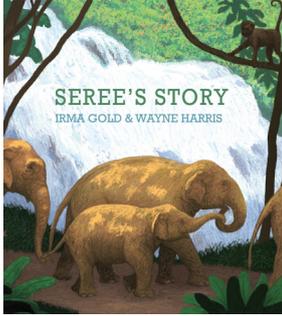




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Seree's Story

Author: Irma Gold
Illustrator: Wayne Harris
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

When they came, the herd scattered in fright, their trumpeting calls shattering the morning. Seree and her mother were cornered.

Life in the jungle was good for young Seree and her mother until the day poachers come. Separated from her mother and the life she knows, Seree is taken to work in a circus. Forced to perform every day and spend each night in chains, Seree longs to be with the herd and reunited with her mother. Will she ever be free?

A poignant story by an active elephant conservationist that puts the spotlight on animal welfare.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Irma Gold is an award-winning writer and editor. Her short stories have been widely published in anthologies and journals like *Meanjin*, *Island*, *Idiom 23* and *Going Down Swinging*. Her debut collection of short fiction, *Two Steps Forward*, was critically acclaimed and won her a Canberra Critics Circle Award for Literature. Irma has lived in England, Melbourne, and is now based in Canberra with her husband and three children. *Megumi and the Bear* was her first title with Walker Books Australia.

Wayne Harris is an award-winning illustrator and designer. He won the APA Best Designed Picture Book of the Year Award for *A Bit of Company* by Margaret Wild and for *Gordon's Got a Snookie* by Lisa Shanahan. He was short-listed in the NSW Premier's Award for writing *Judy and the Volcano*, the same year *Going Home* was named an American Library Association Notable Children's Book. He teaches design and illustration. He also illustrated *Bird to Bird*, written by Claire Saxby and published by Walker Books.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Ages 5-9
- Years 1-4

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Picture Book

Themes/Ideas:

- Conservation
- Animal welfare
- Resilience
- Hope



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Before Reading

Before reading *Seree's Story*, view the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author and illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end?

As a class, brainstorm what you know about Asian elephants then use this information to create a mind-map. Use subheadings to help organise the information.

How many Asian elephants do you think there are in the wild, and how many in captivity? What do you think it might be like for an elephant in captivity?

Discussion Questions and Activities

Who do you think the audience for this book is? Why?

Is *Seree's Story* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? Is it a combination of more than one of these types of texts? How can you tell? Who do you think the book was created for?

On the whiteboard or on a large sheet of paper, place an image of the cover of *Seree's Story* and surround it with words that describe the book. Include words that describe what you liked and what you disliked about the book. Take turns describing/re-telling the story as if you were explaining it to someone who hasn't read it yet. What do you think are the most important parts of the story? Why do you think that?

Personification is when you give human qualities or abilities to an object or animal. Find examples of personification in the book and discuss why you think Irma Gold used this device.

What did you feel while reading the book? Which parts of the story made you feel most emotional? The attitude and actions towards animals in captivity can be confronting or upsetting to see and read about. Do you think it's important for us to know and understand how animals are being treated like this? Why or why not?

Read the 'About Elephants' page at the back of the book, and return to the mind-map you created before reading the book. Cross out or edit any incorrect information then add in anything new that you've learnt. Did any of the new information surprise you?

Asian elephants are an endangered species. What does this mean? As a class, discuss the concepts of extinction and what is being done to try and stop Asian elephants becoming extinct.

Research more about Asian elephants on the internet, using the list of questions you came up with before reading the book as a guide. Create a PowerPoint presentation and present it to the class.

Make a list of websites which are useful for learning about Asian elephants. Make sure you consider whether the information each site provides is reliable, who wrote or manages it and how up-to-date it is.

Where do you think the kind people who save Seree were from? Investigate more ways humans can help and protect Asian elephants and compile a list of organisations that support them. Choose one of these organisations, and write letter of encouragement to them. What things can you do to help?



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Were you surprised to learn how elephants form such close family connections? Why or why not?

Discuss the words “hope” and “resilience”. What do they mean? How are they demonstrated in *Seree’s Story*?

How does Seree keep the memories of her mother and her herd close to her? Why is this so important?

Have you had an experience when you were separated from your family? How did it make you feel? How could support a friend who might be missing someone they love?

Choose one of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- How do you think Seree is feeling? What clues might there be in the pictures?
- Is there a main colour in this spread? How does it make you feel?
- Do the colours change from spread to spread? Why might that be?
- Do the pictures take up the whole page, or are they framed?

- How do things close up look different to things in the picture that are far away?

- How do the illustrations add to the story? How would the story be different if there were no illustrations?

Look at the colours the illustrator, Wayne Harris, has used in *Seree’s Story*. Why do you think he chose to use these colours? Do they accurately represent the environment that Asian elephants live in?

The illustrations not only interpret the text, but extend the story by giving the reader more information. Choose a spread and discuss what information is in the illustrations that are not in the text.

Create a soundscape for the book using either recorded sounds found online, or sounds that you create yourself. Choose sounds that capture the mood of the story.

Some stories have a moral, which means the story is trying to teach the reader a lesson. What is the moral of this story? Is there more than one? Do you know any other stories that have a moral?