

Guided reading

SECTION

2

look, and ask: *Is he wondering if any of his friends have noticed him tip-toeing away?*

Spread 5

Ask the children if they can identify the seven different animals in the picture. Which are hardest to spot? (Perhaps the giraffe?) Ask if Elmer is easy to see in this picture or on the cover. Go on to talk about camouflage and its importance to animals' safety. Ask younger children how many times they can spot the word Elmer in the text. Point out that his name, like theirs, begins with a capital letter.

Spread 6

Do the children think seeing the tree with berries gave Elmer his idea, or if the idea came to him before then? Prompt them to justify their answer, noting: '...Elmer found what he was looking for...'. What colour are the berries? What better way than just 'grey' did David McKee use to describe the berries? ('Elephant-coloured'.) Draw attention to the repetition of Elmer's action – 'shook it and shook it' – indicating that it was hard work and that Elmer was determined.

Spread 7

Read the text and look at the picture. How far through the process of dyeing himself is Elmer in the illustration? Ask the children to explain their opinions with reference to both words and picture – for example, the number of different ways he needed to roll, the quantity of unsquashed berries still on the ground, the amount of colour still visible on Elmer.

Spread 8

Compare this picture with that on Spread 5. Are the animals lined up in the same order? Are they all awake? Note the effect of the more muted colours, suggestive of evening. Ask how Elmer knows that the herd no longer recognises him.

(The greeting no longer uses his name; simply 'elephant'.)

Spread 9

There is a clue in the text that helps the reader to identify Elmer even though he is now elephant-coloured. Can the children find it? ('in the *middle* of the herd'.) What visual clue is there to Elmer's identity? How does his stance and expression typify his character? (Dancing, not still; bright-eyed and watchful of others' reactions). Discuss the meaning of 'worked his way'. Why did the author not write, say, 'went', 'walked' or 'tip-toed' to the middle? Tell the children to stand up and ask one child to demonstrate 'working their way' to the middle.

Spread 10

Do the children think Elmer had been gone long from his friends? How does the text indicate that time is passing? Draw attention to the opening words 'After a while...'. Quite a time has passed by now. Encourage the children to find similar expressions earlier in the story – 'As he walked...', 'After a long walk...', 'After that...'. Why does Elmer think of the cloud as 'same old rain cloud'? Have we seen it before?

Spreads 11 and 12

After reading the text, ask the children to stand up, very still, with their arms by their sides and to adopt a very serious expression. Re-read the sibilant adjectives describing the elephants, making the most of their alliteration. How long before somebody wants to laugh? Now they know how Elmer felt! Why does the text end with an unfinished sentence?

Turn the page and enjoy the impact of the combined picture and text. Turn back to the previous spread, re-reading the text and telling the children to be ready to read together the loud 'BOO!' when you turn the page. Discuss how you know it is loud. (From the size and positioning