



Elmer and the Rainbow

A sequence of activities for Early Years Foundation stage

Session 1:

Share the front cover of the text with the children. What do they already know about Elmer? Scribe children's ideas around a copy of the front cover on a working wall or in a Shared Reading Journal. Ask the children to predict from the front cover what the story might be about or what might happen. Look at the double page spread of the endpapers, showing the illustration of the rainbow. Ask the children if they have seen a rainbow before. Do they know how a rainbow is formed? Take notes of the children's ideas and predictions. Read the first double page spread. Think back to what Elmer says, "Thunder and Lightning is exciting." How do the children feel about thunder and lightning? You may wish to use a video, such as: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M4IRbGJxqA> as a stimulus for children's thinking. Could they think of some words and phrases to describe the thunderstorm? What is happening? What does it sound like? How does it make them feel? You could help to organise the children's ideas into a poem that they can then perform. You could also look at another poem, such as 'The Storm' by Sara Coleridge as a stimulus for writing: <http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/learning/children/reviews/?id=18> The children could also share their responses to this poem. Ask the children 'What would have to happen for the elephants to see a rainbow?', and discuss their responses.

Session 2:

Re-read from the beginning of the book up until "That's awful, we must do something," without reading on to "I'll give it my colours." What do the children think has happened to the colours of the rainbow? What do they think Elmer and the birds could do to help? Scribe children's ideas around a copy of the illustration on a working wall or in a Shared Reading Journal. Read the next sentence, "I'll give it my colours." Do the children think this is a good idea? Why or why not? If you have a toy Elmer in the setting, you could have the children pass this round and they could tell Elmer why they think it is a good idea or not. You could follow this up by writing a letter to Elmer to share some of the children's ideas.

Session 3:

Re-read from the beginning of the book, up until Giraffe asks "What will happen to you, Elmer, if you give it your colours?" Ask the children what they think would happen to Elmer. They could visualise this and translate it into a drawing, which can then be displayed in a class gallery, and the different ideas can be then be shared and discussed. Talk about this huge act of kindness, of how Elmer is considering giving up his colours to the rainbow and thinking of someone else before himself. Ask the children to think of words and phrases to describe Elmer and display these around an illustration of Elmer. To relate this back to their own experiences, allow time for the children to recall a time when someone was kind to them or gave them something special. How did it make them feel?

Session 4:

Re-read the story from the beginning up until "But what about Elmer?" whispered an elephant. What do the children think will happen as Elmer steps out from behind the waterfall? Record predictions around a copy of the illustration on a working wall or in a Shared Reading Journal. Read the next page to reveal whether their predictions were correct. Allow time for the children to re-enact the story in a variety of ways. This could be using small world figures, through role-play with masks, using puppets or props or by making a storybox. Storyboxes create special opportunities to revisit the themes and storylines of a particular story. Typically, they consist of a shoebox containing a range of small toys and inspirational objects. The box itself can be turned into a setting for the story using a variety of collage materials and with the sides cut to fold down. However, the box is at its most effective when something intriguing or unexpected is added. Children can use the box to retell the next episode of a story, or create another story with similar setting or characters. The children could also make their own storymaps to recall the important events in the story and help them in their retellings and re-enactments.

Session 5:

Re-read the whole book. Engage the children in book talk to explore their responses to the story. You might begin by asking the children the four basic questions from Aidan Chambers' 'Tell Me' approach, from *Tell Me: Children, Reading & Talk with The Reading Environment* (Thimble Press, 2011). These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

- Tell me... was there anything you liked about this book?
- Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Were there any patterns... any connections that you noticed...? (With young children, these are likely to be personal connections, although if they know the Elmer books well or any other stories with the theme of sharing and kindness, they may be able to make links with these).

The openness of these questions, unlike the more interrogative 'Why?' question, encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the 'wrong' answer.

Explore the connections that children have drawn. Can they think of a time they've helped someone else, been kind to someone else, shown love to someone else or helped to spread happiness? Think of ways that we could all help to share kindness, happiness, love, and be helpful. Invite each child to make a pledge to help share kindness, happiness, love, and be helpful in school or at home and write these on a coloured square. Across the setting, these can then be arranged to make a patchwork rainbow for all to see.

Across the continuous provision, you could also:

- Use colour paddles and light to investigate colours.
- Colour-mix with paint, learn about how to create shades of intensity using white.
- Learn more about the weather; make wind chimes, rain gauges, reflectors for the sun, create a weather chart to track the weather over the course of the week.
- Learn the 'I Can Sing A Rainbow' song.
- Move with coloured streamers and scarves to create a colour dance.
- Make colourless rainbows using white chalk.
- Learn about emotions, how to recognise these in others and how to react appropriately if someone is scared or upset.



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