

# The Elephant Whisperer saves a herd of elephant

Name:

**Work with a friend. Take it in turns to read the paragraphs of the short story to each other. Answer the questions orally.**

Do you know of the book called **'The Elephant Whisperer'**? It is a true story written by **Lawrence Anthony** about a herd of traumatised elephants that he calmed and rehabilitated using his unique ability with traumatised animals. Lawrence is the author of three books. The first one, *Babylon's Ark*, was written in conjunction with his brother-in-law Graham Spence, where he relates in detail how he rescued a herd of elephants at Baghdad Zoo during an Iraqi invasion. His other two books are *The Last Rhino* since he has been in the frontline of rhino poaching, and of course, his bestselling *The Elephant Whisperer*.

**In his book, Lawrence Anthony tells how he came to adopt a traumatised herd of elephants in South Africa.**

"She (Marin Garai aka Marion) got straight to the point. She had heard about Thula Thula and the variety of magnificent indigenous Zululand wildlife that we had. She said she had also heard of how we were working closely with the local population in fostering conservation awareness and wondered . . . would I be interested in adopting a herd of elephant? The good news, she continued before I could answer, was that I would get them for free, barring capture and transportation costs.



You could have knocked me over with a blade of grass. Elephant? The world's largest mammal? And they wanted to give me a whole herd? For a moment I thought it was a hoax. I mean how often do you get phoned out of the blue asking if you want a herd of tuskers?

But Marion was serious.

OK, I asked; what was the bad news?

Well, said Marion. There was a problem. The elephants were considered 'troublesome'. They had a tendency to break out of reserves and the owners wanted to get rid of them fast. If we didn't take them, they would be put down – shot. All of them.

'What do you mean by troublesome?'

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'The matriarch is an amazing escape artist and has worked out how to break through electric fences. She just twists the wire around her tusks until it snaps, or takes the pain and smashes through. It's unbelievable. The owners have had enough and now asked if EMOA can sort something out.'

I momentarily pictured a five-ton beast deliberately enduring the agonizing shock of 8,000 volts stabbing through her body. That took determination.

'Also, Lawrence, there are babies involved.'

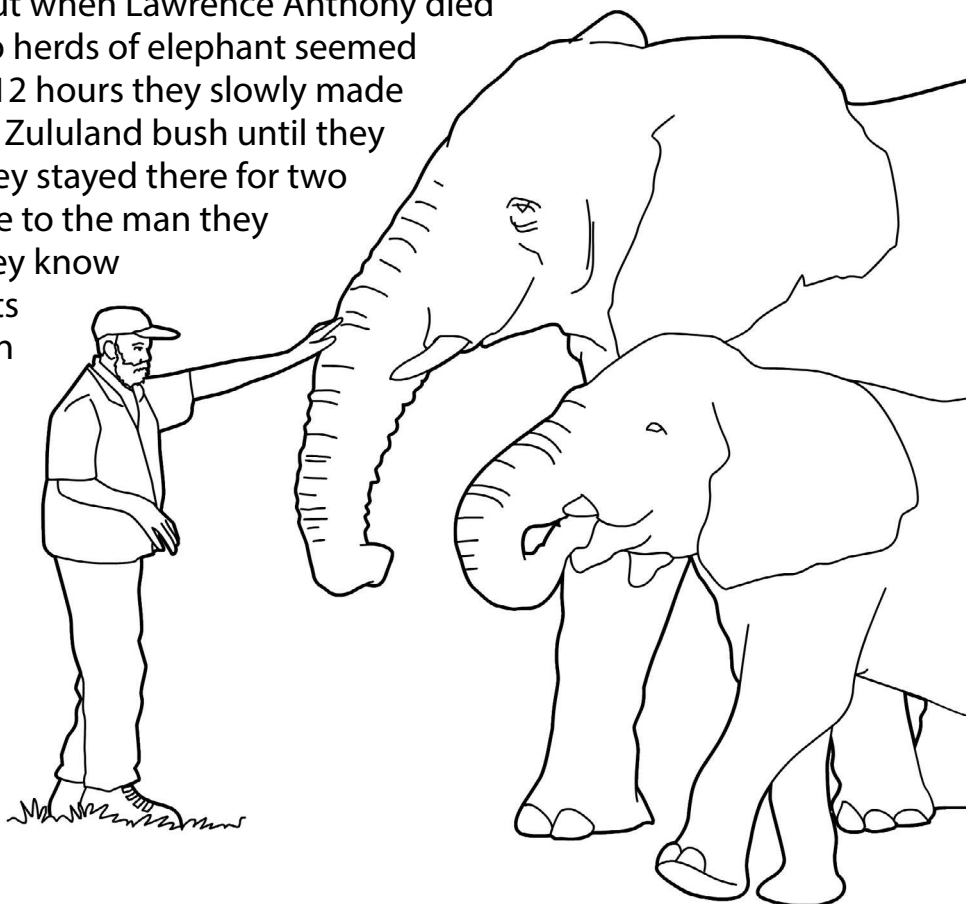
'Why me?'

