



Worksheet 4. Reading: *Pliny Describes Elephants*

Two thousand years ago, people in present-day Europe knew very little about elephants. Read the passage about elephants, closely based on the one written in the first century A.D. by Pliny the Elder in *Natural History, Book 8*. Then answer the questions on the next page.

Pliny Describes Elephants

The elephant's **lifespan** is three hundred years. They travel in **herds**, are afraid of mice, and **courteously** salute men in whatever way they can. They once lived in both in Africa and India, but now only live in India.



Persian and Indian soldiers build wooden **towers** on the back of elephants and fight from there.

They possess the **quality** of **mercy**. If by chance they see a man **wandering** in the desert, they offer to **lead** him to familiar **paths**. If by chance they fight in **battle**, they want to take care of the **wounded** soldiers, so they take the **exhausted** ones and the injured ones back into their own camps.

The elephant is the closest of all animals to humans in **intelligence**. It understands the language of its own country, so it can understand and **obey** orders. Elephants are wise and **just**, remember their **duties**, enjoy affection, and respect the intelligence of men. They know that their tusks are valuable, so when a tusk falls off, they **bury** it.

Elephants are **gentle**, and do no **harm** unless someone **provokes** them. Male elephants are used in battle, carrying castles full of armed soldiers on their backs. The slightest **squeal** of a wild boar can **frighten** them. They hate mice and **refuse** to eat food that a mouse has touched. The main natural enemy of elephants is the terrifying dragon.



Fact: An elephant has one *trunk* and two *tusks*, one tusk on each side of its trunk. They live in groups called *herds*.

Definition: A *dragon* is a large imaginary animal that has wings and a long tail and can breathe out fire.



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Answer the questions according to the reading. Circle a. or b.

1. What can you say about this passage?
 - a. The information is up-to-date and accurate.
 - b. The passage was written 2000 years ago.

2. According to this passage, how long do elephants live?
 - a. About 300 years.
 - b. About 100 years.

3. The author believes which idea?
 - a. Elephants come from India, but are spreading throughout India and Africa.
 - b. Elephants used to live in Africa and India, but now they live only in India.

4. Which statement seems to be true?
 - a. The author believes that elephants have human qualities.
 - b. The author doesn't like elephants.

5. The author makes certain statements about elephants. Circle the ones that you think are scientifically true.
 - a. Elephants travel in herds.
 - b. Elephants courteously salute men.
 - c. Elephants want to take care of wounded soldiers.
 - d. Elephants are wise and just.
 - e. Elephants know that tusks are valuable.
 - f. Elephants have tusks.
 - g. Elephants' natural enemy is the dragon.

6. The author is describing elephants in a certain activity. What is this activity?
 - a. farming
 - b. war

7. The author says that elephants are afraid of some things. Circle the things that elephants are afraid of, according to the author.
 - a. mice
 - b. wild boars
 - c. dragons
 - d. people