

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan library programs as well as activities for family time, day care, or the classroom.

Meet Ohio author Linda Stanek and her collaborator, illustrator Shennen Bersani, who lives near Boston.

Learn about the complex, essential role of the elephant in maintaining the ecology of the savanna.

Explore fun activities that align with Ohio's Learning Standards for kindergarten through grade 3.

Once Upon an Elephant

By Linda Stanek (author)
and Shennen Bersani (illustrator)



About the Book

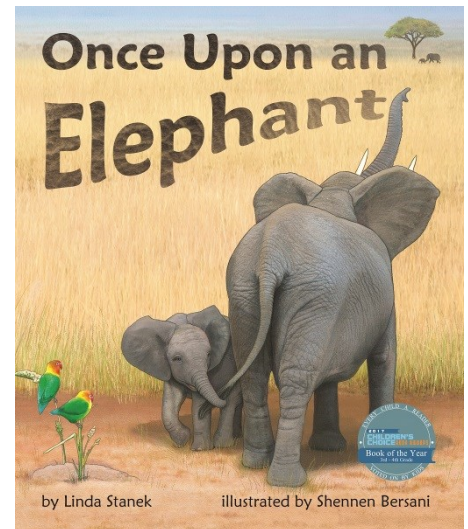
From slowing wildfires to planting seeds, one animal is the true superhero that keeps the African savanna in balance. Elephants dig to find salt that other animals lick; their deep footprints collect water for small creatures to drink; and they eat young trees to keep the forest from overtaking the grasslands. In every season, the elephants are there to protect the savanna and its residents—but what would happen if the elephants were only “once upon a time”?

Read along to discover the important role this keystone species plays in the savanna and explore what would happen if the elephants vanished.

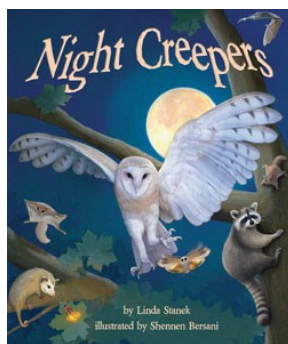
Arbordale Publishing, 2016. ISBN 9781628557312.
Ages 4-8.

Leveled Reading: AR Points 0.5. ATOS Book Level 2.9. AD570 Lexile.
www.arbordalepublishing.com/bookpage.php?id=OnceElephant

Available as an ebook through the Ohio Digital Library: ohiodigitallibrary.com



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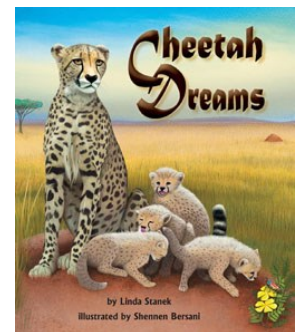
Linda Stanek and Shennen Bersani have created other educational nonfiction picture books.

Read **Night Creepers** to learn about crepuscular and nocturnal animals and some of their behaviors.

Discover the majestic cheetah, the most rapidly vanishing cat in Africa, in **Cheetah Dreams**.

www.arbordalepublishing.com/bookpage.php?id=NightCreepers

www.arbordalepublishing.com/bookpage.php?id=CheetahDreams





Author photo and biographical information courtesy Arbordale; used with permission.

About the Author

As an early and middle childhood educator, Linda Stanek wants to inspire young learners, including children with written language disabilities, to write about things that excite them. Her own passion for saving endangered animals and teaching children about the importance of each link in the natural world provided the inspiration for ***Once Upon an Elephant***, which was chosen as the 2017 Children's Choice Book Award's 3rd-4th Grade Book of the Year.

Linda has also written ***The Pig and Miss Prudence***, ***Beco's Big Year: A Baby Elephant Turns One***, ***Night Creepers***, and ***Cheetah Dreams***. Linda has two grown sons and lives in Ohio with her feline family members.

Author Resources

Linda Stanek's official website

<http://www.lindastanek.com>

An interview with Linda Stanek from Arbordale Publishing

www.arbordalepublishing.com/documents/AuthorInterviews/Stanek-AI.pdf

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

See www.lindastanek.com/visits and contact Linda via her website, www.lindastanek.com/contact

"Once upon an elephant, the forest's trees grew thick and strong. Some trees sprouted in the grasslands and threatened to turn the area into a forest.

But the elephants were there."

Get Ready To Read!

Encouraging early literacy skill-building in young children.

Many of the activities in this toolkit incorporate **five early literacy practices**, everyday activities that help children get ready to read. These practices are:

Reading - Writing - Talking - Singing - Playing

Reading to and with children is the most effective way to support reading readiness. Reading aloud develops vocabulary and comprehension, builds familiarity and comfort with books, and is fun for adult and child.

Writing (or drawing and scribbling) helps children learn about print, letters, and vocabulary, and supports fine motor skills.

Talking helps children learn oral language—a critical early literacy skill—and increases vocabulary and comprehension.

Singing slows language down so children can hear the different sounds that make up words, and develop vocabulary and phonological awareness.

Playing teaches children to think symbolically, practice self-expression, and put thoughts into words.

