My Life as a Circus Elephant!

USE THESE INSTRUCTIONS WITH My Elephant Life BRAINSTORMING PACKET

Overview  What is daily life like for a circus elephant? What are the good and bad things about being an elephant in the circus? How do people feel and think about it? Are elephants good for the circus business? Do people really like seeing elephants at the circus?

Why?

By the end of this activity, child will:

- Investigate if elephants are happy and healthy in the circus
  - What is the daily life like for a family of elephants in the circus?
  - What makes elephants happy? Food, water, treats and daily routine?

- How do circus people feel about having elephants in the circus?
  - Are elephants easy to train? To care for?
  - Elephant needs: housing, food, water, health care, exercise, socializing, training
  - Do elephants like doing their circus acts? Do they hurt them?

- What do audiences think and feel about elephants in the circus?
  - Adults? Moms and Dads?
  - Children?

What?

Get Ready

- Explore resources for information on elephants and their lives in the circus: library, books, teachers, web quest, YouTube.
- Make believe that you are circus elephant. Interview other elephants and animals.
- As an elephant, interview the circus people and audiences about having circus elephants
- Make your own “self-portrait” drawing of you as an elephant. What are you thinking?
- What would the elephant say to the owner about his or her life in the circus?

TIME ESTIMATE

Min. 1 – 2 hrs.

MATERIALS

> Elephant science website and books.
> Paper, printer, etc.
> Art materials. Crayons, markers, paints,
My Multiple Intelligences engaged...

- **Naturalist** – understand the physical and mental needs of elephants
- **Interpersonal** – show awareness of the circus owner’s views and needs.
- **Intrapersonal** – how does an elephant think differently than you about life in the circus?
- **Linguistic** – word choice, expression, grammar, elements of a letter
- **Spatial** – visual organization of information (data) or illustration of important idea

Preparation

- Search for information about elephants living in the circus.
- Search for information about elephants in captivity: housing, food, water, health care, exercise, socializing, training

Project Plan

Get Ready. Read the letter from the circus owner of Dogs & Cats Spectacular (below). Review with your child the Brainstorming Packet for My Elephant Life.

Step 1. Investigate elephants and their daily lives in the circus.

Step 2. Imagine that you are an elephant in the circus and write about your daily life. “Dear Diary…” Write four entries, one for each week spent at Dogs & Cats Spectacular.

Step 3. As a circus elephant, imagine that you interview the circus workers about the elephants: how do they feel about them? Why?
Step 4. Finally, as a circus elephant, interview the circus audience (adults and children) about how they feel about the elephants' performance: did they like the performance? What did they liked or disliked? Why?

Tip: use the question sheet that follows the letter if you need inspiration. You can 1. Ask members of your family to answer as members of the audience, elephants and circus people. 2. Imagine that you are those people and try and guess what they would think.

Step 5. Based on the information you gathered, write a letter back to the circus owner. Remember, he wants to learn about:
1. Are the elephants happy?
2. What did the audience and the circus people think about the elephants?
3. How can we improve the elephants' lives at the circus?

Important & Factual

Because this is a serious topic, it might not be a good idea to add anything fun. You might be able to include powerful images or illustrations or stories to show the most important information and ideas about elephant care.

FINAL Reflections
The parent should **not** provide an evaluation but instead to generate discussion consider the following questions:

- What stands out for you about this activity?
- What surprises you?
- What would you do differently, if you were to do it again?
- What would you like to do next?

### Resources

**Websites:**

**IN THE WILD**
- World Wildlife Fund
  [https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/elephant](https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/elephant)
- National Geographic, African Elephant
  [https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/a/african-elephant/](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/a/african-elephant/)
- Why elephants are important
  [https://elephantconservation.org/downloads/Lessons/LessonSix.pdf](https://elephantconservation.org/downloads/Lessons/LessonSix.pdf)
  Information sheets.

**IN CAPTIVITY**
- Zoos care about elephants
  [https://www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/mammals/asianelephant/helpingelephantsinthewild](https://www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/mammals/asianelephant/helpingelephantsinthewild)
- Science Project – Elephants in Captivity, grades 4 – 8
- 7 Facts About Elephants and Why They Don’t Belong in Captivity
  [https://www.worldanimalprotection.us/blogs/facts-about-elephants](https://www.worldanimalprotection.us/blogs/facts-about-elephants)
**Tip:** Community Connections. Is there anyone in your family, neighborhood or community child can talk with about the lives of circus elephants?

### Class Equivalents / Main Skills

- Language Arts (persuasive language, grammar, sentence structure, coherence)
- Animal Science
- Drama: role playing

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**RESOURCES**

**Letter from Dogs & Cats Spectacular Circus Owner**

Dear Animal Care Team (ACT) Member:

As you know, we have had a family of four elephants with us for a month. How well has this worked out for everyone? Are the elephants happy? What can we do to improve their lives? Imagine you are one of the circus elephants. Interview the other elephants in your family about their lives. Ask the circus staff and
animal trainers how they feel about the elephants being there. Talk with people in the audience after the circus performance to learn how they feel about the elephants and their acts.

Based on these facts, what do you suggest for the future after this family of elephants? What can be done to make their lives better in the circus? Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

The Owner,

*Dogs and Cats Spectacular Circus – (and elephants?!)*

**Questions for the elephant**
1- Imagine that you are one of the circus elephants. What is your daily life like? What act do you do? How does this make you feel?
2- How do the circus people feel about having elephants? Trainers?

**Questions for the audience**
1- Did you enjoy the elephant performance?
2- Would you like to see more or less elephants?