



Really BIG News! Beautiful and Behemoth Bundles of Joy

Animal Care: Preserving Asian Elephants

Learning Objectives

- Learn about an endangered species
- Complete a crossword puzzle to demonstrate reading comprehension
- Locate answers to questions
- Problem solve using mathematics
- Read expository text

Lesson Materials

- Handout #1: **Really Big News: Beautiful and Behemoth Bundles of Joy**
Born at *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*[®] in Florida
- Handout #2: **Crossword Puzzle**
- Handout #3: **Mammoth Math**

Standards

Reading Comprehension: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational text

Reading Comprehension: Responds to questions about text; summarizes information

Life Science: Understands the concept of extinction

Life Science: Knows that an organism's patterns of behavior are related to the nature of that organism's environment

Mathematics: Understands and applies the basic concepts of computation and algebra



Teacher Notes

Asian elephants have long been a beloved part of *The Greatest Show On Earth*® and yet, the sad fact is that they are an endangered species. So, in 1995, Producer Kenneth Feld established the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*®. The *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* provides 200 acres of pristine wilderness where elephants can live in a safe and enriching environment and have more baby elephants.

The *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* is the most successful elephant pbreeding program anywhere outside southeast Asia. To date, 23 Asian elephant calves have been born under the care of *Ringling Bros.*® Each newborn elephant calf takes the Asian elephant one step further from extinction.

To see pictures and a video of our growing Asian elephant herd go to www.ElephantCenter.com

Activity Directions

1. Ask: How much did you weigh when you were born? Allow time for students to share. Then ask: How much do you think an elephant weighs when it is born?
2. Discuss: If an elephant weighs 250 pounds when it is born, how many students in our class would it take to equal the weight of that elephant on a scale?
3. Distribute Handout #1: **Really Big News**, one to each student. Instruct students to read the article and then they will get a crossword puzzle to complete. (If your students are not able to read the article independently, read it aloud with them.)
4. Distribute Handout #2, **Crossword Puzzle**, one to each student. Allow time to complete the crossword puzzle. Tell them that all of the answers can be found in the article.

Below is a list of the words needed to complete the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* Crossword Puzzle on Handout #2. For younger students you can write these words on the board for reference.

Barack	Asian	Florida	Acres
Superior	Comfort	Playtime	Rocks
Veterinarian	Trust	Bananas	Barn
Shared			

Extension

Here's a *Barnum FUNundrum!*SM—a Barnumized way to make practicing math FUN! Distribute Handout #3: **Mammoth Math**, one to each student.

Review the directions and allow time for the students to complete.



The Times

EXTRA!
EXTRA!

REALLY BIG NEWS

*Beautiful and Behemoth Bundles of Joy Born at
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation®*

Florida – It is BIG news when a baby Asian elephant is born. One reason is that the babies are big, really big.

On November 9, 2008 a big bundle of joy was born at the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation* in central Florida. Weighing in at 310 pounds, Sundara's birth was the twenty-first in what is already the most successful Asian elephant-breeding program in the Western Hemisphere. The calf's name, Sundara, means "beautiful" in Hindi.

Then, on January 19, 2009 another big baby came into the world at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*. Another big calf to be exact. Baby elephants are called calves when they are born. The 250-pound calf was named Barack because he was born on the eve of the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

There is another reason the birth of an Asian elephant is big news. Asian elephants are endangered. This means that the elephants are not reproducing fast enough and are losing their native habitats to humans taking up the land in range countries. It is estimated that there are fewer than 35,000 Asian elephants left in the world.

Asian elephants have long been a beloved part of *The Greatest Show On Earth®*. To help preserve this endangered species for future generations, *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey®* established the 200-acre *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* in 1995. The elephants' comfort and security are *Ringling Bros.®* top priorities. In addition to large fields where the elephants can roam, the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* has many barns including a 17,000 square foot barn where the elephants can go at night to sleep and for shelter in bad weather.



The Times

EXTRA!
EXTRA!

REALLY BIG NEWS, cont.

This \$5-million state-of-the-art facility is dedicated to the conservation, breeding and study of the Asian elephant. In order to study Asian elephants, the staff at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*® must first work hard to earn the trust of the elephants. They do this by caring for them around the clock. This includes giving them baths, giving the elephants a secure place to live, providing toys to play with and feeding the elephants highly nutritional food such as fresh vegetables, fruits, high-quality grains and hay. Our young calf, Barack especially loves bright yellow bananas.



Playtime with the elephants also builds trust and promotes good health. Using lots and lots of water, the *Ringling Bros.*® staff makes bath time a playtime. Elephant toys such as large balls, truck tires, and tree limbs are readily available. The elephants also use large rocks to climb and rub against. Watching the elephants play with each other is more than a joy. It also shows the *Ringling Bros.* staff what kinds of things the elephants prefer to do. Some of the elephants enjoy showing off some of their natural behaviors during playtime and if they are comfortable they are given the chance to become performers for *The Greatest Show On Earth*®.

