

Saving a Baby Elephant

Story Reference: *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Humane Heroes Volume II*, Story 11, "Chouk the Elephant"

Lesson Description: Students learn about a baby elephant in Cambodia, named Chouk, who was found suffering in the forest with his foot nearly severed by a snare trap. He was rescued by wildlife specialist Nick Marx, who examined him and determined that to save Chouk's life, the foot must be amputated. Nick cared for the elephant for weeks, cleaning and changing his bandages. Not only did the elephant heal, but Nick's life was also forever changed. Over time, Nick enlisted organizations to create a prosthetic limb specially designed for an elephant. Chouk adapted to his new limb so well that he could walk and play like other elephants and has now outgrown more than 12 prosthetic limbs. Chouk continues to live his adult years at a wildlife and rescue center in Cambodia. In this lesson, students role-play as animal rescuers and supporters, and contemplate the rewards that follow.

ELA Alignment:

- Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

Lesson Objectives:

- Analyze ways to support the well-being of animals.
- Identify personal qualities and skills needed to care for animals.

Vocabulary:

- Prosthetic

Materials:

- Half sheets of lined paper or stationery (1 per student)
- Optional: Letter to Myself Graphic Organizer (1 per student)
- Interactions and Outcomes sheet (1 per pair of students)

Resource Links:

- "Chouk the Elephant" additional online resources:
<http://www.chickensoup.com/ah/volume-2/story-11>

Introduction: Write a letter (7 minutes)

- As students enter the classroom, distribute a half sheet of lined paper (or graphic organizer) to each student. Tell students they will role-play the part of someone who is rescuing a suffering animal.

- Have students write a letter to themselves. The letter should briefly describe an animal they would like to rescue. Students should convey their feelings, their expectations, and what they might hope to gain from an experience in which they saved an animal's life and safeguarded its well-being.
- Briefly discuss the following questions:
 - *What outcome might the animal experience after being rescued?*
 - *What outcome might this experience have on you as the rescuer?*
 - *What outcome might occur if this animal is not rescued?*
- Keep the letters and return them at the end of the lesson during the closing activity.

Read and analyze: Identify outcomes (18 minutes)

- Prior to reading "Chouk the Elephant," tell students they will be reading silently about a baby elephant in Cambodia who was severely injured by a snare trap. Tell students the story recounts the influence of individuals and organizations that made a difference in the elephant's life.
- After reading, arrange students in pairs. Distribute the "Interactions and Outcomes" sheet for each pair to complete as a team. Each student should contribute an outcome for each interaction. Listen and, if needed, prompt students for the following answers:
 - *A wildlife and rescue center contacted Nick Marx to help rescue a trapped elephant.*
 - Nick tranquilized and rescued the elephant, and named him "Chouk."
 - Nick restored Chouk back to health after the amputation of his foot.
 - *Nick contacted the Cambodian School of Prosthetics and Orthotics.*
 - Students and professors visited Chouk to examine and measure him.
 - The staff designed a new foot for Chouk.
 - *Nick contacted the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund.*
 - The SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund covered the cost of the prosthetics.
 - Chouk was able to have new prosthetics made as he grew.
 - *Nick visited Busch Gardens Tampa for advice and lessons on training the elephant.*
 - Nick learned positive reinforcement principles to train Chouk.
 - Chouk successfully adapted to having his prosthetics replaced as he outgrew them.

Guided practice: Role-play as animal rescuers and supporters (15 minutes)

- Share with students that animal caregiving often involves many people and organizations working together. Ask students to imagine the outcome of Chouk's story if Nick had tried to save him without the help of experts in prosthetics or without extra financial help. Explain that Nick needed to use storytelling to enlist the support of others in an animal care project and they will have an opportunity to practice storytelling in a role-play.
- Choose a group of 3-5 students to participate in a role-playing exercise. Arrange the group in a fish bowl configuration with the rest of the class sitting in a circle around the group that is in the role-play.

- Ask the role-playing students to choose their roles: one person will be the animal rescuer (Nick), one or two persons will be experts in prosthetics (but not elephant prosthetics), one or two persons will be representatives from a conservation fund, and one person could be an elephant trainer. While the class observes, the animal rescuer must convince the group to help Chouk by explaining the situation and responding to their questions.
- Coach students on discussion skills such as asking follow-up questions, and paraphrasing, or elaborating on another person's point.
- Guide the rescuer to consider the following questions:
 - *What are the most important facts of the animal's story?*
 - *What might be some obstacles to gaining support?*
 - *What values do the people and organizations have that will motivate them to overcome obstacles and help this animal?*
 - *What additional information is important to share that might persuade others to help Chouk?*
 - *What questions might the other stakeholders (e.g., elephant trainer, representatives from a conservation fund, prosthetics experts) have about these rescue efforts?*
- Ask students in the outer circle to take note of ways to make their stories and questions more compelling. Allow students in the outer circle to trade places with those in the inner circle.
- If time permits, ask a student to trade places with the rescuer and develop a new scenario, or divide the whole class into groups of 3-5 and practice the role-play exercise.
- Debrief on the role-play and ask students to share what they considered to be the most compelling arguments for helping an animal.

Closing: Revise the letters (7 minutes)

- Distribute the original letters students wrote at the beginning of the lesson.
- Ask students to add or change anything they feel they would now answer differently.
- Collect the revised letters as an exit slip. Post them on the wall for future viewing.

Letter to Myself

Imagine you are rescuing an animal from a situation in which it is wounded, ill, or in danger. It can be an animal you know personally or from an imaginary scenario. Think about an animal you care about and write a letter to yourself answering the following questions:

The animal I am rescuing is:

When I think of this animal suffering I feel:

My expectations about saving this animal are:

My hopes for the future of this animal are:

What I hope to gain from this experience is:

Ways I can enlist the support of others:

Interactions and Outcomes

Interaction #1:

A wildlife and rescue center contacted Nick Marx to help rescue a trapped elephant.

List two outcomes of this interaction.

- _____

- _____

Interaction #2:

Nick Marx contacted the Cambodian School of Prosthetics and Orthotics.

List two outcomes of this interaction.

- _____

- _____

Interaction #3:

Nick contacted SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund.

List two outcomes of this interaction.

- _____

- _____

Interaction #4:

Nick visited Busch Gardens Tampa for advice and lessons on training the elephant.

List two outcomes of this interaction.

- _____

- _____
