

Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

January 14, 2016

Article: “Ringling to retire circus elephants early”

Tuesday, January 12, 2016 in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, Main News A4

Pre-Reading:

Before reading the article, read the title and look at the photograph. Why do you think the elephants are being retired early? Where do you think the elephants in the photo are? Have you ever been to a circus? What do elephants do in a circus?

Vocabulary:

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

circus

claims

complaints

conservation

distinctive

driven by

economics

gene

lumbering

pediatric

phase out

residence

transmission

tuberculosis

Comprehension:

1. Feld Entertainment said in a statement that it was phasing out its Asian elephants from its traveling circus and moving them where?
2. Feld Entertainment is phasing out the elephants how much sooner than anticipated?
3. How many shows per year do the elephants perform in?
4. What claims have animal-rights activists made against the circus regarding the elephants?
5. Ingrid Newkirk, president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, called on Feld Entertainment to do what in regards to its circus acts?
6. Newkirk also added that there was a danger of what possible transmission from the elephants to humans?
7. About how much did the company say the cost of caring for the 11 touring elephants is a year?
8. What did Stephen Payne, a spokesman for Feld Entertainment say the decision to phase out the elephants earlier than planned was based on?
9. Feld Entertainment said it wanted to use the money it is currently using to pay for the cost of caring for the elephants to focus on what type of cancer research instead?
10. The research involves testing blood samples from the elephants, whose distinctive p53 gene makes them exceptional what?

Post-Reading:

Read the following passage from the article and discuss the following questions in a group:

Stephen Payne, a spokesman for Feld Entertainment, said the decision was driven by economics, not complaints, as more cities placed restrictions on housing, restraining and transporting the animals. "Rather than fight city hall, we decided to take those resources and use them for conservation of the species," he said.

Why do you think more cities are placing restrictions on the housing, restraining and transporting of the elephants? How do you think the elephants might be affected by the traveling – emotionally and physically? What do you think elephants require in order to live a healthy life? How do you think elephants are currently being threatened and why do you think the conservation of the species is important?

Building Language Skills:

Read the following passage, and complete the activity below:

Ingrid Newkirk, president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, said in an emailed statement that the public had lost its taste for "abusive" shows and called on the company to end all of its animal acts, including the ones with big cats.

Do you think animals being held in captivity and being made to perform in shows is a form of abuse – why or why not? Do you agree with Ingrid Newkirk that Feld Entertainment should end all of its animal acts – why or why not? What are some ways elephants and other animals are mistreated? Research to find out about the living conditions of elephants in circuses and zoos. Then research to find out how elephants are treated or used in other parts of the world – Africa, India, Thailand, etc. Next, brainstorm a list of actions you could take to help prevent and stop animal abuse.

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Comprehension Question Answers:

1. Feld Entertainment said they would be moving the elephants to a conservation center in Florida.
2. A year and a half sooner than anticipated.
3. 1,000 shows per year
4. Animal-rights activists have made claims that the circus treated the elephants cruelly (including complaints about its use of long, hooked poles called bullhooks and other methods of control) **Answers may vary slightly.**
5. She called on the company to end all of its animal acts – including ones with big cats.
6. She said that there was a danger of disease transmission (tuberculosis) from elephants to humans.
7. \$65,000 a year
8. He said it was based on economics.
9. Pediatric cancer research
10. It makes them exceptional cancer fighters.