

Trend Task



An Elephant Story

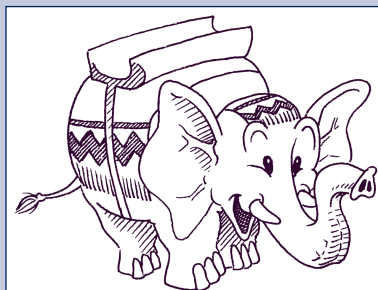
Approach: Station

Focus: Reading comprehension.

Resources: A story in four parts, on 4 separate sheets.

Level: Year 4 and year 8

Read Part 1 of the story.

**PART 1**

Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a rich man called Lee Chin. He had a very big elephant. It was a fine strong elephant, and Lee Chin was very proud of it. Many people came to look at it. The elephant made him very happy.

Now the King of this land was going to have a birthday. All the rich people had to give him a present for his birthday. What could Lee Chin give the King?

That night he had a good idea. "I would like

to give my elephant to the King," he said. "It would be a wonderful gift." His friends thought so too.

So, one day Lee Chin set off with his friends to take his elephant to the Palace. He had dressed the elephant up in a fine cloak of many colours. Then they began the long journey.

On the way they came to some high mountains. The elephant was much too big to be able to walk across the mountains on the narrow track. So Lee Chin said, "I will have to take my elephant down the river on a boat."

Luckily, there was a boat nearby, with a boatman waiting for people to take a ride. "Will you take my elephant down the river on your boat?" asked Lee Chin.

"Yes," said the boatman. "I will help you. But first you must tell me how heavy it is."

"Why?" asked Lee Chin.

"So that I can work out how much you will have to pay me. A heavy animal costs more than a light one," he said.

Now that was a problem. The rich man had

no idea how heavy his elephant was. "I cannot weigh it," said Lee Chin. "I don't have any scales that are big enough. What can I do?"

Do questions 1 to 6 on your answer sheet now.

PART 2

Lee Chin had a serious problem. How could he possibly weigh such a colossal animal. He asked his friends for help.

"I have an idea," said the first one. "You could try to weigh one leg at a time."

"That would not solve the problem," said the second friend. "I believe you will need a huge see-saw to do this job. Put the elephant on one end of the see-saw and see how many men it takes to balance it." But nobody knew where to get a big enough see-saw.

A third friend had another idea. "I think you will require a large set of scales. Arrange to have the elephant sit on all of the scales at once, then record the weight on all of the scales, and add them up."

Circle the letter alongside the best answer.

% responses
2000 ('96) 2000 ('96)
year 4 year 8

1. How did the rich man feel about the elephant?

- ☒ a. He was proud of it.
b. He was worried about it.
c. He wanted to get rid of it.

a 77 (77) 94 (95)

2. Why should Lee Chin have to give something to the King?

- a. The King did not like him.
b. The King wanted Lee Chin's elephant.
☒ c. The King was having a birthday.

c 85 (83) 97 (96)

3. Why didn't they climb over the mountains?

- a. The mountains were too high.
☒ b. The track was too narrow.
c. Lee Chin was too old.

b 62 (66) 85 (84)

4. What did Lee Chin ask the boatman to do?

- ☒ a. Take the elephant down the river.
b. Weigh the elephant.
c. Give his elephant to the King.

a 76 (74) 92 (91)

5. What did the boatman want to know first?

- a. Whether Lee Chin had enough money.
☒ b. How much the elephant weighed.
c. Why they wanted to take the elephant on board.

% responses
2000 ('96) 2000 ('96)
year 4 year 8

b 82 (76) 97 (95)

6. Why did he want to know this?

(Write an answer in your own words.)

to work out how much had to be paid

48 (40) 78 (76)

Now read Part 2 of the story. Circle the letter alongside the best answer.

7. What was the first method suggested for weighing the elephant?

- a. Use a see-saw.
☒ b. Try to weigh the legs.
c. Try to lift it up.

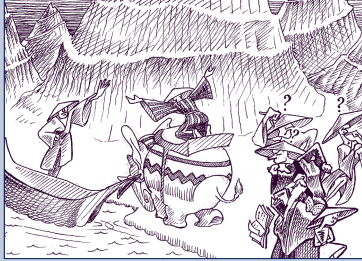
b 65 (57) 88 (84)

8. What did they think was wrong with the see-saw method?

- a. The see-saw would get smashed.
b. The elephant would fall off.
☒ c. They could not find a big enough see-saw.

c 79 (66) 96 (96)

But nobody was excited by that idea either. It seemed that none of his friends had a sensible answer. So Lee Chin asked for Tsao Tsao, the Wise Man, to be called. Maybe he could find a solution. Accordingly, Tsao Tsao was approached and he was asked for his views.



Unfortunately, he had little to offer either. He went to his large library, and searched through many books, but could find nothing related to the weighing of elephants. Apparently it was not a common problem for those who write books.

By now Lee Chin was becoming impatient. He talked to the boatman again to see if he would change the rules, but he would not. Surely someone could find a practical solution.

Do questions 7 to 12 on your answer sheet now.

PART 3

Now while the wise man was consulting his library, his young daughter, Little Tsao had a flash of inspiration. She immediately announced that she had discovered a solution to their difficulties, but her announcement was ignored. Nobody would possibly expect an immature person like her to come up with a solution to a problem that had stumped so many wise adults. She tried a second time, with a much louder call. This time they heard her speak, but again she was disappointed at their reaction. They burst into laughter.

“What would a mere child know of such complex matters?” they exclaimed, and they continued to ignore her.

However, Lee Chin heard Little Tsao’s plea, and asked for her opinion on the matter.

“I’ve listened to so much irrelevant nonsense on the subject already that I may as well give her a chance.”

So little Tsao was given the floor. First, she requested that the huge beast be transferred on to the boat. Lee Chin and his servants did as they were asked. Initially, the boat rocked back and forth, and sank well down in the water with the extreme weight of the elephant. Eventually, the vessel settled down. Then Little Tsao asked the rich man’s servants to paint a straight line around the sides of the boat to indicate where the water came up to. This was done and the elephant was then restored to dry land again.

Do questions 13 to 18 on your answer sheet now.

9. The third method required many scales. Where was the elephant supposed to sit?

a. On the boat.

b. On the scales.

c. In the water.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
b	68 (58) 94 (93)

10. How would they get the answer in this method?

a. By adding up the amounts on all the scales.

b. By counting how many scales it took.

c. By waiting till the scales reached their highest point.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
a	57 (42) 85 (80)

11. What did the Wise Man try to do to solve the problem?

a. Asked Lee Chin for advice.

b. Looked through his books.

c. Told them how to weigh the elephant.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
b	61 (52) 88 (87)

12. Why was Lee Chin getting impatient?

(Write an answer in your own words.)

nobody had a solution 19 (15) 39 (34)

Now read Part 3 of the story.

Circle the letter alongside the best answer.

13. Who had the flash of inspiration?

a. Lee Chin.

b. The Wise Man.

c. The Wise Man’s daughter.

d. The King’s daughter.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
c	63 (41) 90 (87)

14. What happened the first time that Little Tsao asked to be heard?

a. They ignored her.

b. Lee Chin spoke to her.

c. They laughed.

d. They told her to be quiet.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
a	55 (37) 87 (84)

15. How did she get people’s attention in the end?

a. She asked the King to listen.

b. She said she had a plan.

c. Lee Chin encouraged her to speak.

d. She threatened them.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
c	42 (28) 74 (72)

16. What did she ask them to do first?

a. Get some large scales.

b. Weigh the boat.

c. Put the elephant on board.

d. Get some paint.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
c	50 (36) 87 (80)

17. Where did they draw a line?

a. On one side of the elephant.

b. On both sides of the elephant.

c. At the water line on the boat.

d. Around the top of the boat.

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
c	49 (34) 79 (77)

18. What do you think she will ask them to do next?

(Write an answer in your own words.)

fill boat with something until
water level reaches the line
(better answer)

fill boat with something and/or see
how high the water comes up

% responses	
2000 ('96)	2000 ('96)
year 4	year 8
2	19
(7)	(29)
9	18

Now read Part 4 of the story. Circle the letter alongside the best answer.

PART 4

The next phase in Little Tsao's plan was now ready for operation. She surprised the company by asking that the vessel be loaded with stones. Indeed, she asked them to continue loading the vessel until it had submerged to the point that the surrounding water had reached the threshold line already drawn. The people were still somewhat confused, but they followed her orders to the letter.

"Now, a set of scales will be necessary for the final phase," she explained. "Kindly remove the stones, weigh them in batches, and calculate the total weight of all the batches. This sum is the figure you have been seeking — the weight of the elephant."

At last the onlookers were able to follow her reasoning.

"What an elegant solution!" ventured one.

An Elephant Story
Part 4
At last the onlookers were able to follow her reasoning. "What an elegant solution!" ventured one. "What a stroke of genius!" acknowledged a crowd of people who came up with such a solution.

An Elephant Story
Part 3
Now while the wise man was consulting his library, his young daughter, Little Tsao, had a flash of inspiration. She immediately announced that she had discovered a solution to their difficulties, but her announcement was ignored. Nobody would possibly expect an immature person like her to come up with a solution to a problem that had stumped so many wise adults.

An Elephant Story
Part 2
Lee Chin had a serious problem. How could he possibly weigh such a colossal animal. He asked his friends for help.

An Elephant Story
Part 1
Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a rich man called Lee Chin. He had a very big elephant. It was a fine strong elephant, and Lee Chin was very proud of it. Many people came to look at it. The elephant made him very happy.

Lee Chin was becoming worried. He was asked for his views. He went to his large library, and searched through many books, but could find nothing related to the weighing of elephants. Apparently it was not a common problem for those who wrote books.

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"A virtual stroke of genius!" acknowledged another. "Why didn't we come up with such a brilliant solution?"

"Indeed!" agreed the relieved Lee Chin.

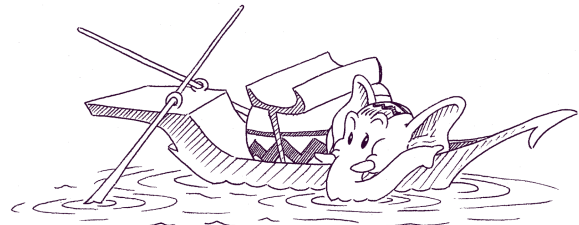
The clever young woman's technique was duly applied, and the waiting boatman was immediately able to estimate the price that Lee Chin was required to pay. Being wealthy, he was readily able to meet his obligations, and the vessel was soon heading downstream with its precious cargo aboard.

Suffice it to say that the mission was duly accomplished, the King was well satisfied with his unusual present, and the townsfolk expressed nothing but admiration for the clever young woman who was able to produce such a neat solution to Lee Chin's problem.

Do questions 19 to 24 on your answer sheet now.

- | | % responses | |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| | 2000 ('96) | 2000 ('96) |
| | year 4 | year 8 |
| 19. What did the servants do with the stones at first? | | |
| a. Weighed them. | | |
| b. Put them in the boat. | b 48 (31) | 85 (79) |
| c. Counted them. | | |
| d. Put them in the water. | | |
| 20. At what point were they to stop what they did with the stones? | | |
| a. When they ran out of stones. | | |
| b. When she told them to stop. | | |
| c. When they reached the boat's normal water-line. | | |
| d. When they reached the painted line on the boat. | d 38 (24) | 75 (69) |
| 21. What did they do with the scales? | | |
| a. Weighed the stones. | a 50 (28) | 84 (79) |
| b. Weighed the elephant. | | |
| c. Weighed the boat. | | |
| d. Weighed Lee Chin | | |
| 22. Why was the weight of the stones important? | | |
| a. It showed the weight of the boat. | | |
| b. It showed the weight of the boat and the elephant. | | |
| c. It showed the weight of the elephant. | c 49 (25) | 80 (74) |
| d. None of these. | | |
| 23. What was the "precious cargo"? | | |
| a. The elephant. | a 51 (30) | 85 (80) |
| b. Lee Chin. | | |
| c. The stones. | | |
| d. Little Tsao. | | |

- | | % responses | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| | 2000 ('96) | 2000 ('96) |
| | year 4 | year 8 |
| 24. How did they work out the weight of the elephant in the end? (Write an answer in your own words.) | | |
| found equivalent weight in stones and then weighed the stones (2) | 7 (4) | 32 (32) |
| found equivalent weight in stones or then weighed the stones (1) | 24 (11) | 42 (35) |
| other (0) | 69 (85) | 26 (33) |
| Total score: 21 – 25 | 15 (10) | 59 (55) |
| 16 – 20 | 23 (16) | 26 (24) |
| 11 – 15 | 26 (17) | 9 (13) |
| 6 – 10 | 20 (29) | 5 (6) |
| 0 – 5 | 16 (28) | 1 (2) |



Commentary:

On average, about 25 percent more year 8 than year 4 students got each question correct. Almost 50 percent more got a total score of 21 or above. Comparison of the results for 1996 and 2000 reveals little change for year 8 students, but very substantial improvement for year 4 students. The percentage of year 4 students scoring more than half marks increased from 36 percent to 55 percent.