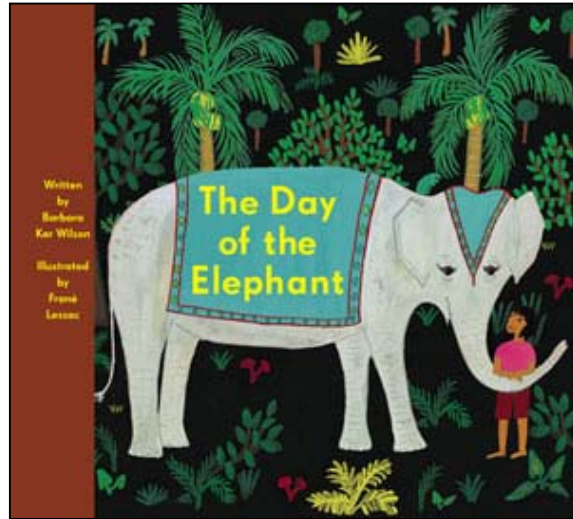


# The Day of the Elephant

Written by Barbara Ker Wilson

Illustrated by Frané Lessac



Teaching Notes written by Christine Sarandis

**THE DAY OF THE ELEPHANT (HB)**

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## Synopsis

*The Day of the Elephant* is set in Thailand and is based on reports of heart-warming incidents that occurred during the tsunami that hit the coastlines of Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives on Boxing Day 2004.

The story centres around the elephant, Mae Jabu, who visits a small village to entertain the villagers. The village children are particularly excited about Mae Jabu's visit as they all love elephants and are hoping that she will dance for them.

As Mae Jabu approaches the village she appears restless and bellows loudly. Her keeper is concerned by her unusual behaviour, and as Mae Jabu is led to a grassy clearing the children become aware that something very odd is occurring down on the shoreline. Before they even know what is happening, Mae Jabu gently lifts a small group of children on to her back and then heads for higher ground with her keeper running anxiously beside her.

The wave rolls in but the children are saved by the extraordinary efforts of Mae Jabu, whose 'sixth sense' anticipated the disaster.

Ages 4+

Royalties from the sale of this book will be donated by the author, illustrator and publisher to assist the Asian tsunami aid effort.

### **About the Author**

Barbara Ker Wilson has written some 40 fiction and non-fiction books for children of all ages, including several collections of folktales from Asia and Europe, which have been published in the UK, USA, Australia, NZ, Japan and PNG. Barbara has worked as a children's book editor and is now a freelance editor, mentor and writer.

### **About the Illustrator**

Frané Lessac is an author/illustrator of international renown who has 20 published books to her credit. Frané was born in the USA, but spent many years living on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, where she began her career as a painter. Capturing folk cultures and their heritage on canvas is one of Frané's particular passions.

For more information about Frané and her work, please refer to her website: [www.franelessac.com](http://www.franelessac.com)

## **After Reading the Story**

### **Information for Teachers**

**Please note:** In responding to a traumatic event such as the Boxing Day tsunami, supportive and meaningful approaches might include:

- Taking the lead from children and providing information at a level appropriate to their interest level and understanding
- Promoting a sense of security and optimism through the maintenance of regular routines and activities
- Being sensitive to children's cues and taking their opinions seriously
- Minimising sensationalism
- Focusing on positive stories in the media and redevelopment projects.

## **Questions for Discussion**

### **A. The Text**

- Describe the setting of Solada's village.
- With whom did Solada live?
- List all of the things Solada's teacher said about elephants.
- What sort of questions did the children ask about Mae Jabu?

