



Elmer and the Hippos

A Sequence of activities for Key Stage 2

Session 1:

Dilemma of limited resources/territorial debate

Prior to the session:

Using large pieces of sugar paper or card, note each of the following words on a different piece:

- Water
- Clean Air
- Electricity
- Gas
- Medical Facilities

Position these pieces of paper/card in different areas of the classroom or hall, ensuring that they are all located on either the left or right hand side of the room.

Create a boundary between the two sides of the room, using chairs, a bench or masking tape.

As the children enter the room, assign each of them the letter A or B alternately. Once every child has been allocated a letter, invite the A's to go to one side of the room and the B's to the other side of the room.

Explain to the children that you are going to share a series of dilemmas with them to discuss in their groups and formulate proposed resolutions to discuss and debate with the opposing group. Encourage them to note their positions and main arguments in preparation for the whole class discussions.

Dilemma One

- A.** A member of your group is unwell and needs medication, but you reside on the side of the territory that does not have access to medical facilities.
- B.** A large number of your group require medication in your territory. It is very expensive to produce. An individual from group A is also in need of this medication, what will you do?

Dilemma Two

- A.** You do not have access to clean water and no longer have the money to buy water for your territory. How might you convince group B to assist?
- B.** The pumps that draw water from the ground are beginning to rust and will need replacing, this will require a large investment of time, money and work. Group A have no access to water. Do you think you have a responsibility to help?

Dilemma Three

- A.** You are unable to heat and light your homes but you do not have access to electricity poles or gas lines. Is it fair to reserve access to these facilities to group B's territory?
- B.** Individuals living in territory A have no electricity. Should you invest money on extending electricity poles into their territory or should that money be spent on making those who live and work in your territory safer at night by increasing street lights?

Session 2:

Recount and reflect on the dilemmas explored in the previous session. Discuss which arguments and proposals resonated most with the group and why. Draw on this to help you consider with the group what components help to formulate a strong argument. Agree upon, and note for later reference, these key components.

Read the opening of *Elmer and the Hippos*, stopping at: "But that means a lot of work." Invite the children to discuss the options/solutions available and the possible oppositions. Note their responses.

Read on to: "I need your help." Share the following page featuring the illustration of Elmer and Wilbur facing the other elephants without disclosing the written text. Invite the children to discuss and respond to the illustration.

Using thought bubbles, invite the children to note what they think some of the elephants might be thinking. Arrange the bubbles on an enlarged copy of the illustration.

Read the first part of the text accompanying this illustration and stop at: "If we help it will soon be done." Select two children to take on the role of Elmer and Wilbur, with the rest of the class taking on the role of the community of elephants. Invite them to discuss in role and explore why they might choose to help the hippos.

Once the discussion in role is complete, hold a secret ballot to determine what proportion of the class think the elephants should help the hippos.

Session 3:

Invite the children to watch a selection of famous historical speeches. Provide them with the opportunity to respond to each speech and discuss what aspects appealed to them and why.

Drawing on transcripts of the speeches viewed, encourage the children in groups to text mark and identify aspects that made the speeches powerful and effective. These may be features like repetition, alliteration, stating information in sets of three, effective use of pronouns to appeal directly to the listener, or the use of emotive language.

Based on their group discussion and notes, ask the children to contribute what, in their view, made the speeches effective. Agree as a collective on the common threads of their reflections to formulate an agreement on what components make a good speech.

Session 4:

In pairs, invite the children to write their own speeches to galvanise the elephant community to act and resolve the matter in the way they see fit, based on the discussions from the previous session. Allow time for drafting and refining their speeches.

Session 5:

Watch the selection of historical speeches again and this time focus the attention on body language, posture, facial expression and how the delivery impacts on the listener.

Give the children time to refine their speeches and rehearse their delivery.

Provide each pair with the opportunity to deliver their speech.

Once all of the speeches have been delivered, conduct another secret ballot to determine what proportion of the class think the elephants should help the hippos. Discuss if there is a variation in numbers compared to the first vote and why this might be.

Share the rest of the 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...?

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.