



WEIGHING THE ELEPHANT

by
Ting-xing Ye

Huan-huan, the baby elephant, was beloved by his entire village. He could do tricks, dance, and help the school children. When the jealous Emperor took Huan-huan to entertain his own children, Huan-huan was so sad that he could not do what the emperor wanted. Angered, the Emperor threatened to sell him unless someone could tell him, the Emperor, how much Huan-huan weighed. All of the wise men and villagers tried but were unable to do it. Finally a young boy, Hei-dou, thought of a way.

For this book-activity pair, do not read the entire book. Read the first 18 pages to your children, up to the page which ends, "so the ox was slaughtered to feed the Emperor's guests." At this point in the story, pose the question to your class, "How can we find out how much Huan-huan weighs?" Record their suggestions/predictions/solutions. Next, read the next 6 pages until the page which ends, "From the distance came the sound of galloping horses." Again ask your children for their predictions or solutions. What kind of an idea could he have gotten as he sat here by the lake in the moonlight? And again, record their comments. Read the next page. Why did Hei-dou make a mark on the side of the boat? How will that help? Now you can finally finish the book! Discuss Hei-dou's solution with your children. Do they think this will work? If desired, use the suggested materials to weigh your own object(s).

MATERIALS: water, large tub, heavy-duty aluminum foil, black waterproof marker, object(s) to determine weight of, units of weight - see Teacher Notes. quart freezer Ziploc™ bags, rice or beans, balance or scale

ACTIVITY: Have the students bring in objects for weighing. Show students the size of the tub you plan to use so that their choice of object will fit in the tub. Use the "standard" units of measurement to weigh the selected object(s).

TEACHER NOTES: Older students could make a boat from heavy-duty aluminum foil and weigh small objects in the boat. For younger students, prepare "bags" of rice or beans using freezer quart bags. Using the balance put the amount of rice or beans in the bag so that each bag weighs a standard amount. Each bag could one pound or 454 grams. The bags could weigh as little as an ounce or a gram. Pennies could be used; a penny dated after 1984 weighs 2.5 grams. For example, an object could weigh a certain number of pennies. These bags will be your "standard" units of measurement. The number and weight of the bags will be determined by the objects you and your students choose to use. This activity could become complicated. Streamline it for your classroom use. You could simply make a mark on the tub as it sits empty in the water, put your object (a stuffed animal or stuffed elephant) in it and make a second mark. For younger students, they will be able to see how the weigh of the object displaces the water that the tub sits in.

STANDARDS:

BSL: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.8, 1.9, 1.11, 1.13, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 6.3, 9.9, 11.2, 11.4, 12.1, 12.3, 12.5, 12.8, 12.10, 12.11, 12.13

NCTM: 1a, 1c, 3b, 3c, 4d, 4e, 6a, 10a, 10c, 11 d

SCS: A1, A2, B1, E3, H2, H3, H4, H5

Ye, Ting-xing. Weighing the Elephant. Illus. by Suzane Langlois. NY: Annick Press, c1998. ISBN#155037526.