All of these practices lead to children being ready to learn how to read when they begin school. Parents, teachers, and librarians can share these practices with children at home, in the classroom, or at the library. For more information, visit ohreadytoread.org.

About the Illustrator

Shennen Bersani is an award-winning illustrator with 2 million copies of her books cherished and read by children, parents, and teachers throughout the world. Her art delivers heartfelt emotion for the wonders of nature and science and creates a unique joy for learning.

Some of Shennen's other illustrated works include ***A Case of Sense; Salamander Season; Sea Slime: It's Eeuwy, Gooy and Under the Sea; The Shape Family Babies; Animal Partners; Shark Baby; Home in the Cave; The Glaciers are Melting!*** and ***Astro: The Steller Sea Lion*** for Arbordale. In 2015, Shennen made her debut as an author with ***Achoo! Why Pollen Counts***. Shennen lives with her family near Boston, Massachusetts.



Illustrator photo and biography courtesy Arbordale. Book art courtesy Shennen Bersani. Used with permission.

Illustrator Resources

Shennen Bersani's official websites

www.achoowhypollencounts.com and shennen.typepad.com

An interview with Shennen Bersani from Arbordale Publishing

www.arbordalepublishing.com/documents/AuthorInterviews/Bersani-AI.pdf

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

See Shennen Bersani's School Visits page:

www.achoowhypollencounts.com/school-visits.html.



Practice It!

Here are some fun ideas for extending ***Once Upon an Elephant*** to include the five practices.

Reading

After reading this book, children may ask, "What can I do to help elephants?" Visit the International Elephant Foundation and read about ways children are helping with elephant conservation.

elephantconservation.org/resources/kids-in-conservation/
elephantconservation.org/fundraising/donate/how-kids-and-classrooms-can-help/

Writing

Before reading, look at the cover and ask the children what they think the book will be about. Ask: what do we already know about elephants? Write a list together of what the children know about elephants.

Talking

After reading the book, go back to your list of facts about elephants. Talk about the new facts that the children have learned from the book and add those new facts to your ever-growing list.

Singing

Sing along to "The Elephant Song" from Sesame Studios while watching video clips of elephants in the wild: youtu.be/zh99QndkO2w

Playing

Play charades! Write the names of the animals in this book—one name per slip of paper. Have each child choose a slip of paper. Taking turns, each child acts out the animal (without speaking) and the children try to guess who the animal is. The next turn goes to the child who guesses the correct animal.

You may also share these activities, and those on the next page, with school-age children!

Tie It In!

Using this book with Ohio's Learning Standards.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards also apply. These activities using **Once Upon an Elephant** align with Ohio's Learning Standards for Kindergarten – Grade 3.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

These activities are also great for library programs, family time, and playgroups.

English Language Arts

Reading: Key Ideas and Details. Follow this link for a reading comprehension quiz from Arbordale: www.arbordalepublishing.com/quize.php?title_id=227&q_type=1

Reading: Craft and Structure. Throughout this book, whenever the animals faced a problem, the author writes, "But the elephants were there." Ask the children: How does this sentence make you feel each time you read it? Do you feel that the elephant is like a superhero? What other animals are like superheroes? Answers might include bees ("super-pollinators"), worms ("super-diggers"), etc.

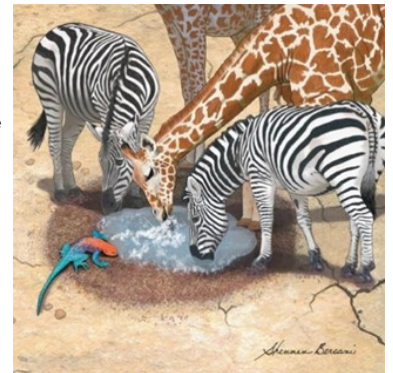
Reading: Craft and Structure. After reading this book, ask the children to share what words were unfamiliar to them. Make a list of these words. Ask for thoughts on the meanings of the words. Compare their ideas to the true word definitions.

Science

Life Science: Interactions within Habitats. Explain the definitions of "extinct" and "endangered." Ask students to name animals they think might be endangered at present. Make a list of these animals. Research endangered animals and compile a list of those animals. Have the students compare and respond to the two lists. What was surprising? Ask for thoughts as to why some of the animals were endangered. What might have happened for that animal to be on the endangered list?

Life Science: Basic Needs of Living Things. Think of the seeds that dropped from the trees. Ask the children what these seeds need to live. Next, have each child choose an animal from this book. Ask the children what this animal needs to live. Compare and contrast how each living thing gets energy and food.

Life Science: Interactions within Habitats. Ask the children how nature changed the environment throughout the book. What happened when there was a long period of time without rain? What happened when lightning struck the dry savanna?



Social Studies

Geography: Places and Regions. Ask the children to think of their neighborhood. Compare the environment of their neighborhood to the environment of the African savanna. List the similarities and differences between the environments.

Find many more activities, quizzes, games, writing prompts, and other resources in Arbordale's African Savanna Teaching Activity Guide:

arbordalepublishing.com/documents/TeachingActivities/OnceElephant_TA.pdf

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: library.ohio.gov/ctro.

This toolkit revised December 2018.

STATE LIBRARY OF OHIO

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