readers might find themselves asking, *just what would I learn?*

BEFORE YOU READ

- › Look at the picture of the elephant on the cover. Examine the title of the book. Ask: *Does the cover look very realistic? Why or why not?* Have students predict what the book may be about.
- › Hold an elephant brainstorm session. Ask: *What do you already know about elephants?* See if students have ever observed elephants at the zoo. List answers and observations on the board.
- › Ask: *What do you think an elephant would learn in school?*
- › Have students review the Words to Know and their definitions. Ask them to look for the words as they read.

WORDS TO KNOW

backward (BAK-wurd): in the reverse direction

cocoon (kuh-KOON): a covering made from silky threads produced by the larvae of some insects and by other certain small animals to protect themselves or their eggs

doubtful (DOUT-ful): uncertain and unlikely

groom (GROOM): to take care of your appearance

platypus (PLAT-uh-pus): an Australian mammal with webbed feet, a broad bill, and dense fur

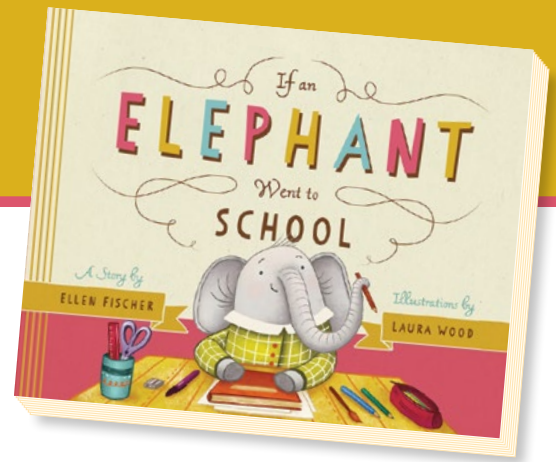
scampered (SKAM-purd): to have run lightly and quickly

snorkel (SNOR-kuhl): a long tube that you hold in your mouth and use to breathe when you're swimming underwater

trotted (TRAHT-ed): to have moved at a pace that is faster than a walk but not as fast as a run



EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



Know It!

DISCUSS THE BOOK

- › **Explain alliteration to students.** Describe how alliteration is used to change the rhythm and flow of a story. Then read the skunk passage. As a class, have students identify the alliteration used in this spread. Write their findings on the board. Have students discuss the effect alliteration has on the sound and feel of the passage.
- › **Discuss with students** how picture books contain important visual clues about the meaning of stories. Illustrations are just as important as the words. Pair up students and ask them to pick a spread from the book. They should study both the words and the illustrations. Ask: *How do the illustrations fit the text? What do the illustrations tell you about this part of the story that the words do not? Are the imaginary scenes illustrated differently from the realistic scenes?*
- › **Divide students into small groups.** Ask each group to choose one or two spreads from the book. Have them examine the text and the illustrations and choose five words they think are

important. Then explain that “synonyms” are words that mean the same thing. You can take this opportunity to introduce students to a thesaurus and how it works. Tell them to replace their chosen words with synonyms. Let them use the thesaurus if they get stuck. Ask: *Which version do you like better? Why? Why do you think the author chose to use certain words?*

WRITE ABOUT IT

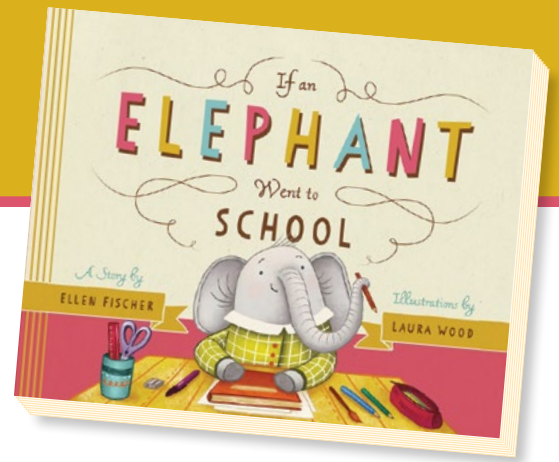
- › **Animal Abilities:** Have students choose an animal ability in the book that they would want to have. Tell them to write a persuasive piece on why they chose this ability. Ask: *How would this skill be useful? How did the text and illustrations influence your decision?*
- › **Book Review:** Ask students to pretend they are book reviewers. Their job is to write a review of *If an Elephant Went to School* for a newspaper. The review should begin with a summary that answers the *who, what, when, where, why, and how* of

the book. The review should also include the central lesson students learned and any opinions they have about the book.

MAP IT OUT

- › **Fact or Fiction?:** Have students fill out the chart on **page 6** for each animal. Explain that they should decide which details from the book are fiction, meaning not real, and which details are fact. Then ask students to think of something else they would like to know about each animal. Ask them to write a question for each animal in the third column.
- › **Creature Comparisons:** Tell students to use the Venn diagram on **page 7** to compare and contrast the elephant and zebra from the book. Have them include specific details from each animal’s spreads. Ask: *How are their experiences similar? How are they different?* For other animal comparison activities, reference the blank “Creature Comparisons II” outline on **page 10**.

EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



Try It!