- How did the children react when they heard about Mae Jabu's visit?
- Solada's mother gave her daughter a gift before she went to see Mae Jabu. What was the gift and where did it come from?
- Why did Solada sleep with the little pink elephant under her pillow?
- Later in the story, did the little elephant bring Solada luck as she had hoped?
- Where did the children meet Phailin's uncle and Mae Jabu?
- What appeared unusual about this particular morning? Discuss.
- Describe Mae Jabu's appearance as she walked along.
- How did she keep cool?
- How did Deng Kiet interpret Mae Jabu's mood?
- What did the children bring for Mae Jabu?
- Mae Jabu did not dance as expected. Why not and what did she do instead?
- Describe what the boy saw when he glanced towards the shoreline.
- How did the author describe the approaching wave? Discuss its appearance and the sound that accompanied it.
- What did Mae Jabu do as the wave approached?
- Describe how the children might have been feeling.
- Where did Mae Jabu go with the children on her back?
- What did Deng Kiet do after he helped the children to the ground?
- What did Solada say to Mae Jabu and then to her own little pink elephant at the end of the story?

## **B. The Illustrations**

- Describe the illustrations in the text.
- How do the illustrations enhance the story?
- Look at other books or works of art by Frané Lessac and discuss her technique and style and the importance of her use of colour. (Please refer to the artist's website.)
- Ask the children to express their feelings about the story and its characters using various medium such as paint, chalk, collage, clay etc.
- Discuss and share their artwork.

## **C. Further Activities**

### **Language and SOSE**

- Together with the children, study a map of Thailand and locate the Andaman Sea beside Southern Thailand where Solada and her family lived.
- What is an elephant mahout? Describe what they do? Please refer to: <http://www.elephant.se/mahout.php> and also <http://www.kidcyber.com.au/topics/thaielephant.htm>
- Discuss the Boxing Day tsunami – compare the children's impressions from the time of the actual disaster to their responses today now that some time has passed.

- Brainstorm a word list generated from discussion about the story and the tsunami.
- Research stories describing animals' 'sixth sense' and discuss.
- Children work in pairs to write a fictional story about their chosen animal's ability to sense the approach of a natural disaster and the animal's reaction to it.
- Research and list different types of natural disasters. Children could choose to create a small project on a particular one.
- Children work in pairs to research Asian elephants and write a report, create a piece of art work or do a presentation in a format of their choosing.
- With older children, look at a map of the areas affected by the tsunami and research some of the redevelopment projects undertaken since the disaster. Refer to: <http://worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/tsunami.gif> and also <http://149.166.110.235/GeoSriLanka/default.aspx>

## **The Arts**

- **Pastel or Crayon with Dye Wash – Elephants in the Jungle**

Materials needed: crayons, large sheets of paper, water colour wash or dye.

Introduce the lesson by discussing elephant characteristics and elements of the jungle flora and fauna. Encourage the children to fill the entire page focusing on the dense layers of the jungle environment before adding their elephant. Once the children have completed their picture using overlaid and mixed crayon, and once the entire page is filled, ask them to apply a water colour wash as the final coat

- **Weaving**

This activity can be a class project or a project for a group of up to four children. It is best undertaken across a number of sessions.

Materials needed: chicken wire, approximately one metre per group.

On a piece of paper the same size as their chicken wire, children draw their elephant and then the wire is taped over the top of the drawing onto the floor. The children then use different strips of fabric to weave the design of their elephant into the chicken wire.

- **Make a Papier-mâché Elephant**

Materials needed: torn newspaper strips, old phone books, wallpaper paste or PVA glue and water (3 parts water, 1 part PVA), boxes or balloons, toilet roll tubes, scissors, masking tape, brushes and paint.

Invite children to make their elephant using either boxes or inflated balloons and tape. Once satisfied with their design, children can start to add 5 x 7 cm strips of newspaper dipped in glue. (Newsprint must be liberally coated with paste.) Be careful that children cover all parts of their elephant and joints with paper strips. The final layer should be newsprint as this provides a good surface for painting; leave to dry thoroughly. Give the elephants a base coat or two of white paint and then allow the children to paint the final coat in any colour or design of their choosing.

Sample Papier Mache elephants



<http://www.greet.bham.sch.uk/img89.jpg>

## Science

- **Ocean Wave Simulation**

This activity will demonstrate how an ocean wave is formed and grows larger.

Materials needed: 500 ml plastic bottle, 150 ml water, 150 ml vegetable oil, blue food coloring.

Fill the plastic bottle with the water. Put three to four drops of the blue food coloring into the oil. Pour the oil into the bottle. The oil should float on top of the water. Shift the bottle from left to right, simulating an ocean wave. Notice how the wave grows larger from one end of the bottle to the other.

- **Wave Formation**

This activity will simulate how the 'small' beginnings of a tsunami can turn into a giant wave.

Materials needed: bucket, water, small pebble, baseball bat or stick.

Fill the bucket about 3/4 full of water. Put the bucket of water on a flat surface and let the water become still. Drop a small pebble into the middle of the water and watch the waves form. What happens as the waves travel farther from where the pebble was dropped?

For another experiment, after the water has become still, strike the bottom of the bucket with the baseball bat or stick. Are ripples formed in the water? Are the ripples smaller or larger on the side of the bucket where the stick hit?

## **Background Information for Teachers**

### **Tsunamis**

#### **General Information**

Tsunamis are not tidal waves. They are a series of waves of extremely long wavelength and period. They are not associated with the tides. Tsunamis are primarily associated with earthquakes in oceanic and coastal regions. They can travel virtually unnoticed through the open ocean because the wave height may be only 30 centimetres. There is no truly reliable early detection system for tsunamis yet. Tsunamis can be local, regional or ocean-wide, depending on the size of the waves and the area affected. When approaching a shore, tsunami wave heights can reach 30 metres or more.

#### **The Boxing Day Tsunami – 26 December 2004**

The Earth's crust is comprised of a number of rigid 'plates' that move slowly in different directions. Where different plates meet and interact, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are common. Around northern Sumatra, the Australian and Indian plates and the Burma and Sunda plates interact to form the Sunda trench.

Normally, the Indian plate moves at about 6 cm per year relative to the Burma plate, but on 26 December 2004, at 11.59 Eastern Standard Summer Time (ESST), a large earthquake, measuring 9.0 on the open ended Richter Scale occurred, caused by the release of stresses that develop as the Indian plate dives under the Burma plate. The uplift of one plate over the other displaced a huge amount of water, starting the tsunami. Approximately 1200 km of the plate

boundary slipped with an average displacement (vertical movement) of about 15 metres.

### **Animals Sixth Sense**

For a wonderful article about animals' sixth sense during the Boxing Day tsunami, please read 'Did Animals sense Tsunami was Coming?' by Maryann Mott for National Geographic News, 4 January 2005.

[http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/01/0104\\_050104\\_tsunami\\_animals.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/01/0104_050104_tsunami_animals.html)

#### **For further information on animal behaviour please refer to:**

News stories from the BBC and Reuters about animal behaviour prior to and during the tsunami.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4136485.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4136485.stm)

#### **Further Reading**

Nature in Action – *Powerful Waves*, D. M. Souza, ISBN: 0876146612  
Natural Disasters – *Tidal Waves and Flooding*, Jane Walker, ISBN: 0749607602  
High Interest Books – *Tsunamis*, Luke Thompson, ISBN: 0516235680  
*Furious Earth: The Science and Nature of Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and Tsunamis*, Ellen J. Prager (editor), ISBN: 0071351612

#### **Web References for Teachers**

[http://observe.arc.nasa.gov/nasa/education/teach\\_guide/tsunami.html](http://observe.arc.nasa.gov/nasa/education/teach_guide/tsunami.html)  
<http://www.ess.washington.edu/tsunami/index.html>  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/savageearth/tsunami/index.html>  
<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/cmis/eval/curriculum/pathfinders/disasters/tsunamis/tsunami2.htm>  
<http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/articles/0,6709,1013398,00.html>  
<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/deptinit/pages/default/tsunami/>  
<http://science.uniserve.edu.au/school/resource/index.html>  
<http://www.tsunami.org/>  
<http://www.geophys.washington.edu/tsunami/>  
<http://www.disastercenter.com/tsunami.htm>  
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/tsunamis/>  
<http://www.gtav.asn.au/>  
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/tsunami/>

