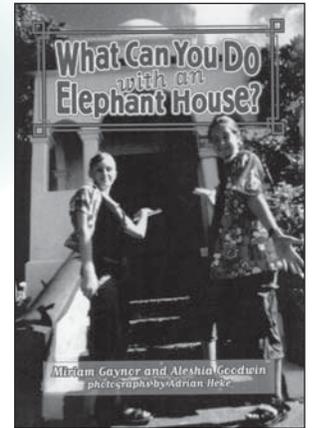


# What Can You Do with an Elephant House?

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## Book Summary

Two sixth grade students get an opportunity to make a difference in their community. They learn about writing proposals and planning and carrying out a project at the City Zoo.

## Features of the Book

- An example of the problem-solving process
- The use of historic photographs to set the scene
- The example of a chronological report
- The transactional writing
- The use of brainstorming to set priorities
- Thought bubbles, sketch map, and lists
- The use of different typefaces for effect

## Purpose

*What Can You Do with an Elephant House?* can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** writing a proposal;
- S** using chapter headings as clues to content;
- S** retrieving information from a text;
- S** discussing the pros and cons of a course of action;
- S** using diagrams to present information.

## The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Writing a proposal
- S** Using chapter headings as clues to content
- S** Retrieving information from a text

## Introducing the text

Choose a community building or space your students will know about. Ask the students to think about the building or space and to suggest answers to the following questions:

- *Why was it built?*
- *What purpose does it serve?*
- *Who uses it?*

Now ask them to think about their community.

- *What facilities does our community have?*
- *Who are the facilities for?*
- *What facilities are needed?*
- *Who in our community is missing out?*

Explain that the building or space you have chosen is to be given a complete face-lift. It is the students' job to come up with an exciting alternative for this building or space. The story should get them started.

Show the students the cover of the book. Ask:

- *What could you do with an elephant house?*

Write some of their ideas on the board.

Read the blurb on the back cover.

- *What is a proposal?*
- *Why would the students have to write a proposal?*
- *Why would they need to find out the best paint deal? How would they do this?*

## Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to look at the chapter headings on the contents page.

- *Why have the chapters been organized like this?*
- *What are we going to find out in each chapter?*
- *Why is there a chapter called “Brainstorm”?*
- *What might “Getting the Green Light” mean?*
- *What might “Messy Work” refer to?*

Ask the students to read chapters 1 and 2. As they read, they should think about what proposals are and note some of the important things about a proposal. The students in the story came up with three ideas. Using the idea for picture signs, ask the students to work through the five questions (what/why/who/how/when?) with you to create a proposal.

The students can now read the rest of the story independently. As they read, they should think about the question that forms the title of the book:

- *What can you do with an elephant house?*

The students in the story came up with some ideas for the elephant house. Ask the students in your group:

- *What other ideas can you come up with?*
- *What things influenced the students to change their proposal?*
- *What made their proposal a good one?*

When the students have finished reading, ask them to go back to “Setting Out a Proposal” on page 4. Review the elephant house proposal by going over the five questions.

Now ask the students to think about the community building or space they discussed at the beginning of the lesson.

- *What can we do with the building or space we talked about?*

The students could brainstorm in a small group and then share their ideas.

## Revisiting the Text

The suggested activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson if appropriate or could be taken as a mini-lesson at a later time.

### **S** Discussing the pros and cons of a course of action

In the book, the zoo management decided against having more elephants. In order to come to this decision, they would have had to consider the pros and cons. The students could use the blackline master on page 73 to list the pros and cons of having zoos. Ask the students to share their lists.

- *What decision would you have come to? Should we have zoos or not?*

If your students are going to write proposals, then ask them to complete a similar list of pros and cons for their two or three most practical suggestions. This will help them to make a final decision about which option they choose.

### **S** Writing a proposal

 Once the students have chosen an option (using the exercise above), they could work in pairs to write a proposal for the building or space. They could refer back to the steps on page 4 of the book.

When the students have completed their proposals, have a meeting to decide what, if any, changes need to be made. If there is not a building or space available in the community, ask the students to consider an idea that would enhance the school environment.

### **S** Using diagrams to present information

The students in the story had to draw a detailed floor plan and measure the walls of the elephant house. They needed these measurements to make an accurate costing for the project.

 Ask the students to draw a detailed floor plan of the building or space they want to improve. They should include the changes they want to make.