FUN ACTIVITIES



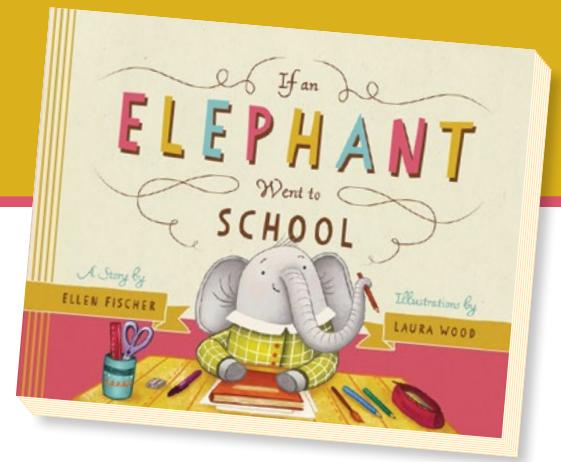
- › **Guess Who?:** Have students choose an animal that does not appear in the book. Ask them to research the animal using the Internet or a nonfiction book. Then have them use their research to fill out the animal profile on **page 9**. In small groups, have each student read their profile without revealing the animal. The other group members must try to guess the animal being described!
- › **Create-a-Creature:** Tell students to write a description for a made-up animal. It should include what the animal looks like and what it would learn in school. Then ask students to trade descriptions with a partner. Have students draw a picture based on their partners' descriptions. Students can present their finished creations to the class with their partners.
- › **Animal Illustrator:** Ask students to pick an animal that appears in the book but is not directly featured, such as a beaver or a ladybug. Have them research their chosen animals. Then have them illustrate their own spreads, describing something their animals would—and wouldn't—learn in school.

CONNECT

- › **Read *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page.** Have students compare the book to *If an Elephant Went to School*. Ask: *How are the books similar? How are they different? How do both books teach us about animals?* Have students answer these questions as a group.
- › **Visit a zoo or natural history museum.** Ask students to make a list of the different animals they see and to record the special skills of each animal. Have students discuss their findings in small groups.



EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



EXPLORE MORE

Visit the following websites to learn more about animals and what they learn:

› **San Diego Zoo, African Elephant**

<http://kids.sandiegozoo.org/animals/mammals/african-elephant>

Learn about the majestic African elephant. You can even watch live video footage of an elephant herd!

› **Smithsonian National Zoo, Animal Photo Galleries**

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/PhotoGallery/>

Visit the zoo without leaving the classroom! This website offers plenty of photos and fun facts about a variety of animals.

› **National Geographic Kids, Duck-Billed Platypus**

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/platypus/#platypus-underwater.jpg>

Is it a duck? A beaver? Neither! Visit this site to learn more about this strange mammal.



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The activities and discussion questions in this guide support the following Common Core State Standards.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.1 Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., *because*, *and*, *also*) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.4 Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

If an
ELEPHANT
 Went to
SCHOOL

Fact or Fiction?

What is fact and what is fiction? Fill out the chart below as you read the book.

ANIMAL	FACT	FICTION	I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ...
Elephant			
Owl			
Zebra			
Frog			
Eel			
Bee			
Skunk			
Caterpillar			
Platypus			

If an
ELEPHANT
Went to
SCHOOL

Creature Comparisons

Research the animals below to learn more about their traits.
Then, write each trait in the diagram where you think it belongs.

SLEEPS STANDING UP

HAS GRAY SKIN

WALKS ON FOUR LEGS

HAS LARGE, FLOPPY EARS

HAS A MANE

ELEPHANT TRAITS:

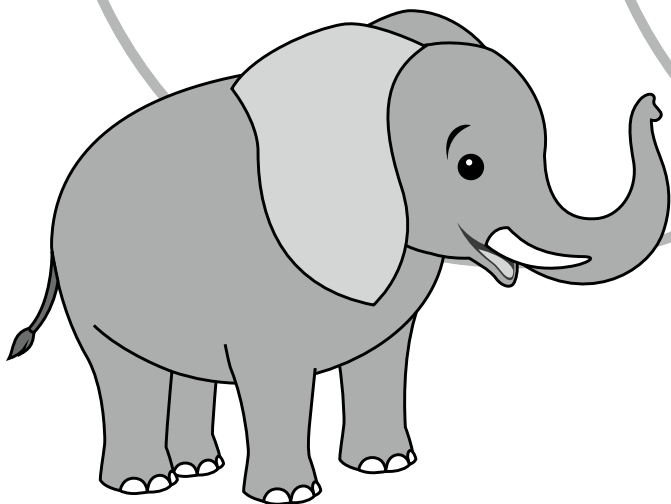
HAS A TRUNK

ZEBRA TRAITS:

HAS STRIPES

**SHARED
TRAITS:**

HAS A TAIL



If an
ELEPHANT
Went to
SCHOOL

Be Creative!

Write an imaginative poem with words that start with the letters given.

This is an acrostic poem. Each word used should describe the animal.

Use a dictionary or thesaurus if you get stuck!

E

L

E

P

Huge

A

N

T

P

L

A

T

Y

P

Unique

S

Z

E

Bizarre

R

A

C

A

Talented

E

R

P

I

L

L

A

R

If an
ELEPHANT
Went to
SCHOOL

Guess Who? Animal Profile

Create an information card for your favorite animal. Draw a picture of the animal in the box, and then write down information about the animal.



Name: _____

Habitat: _____

Likes: _____

Dislikes: _____

Favorite Food: _____

Special Skill: _____

Fun Fact: _____

Other Information: _____

If an
ELEPHANT
Went to
SCHOOL

Creature Comparisons II

Write down the names of two animals not in *If an Elephant Went to School*. Fill in the diagram with their traits. Draw a picture of each animal underneath its circle.