Marion sensed my trepidation. This was an extremely unusual request.

'I've heard you have a way with animals,' she continued. 'I reckon Thula Thula's right for them. You're right for them. Or maybe they're right for you.'

Lawrence brought the distressed elephants to his home in the Thula Thula Game Reserve, which he owned, in Zululand. He had unusual techniques in communicating with the elephants and they calmed down and settled happily in the Game Reserve. He came to realize that elephants had a great deal to teach him about life, loyalty, and freedom. There were two herds of elephant at Thula Thula.

The really interesting part of this story is that the elephants had not visited his house for over 18 months, but when Lawrence Anthony died unexpectedly, the two herds of elephant seemed to know about it! For 12 hours they slowly made their way through the Zululand bush until they reached his house. They stayed there for two days – to say good-bye to the man they loved. But how did they know he had died? Elephants have long been known to mourn their dead – and this was a profoundly moving example of this.



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**Answer the following in your class workbook. Work with a friend.**

1. Retell the details of the extract and make sure the timeline is in the correct sequence.
2. Make a list of the main ideas and their supporting ideas and create notes in the form of a mindmap. Compare and discuss your mindmap with another group.
3. How do you think Lawrence would have tamed and calmed the traumatised herd of elephants?
4. Which characters are mentioned in this story?
5. What would you describe as the theme of this story? (A theme is a central idea that is repeated or developed through the piece of writing).
6. What point of view is the writer of the article trying to get across? Has the writer been successful in doing this?
7. Have you ever known of a situation where a person has a calming effect on animals. Tell your friend about it.
8. Make a list of five words that might be new to you in this passage and look up their meanings in a dictionary.
9. Work with your friend and create a dialogue that you imagine would have been spoken among the elephant about the death of Lawrence.

# Answer sheet

**Answer the following in your class workbook. Work with a friend.**

1. Retell the details of the extract and make sure the timeline is in the correct sequence.

**First Marion Garai phoned Anthony Lawrence to see if he would take responsibility for a herd of elephants.**

**Second she explains that they are traumatised elephants.**

**Thirdly she mentions that they are very troublesome and that there are also babies.**

**Next he brings the herd to his farm, Thula Thula.**

**After that he used unusual techniques to calm them down and make friends with them.**

**Finally he died unexpectedly and the elephants seemed to know about it and made their way to his house to say goodbye.**

2. Make a list of the main ideas and their supporting ideas and create notes in the form of a mindmap. Compare and discuss your mindmap with another group.

**The main idea is that Anthony Lawrence is persuaded to take on a traumatised difficult herd of elephant who then become very fond of him and mourn his death in an unusual manner.**

**The supporting ideas are:**

**He would get the elephants free except for their capture costs and transportation fees.**

**The matriarch can break through electric fences.**

**He brings the elephant to his home and tames them.**

**The elephants calm down and settle happily.**

**He doesn't see them for 18 months before his death.**

**When he dies unexpectedly both herds walked to his house and stayed there for two days before leaving again.**

3. How do you think Lawrence would have tamed and calmed the traumatised herd of elephants?

**Learners' own answers.**

# Answer sheet

4. Which characters are mentioned in this story?

**Marion Garai, Anthony Lawrence, the owners of the elephants, the elephants**

5. What would you describe as the theme of this story? (A theme is a central idea that is repeated or developed through the piece of writing).

**The theme could be that Anthony Lawrence has unusual abilities in taming wild elephants.**

**Learners' own views.**

6. What point of view is the writer of the article trying to get across? Has the writer been successful in doing this?

**The point of view is that Anthony Lawrence was persuaded to do something very difficult and he used his own methods to achieve unusual success in this venture. Yes, he has been successful in this.**

**Learner's own views.**

7. Have you ever known of a situation where a person has a calming effect on animals. Tell your friend about it.

**Learners' own views.**

8. Make a list of five words that might be new to you in this passage and look up their meanings in a dictionary.

**Learners' own choice.**

9. Work with your friend and create a dialogue that you imagine would have been spoken among the elephant about the death of Lawrence.

**Learners' own choice.**