Ringling Bros. has full-time veterinarians to care for the elephants at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* and on the *Ringling Bros.* touring units. The veterinarians make sure all of the elephants are healthy and comfortable.

Recognized as one of the leading centers for the study of Asian elephants, the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* shares its pool of knowledge with the rest of the scientific and conservation community worldwide.



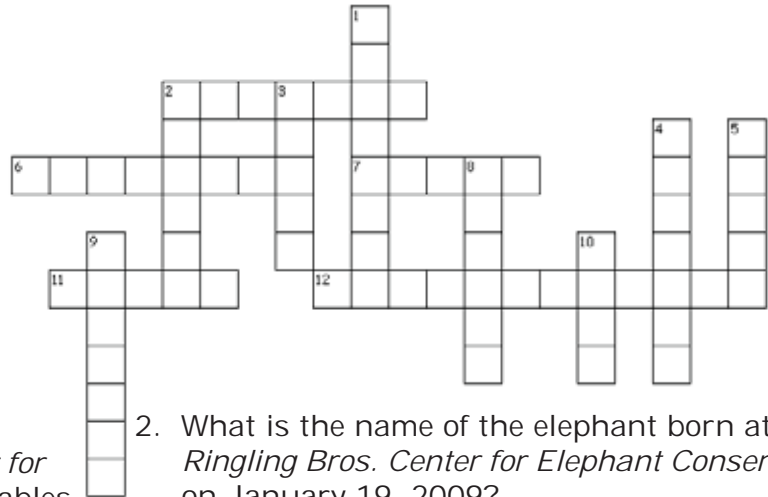
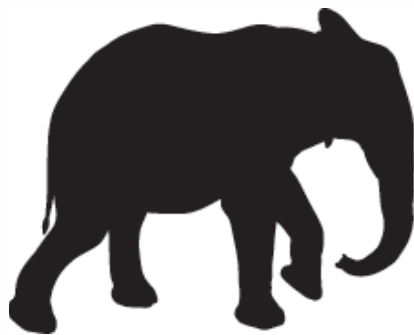
Handout #2: Crossword Puzzle

Name: _____

Beautiful and Behemoth Bundles of Joy

Instructions:

Read the article about the new baby elephants at the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*[®]. Using the clues on this page, complete the following crossword puzzle.



Across

2. Elephants at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*[®] eat fresh vegetables, fruits and high quality grains and hay. Barack enjoys eating bright yellow _____.
6. The *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* is devoted to providing a _____ environment for Asian elephants.
7. *Ringling Bros.*[®] staff live and work closely with the elephants to build _____.
11. Elephants like to climb on and rub against these.
12. *The Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* has a full-time one of these to take care of the elephants' health.

Down

1. These activities form the basis of the performance routines in the *Ringling Bros.* shows.
2. What is the name of the elephant born at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* on January 19, 2009?
3. The *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* is located on 200 of these.
4. *The Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* is located in central _____.
5. This kind of elephant has been a part of the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey*[®] circus for more than 140 years.
8. Everything the elephant experts at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* learn is _____ with elephant scientists around the world.
9. At the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*, an elephant's _____ is the top priority.
10. The *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* has a 17,000 square foot _____ where the elephants sleep at night and are sheltered in bad weather.



Handout #3: **Mammoth Math**

Name: _____

Question:

The baby elephant, Barack, was born at 250 pounds. If you wanted to step on the other side of the scale, who would you need to join you to come close to equaling baby Barack's birth weight?

Find out the weight of several family members and friends and make a list of their names and how much they weigh. Next select the ones you would need to help you reach 250 pounds on the scale. List their names along with yours on a separate piece of paper, include their weights and the total weight.

Challenge:

On average the baby elephant, Barack, could gain up to 3 pounds a day during his first year. At that rate of growth, he doesn't stay small for long.

He was 250 pounds at birth. How much will he weigh at the following ages:

- One month: _____ pounds
- Six months: _____ pounds
- One year: _____ pounds
- At age 2, he will be called a juvenile elephant.
- How much will he weigh then? _____ pounds



Baby Barack

Ages and Names

People get called different names at different ages. First we are babies, then toddlers, then adolescents, then teens and finally we are called adults after the age of 21.

Elephants are also called different names at different ages.

From 0-2 years old elephants get called babies because they are so cute, but the correct term is **calf**.

From 2-5 years an elephant is called a **juvenile**.

From 5-15 years an elephant is called an **adolescent**.

From age 15 and older, an elephant is called an **adult**.