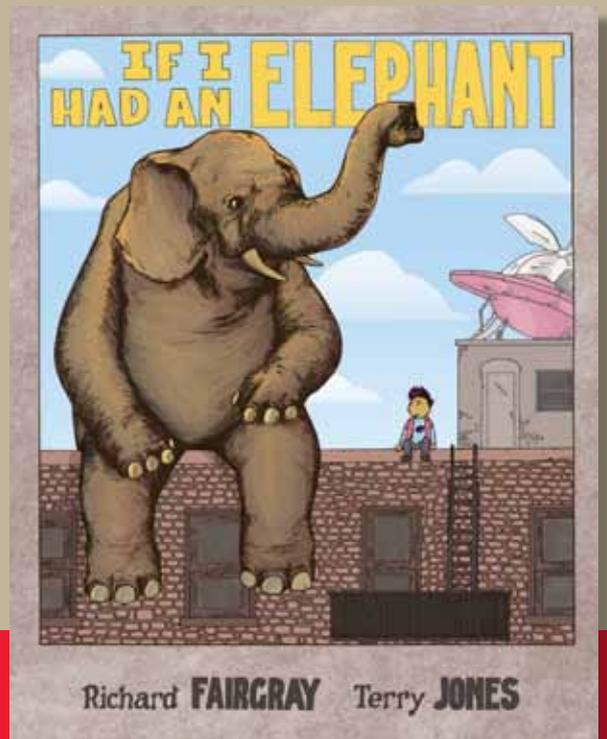


If I Had an Elephant

Text by Richard Fairgray
& Terry Jones

Illustrations by Richard Fairgray



- Reading • Speaking • Listening
- Writing • Drama • Art

Synopsis

A child imagines all the fun he could have if only he had a pet elephant – from having water fights to building a time machine. And all the time, the fantasy just keeps on getting wackier! Having an elephant would be pretty great.

About the Authors and Illustrator

When Richard was 7 he orchestrated an elegant blackmail operation, which funded his first several comics being published. Since then he hasn't taken any time off from writing and drawing (even though he is now legally blind). At around the same time as all of this, Terry was working furiously on a couple of YA novels.

Terry, formerly a teacher of high school Media Studies, has been writing together with Richard for over a decade. Among their best-known works are the *Blastosaurus* series. Their main focus has been comics but they have also worked on scripts, short stories, occasional animations and pitches for TV, and now have several picture books under their belt, including *Gorillas in Our Midst* (Scholastic NZ). At this point, neither of them remembers whose ideas are whose.

Writing Style

This is a unique story with deadpan humour that young early readers would enjoy listening to and then revisiting by themselves for independent reading. The illustration style is classic and humorous, with modern, relatable children, and a sense of magic and wonder added to the dull reality of the backgrounds. It uses key elements of comic strip styling. The limited text lends itself to exaggerated read-aloud voices and slowly turned pages to heighten the listener's anticipation. Comic book fans and anyone with an offbeat sense of humour will feel at home. Asked about their inspirations behind their latest titles, they stated: "Richard wanted to draw gorillas and then wanted to draw an elephant. Next he wants to draw a bear."

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Show the children the cover. Ask them one thing they might do if they had an elephant.
- Look at the front and back endpapers in the book. What do you think is happening?
- Ask the children what they think is in the bag (peanuts). What do they think the elephant will do with these? (title page)
- Look at the next page – does anyone know what this is called? (imprint page) What are the words at the top of the page for?
- How do we know who is talking on the first text page? Why do you think the boy wants an elephant? Would you like an elephant? (p. 3)
- How would the elephant help the boy get a cookie? What is another word for 'cookie'? What do you call them in your house? (p. 4)
- How would an elephant be useful in the game shown on this page? (p. 5)
- What would happen to the children if they had a water fight with an elephant? (p. 6–7)
- What is the elephant's name? What is the boy's name? What would happen if they got their jackets mixed up? (pp. 8–9)
- How would Henry get to school if he had an elephant? Does the picture on p. 9 make you think something different from what you see on p. 10? (pp. 10–11)
- Why might Clarence have friends in the circus? (pp. 12–13)
- What is a 'time machine'? What is it used for? What would you do if you had a time machine? (pp. 14–15)
- Was Clarence's many times great-grandfather an elephant? If not, what was he? Ask children how many 'greats' they can count. (pp. 16–17)
- What else would they use the time machine for? Where would your first stop in a spaceship be? (pp. 18–19)
- How does the planet Zillofrax differ from Earth? How do we know Henry is speaking and not just thinking the words? How would you draw it if Henry was just thinking? (pp. 20–21)

- What has Henry been grabbed by on Zillofrax? (pp. 22–23)
- How is Henry feeling on page 24? How about on page 25? How do you know?
- How does Henry think Clarence will rescue him? (pp. 26–27)
- How do they get back to Earth? (pp. 28–29)
- What did Henry get instead of the elephant he was wishing for? How would you feel if you opened your birthday present and it wasn't what you hoped it would be? (pp. 30–31)
- What sort of things would you do with a dragon and a gorilla? (p. 32)

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: COMIC STRIP

Parts of the story are written with speech bubbles like in a comic. Ask the class to fold a page into 4 or 6 squares. Ask them to draw the story of what would happen if they got an elephant as a present for their next birthday. Encourage them to use speech bubbles for anything they or their elephant says to each other.

ACTIVITY 2: ACTING OUT

In pairs, the children share their comic strips. Taking turns, ask them to practise acting out the comic strips together to share with the class, or a small group. The audience can practise sitting respectfully, listening and watching, and can try to guess the storyline from the actions and speech.

ACTIVITY 3: PET ELEPHANT WANTED

Ask the children to think of the qualities they would most like in a pet elephant. Supply them with art materials to make a poster to find their perfect pet elephant.

Written by Sarina Dickson



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC