

THE ELEPHANT'S CHILD

INTRODUCTION

By Tracy Hanson

As a child this tale was one of my favorites from Rudyard Kipling's book of [Just So Stories](#), and remains so to this day. The elephant child was always asking questions! Of course, he was only punished by the adults until he finally went off to seek answers for himself. I admired him for his persistence and believe it was his determination which saved him in the end. All turned out well in the end, or should I say, the front?

Have you ever wondered about the abilities of animals and some of their unique features? How can owls turn their heads so far around? Why do snakes make a hissing sound? How do they move without legs? How did butterflies get such [colorful wings](#)?

Maybe one of you will write a story that would make a good script for other GMRT families to read. We are always looking for new scripts for our library.

Here is a [delightful version](#) of the story with captions. And just for fun, here is a [puppet version](#) of the story.

Hmmm, puppets....elephants. Hmmm, maybe we can make some puppet elephants. [Elephant crafts](#) tell you how to make elephants in many different ways. [10 Puppet crafts](#) have different ideas. Try putting them together and see what you can create. And don't forget to share!

THE ELEPHANT'S CHILD

by Rudyard Kipling
Script by Tracy Hanson

NARRATOR 1	NARRATOR 2	ELEPHANT CHILD
CROCODILE	BROTHER 1	BROTHER 2
KOLOKOLO BIRD	OSTRICH	GIRAFFE

NARRATOR 1: In the high and far-off times, the elephant had no trunk. He had only a blackish, bulgy nose, as big as a boot, that he could wriggle about from side to side--but he couldn't pick up things with it.

NARRATOR 2: But there was one elephant, a new elephant--an elephant child--who was full of insatiable curiosity, and that means he asked ever so many questions! He lived in Africa, and he filled all Africa with his insatiable curiosities.

NARRATOR 1: He asked his tall aunt the Ostrich:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "Why do your tail feathers grow just so?"

NARRATOR 1: And she spanked him with her hard, hard claw.

NARRATOR 2: He asked his tall uncle, the Giraffe:

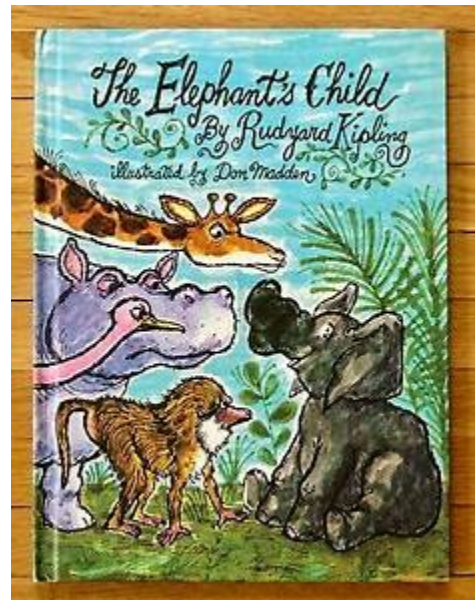
ELEPHANT CHILD: "What makes your skin spotty?"

NARRATOR 1: And Uncle Giraffe smacked him with his tail.

NARRATOR 2: He asked his broad aunt, the Hippopotamus:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "What makes your eyes red?"

NARRATOR 1: And she spanked him with her broad, broad



hoof.

NARRATOR 2: He asked his hairy uncle, the Baboon:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "Why do melons taste just so?"

NARRATOR 2: And his Uncle Baboon spanked him with his hairy paw. And still he was full of insatiable curiosity!

NARRATOR 1: He asked questions about everything that he saw, or heard, or felt, or smelled, or touched and all his uncles and aunts spanked him. And still he was full of insatiable curiosity!

NARRATOR 2: One fine morning, this insatiable elephant's child asked a new, fine question that he had never asked before. He asked:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "What does the crocodile have for dinner?"

NARRATOR 2: Then everybody said:

All: Hush!

NARRATOR 2: And they spanked him for a long, long time.



NARRATOR 1: By and by, when that was finished, he came upon the Kolokolo bird and he said to him

ELEPHANT CHILD: "My father, my mother, all my aunts and uncles, have spanked me and I still want to know what the crocodile has for dinner!"

KOLOKOLO: "Go to the banks of the great grey-green Limpopo River, and find out."

NARRATOR 2: That very next morning, this insatiable elephant's child took a hundred pounds of bananas --



NARRATOR 1: The little, short, red kind --

NARRATOR 2: And a hundred pounds of sugar cane --

NARRATOR 1: The long, purple kind --

NARRATOR 2: And seventeen melons --

NARRATOR 1: The green, crackly kind --

NARRATOR 2: And said to all his dear family:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "Good-bye. I am going to the great, grey-green Limpopo River to find out what the crocodile has for dinner."

NARRATOR 2: And they spanked him once more for luck.

NARRATOR 1: Then he went away, eating melons and throwing the rind about, until he came to what he thought was a log of wood at the very edge of the Limpopo.

NARRATOR 2: But it was really a crocodile, and the crocodile winked one eye.

NARRATOR 1: Then the crocodile winked the other eye and lifted half of his tail out of the mud.

NARRATOR 2: And the elephant's child stepped back most politely because he did not wish to be spanked again.

ELEPHANT CHILD: "S'cuse me, but do you happen to have seen a crocodile in these parts of the river?"

CROCODILE: "Come hither, little one. Why do you ask such things?"

ELEPHANT CHILD: "S'cuse me, but my father and mother and all my aunts and uncles have spanked me, and so, if it's quite all the same to you, I don't want to be spanked anymore...."

CROCODILE: "Come hither, little one, for I am the crocodile."

NARRATOR 1: And he wept crocodile-tears to show it was quite true.



Then the elephant's child grew all breathless, and he panted and kneeled down on the bank and said:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "You are the very person I have been looking for all these long days. Will you please tell me what you have for dinner?"

NARRATOR 2: The Crocodile leaned toward the elephant's child and said:

CROCODILE: "Come hither, little one, and I'll whisper."

NARRATOR 1: Then the elephant's child put his head down close to the crocodile's musky, tusky mouth and the crocodile said:

CROCODILE: "I think today I will begin with the elephant's child!"

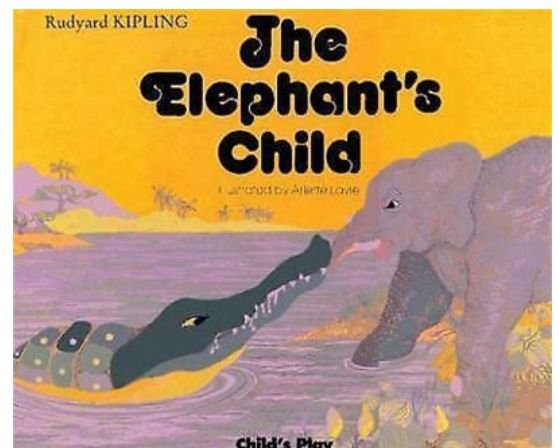
NARRATOR 2: He clamped his teeth together, biting the elephant's child's nose and elephant's child wrinkled up his nose and tried to back away.

NARRATOR 1: Up to that very week, day, hour and minute, the elephant's child's nose had been no bigger than a boot--though much more useful! Speaking through his nose, elephant's child said:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "Let go! You are hurting me!"

NARRATOR 2: Then the elephant's child sat back on his little haunches and pulled, and pulled, and pulled and his nose began to stretch.

NARRATOR 1: And the crocodile floundered in the water, making it all creamy with great sweeps of his tail, and he pulled, and pulled.



NARRATOR 2: And the elephant's child's nose kept on stretching; and he spread all his little four legs and pulled, and pulled, and pulled.

NARRATOR 1: And the crocodile threshed his tail like an oar, and he

pulled, and pulled, and pulled and at each pull the elephant's child's nose hurt him terribly!

NARRATOR 2: Then the elephant's child felt his legs slipping, and he said through his nose, which was now nearly five feet long:

ELEPHANT CHILD: "This is too much for me!"

NARRATOR 1: And he pulled as hard as ever he possibly could, and the crocodile let go of his nose with a plop that you could hear all up and down the Limpopo.

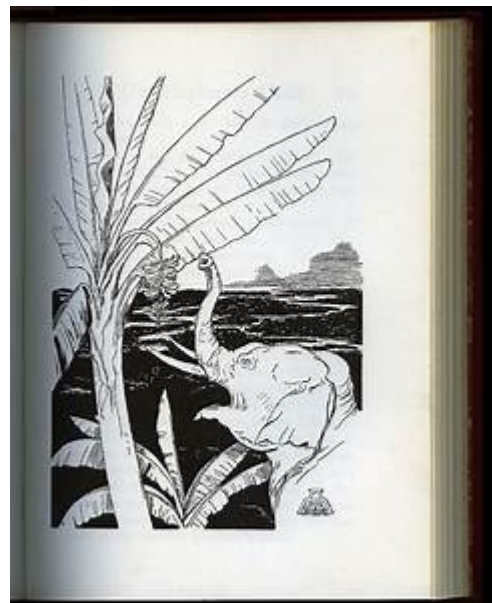
NARRATOR 2: Then the elephant's child sat down most hard and sudden, and the first thing he did was to be kind to his poor pulled nose. He wrapped it all up in cool banana leaves and hung it in the great grey-green greasy Limpopo to cool.

NARRATOR 1: The elephant's child sat there for three days waiting for his nose to shrink. But it never grew any shorter, and besides, it made him squint. For, O Best Beloved, you will see and understand that the crocodile had pulled it out into a really, truly trunk, same as all elephants have today.

NARRATOR 2: So the elephant's child went home across Africa frisking and shisking his trunk.

ELEPHANT CHILD: "When I want fruit to eat, I can pull it down from a tree, instead of waiting for it to fall, as I used to. When I want grass, I can pluck it from the ground, instead of going down on my knees. When the flies bite me, I can break off a branch of a tree and use it as a fly-whisk; and I can make a new, cool, squishy mud-cap whenever the sun is hot."

NARRATOR 1: One dark evening he came back to his family. They were very glad to see him and immediately said:



BROTHER 1: "Come over here and be spanked for your insatiable curiosity!"

ELEPHANT CHILD: "Pooh! I don't think you people know anything about spanking, but I do and I'll show you."

NARRATOR 2: Then he uncurled his trunk and knocked two of his brothers, head over heels!

BROTHER 2: "O Bananas! Where did you learn that trick, and what have you done to your nose?"

ELEPHANT CHILD: "I got a new one from the crocodile on the banks of the great, grey-green greasy Limpopo River. I asked him what he had for dinner, and he gave me this to keep."

Brother 2: "It looks very ugly."

ELEPHANT CHILD: "So it does. But it's very useful."

NARRATOR 1: And he picked up his brother by one leg and shoved him in a hornet's nest.

Brother 2: "AWWWWwwwwwwww!"

NARRATOR 2: Then that bad elephant's child spanked all his dear family for a long time till they were very warm and greatly astonished.

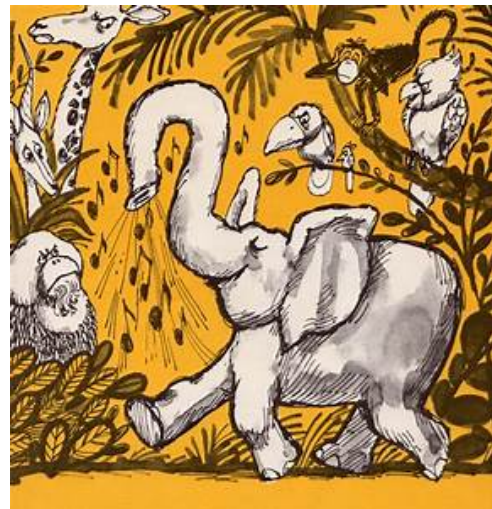
NARRATOR 1: He pulled out his tall Ostrich aunt's tail-feathers.

OSTRICH: "Ouch!"

NARRATOR 2: And he caught his tall uncle, the Giraffe, by the hind-legs and dragged him through a thorn-bush.

GIRAFFE: "Aaaaaaahhhh!"

ELEPHANT CHILD: "Ha ha ha ha ha!"



NARRATOR 1: He shouted at his broad aunt, the Hippopotamus:

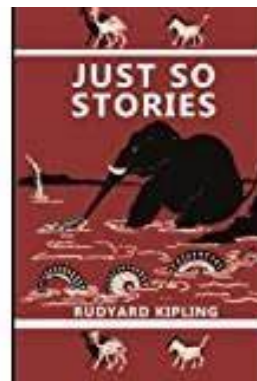
ELEPHANT CHILD: "Hey, Hippo!"

NARRATOR 2: His broad Aunt Hippo pretended to sleep and he blew bubbles in her ear when she was sleeping in the water after meals.

NARRATOR 1: But he never let anyone touch the Kolokolo Bird.

NARRATOR 2: At last, things grew so exciting that his dear family went off one by one in a hurry to the banks of the great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, to borrow new noses from the crocodile.

NARRATOR 1: When they came back nobody spanked anybody any more, and ever since that day, O Best Beloved, all the elephants you will ever see, besides all those you won't, have trunks precisely like the trunk of the insatiable elephant's child.



GMRT and its script format are licensed under the Creative Commons and can only be used by licensed facilitators.