

# Reading – Week 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020



## The Elephant Teacup



Kieran and Tam sprinted up the pathway to the museum. Neck and neck, they burst through the entrance doors and skidded across the foyer. Tangled together, a whirlwind of arms and legs, they hurled themselves at the ticket desk.

“Yes!” yelled Tam, punching the air in triumph. “I’m first! I’m the winner. Now you have to do my dare!”



Kieran collapsed onto the floor. Clutching his sides and panting for breath, he gasped, "No!"

An elegant, grey-haired woman stepped out from the shadows and raised one dark, questioning eyebrow.

Kieran felt himself blush. "Sorry," he mumbled. Silently, he cursed. Why did he always let Tam get him into trouble?

The woman's face crinkled into a smile. "Welcome to Hanley Industrial Museum."

Kieran quickly scrambled up off the floor.

The woman handed him a visitor pack. "Follow our museum trail and be transported back in time!" She pointed at a hand-shaped, yellow sticker. "This symbol indicates that an artefact is included in our touch collection. You may interact with the exhibit; pick it up, feel it, smell it; do whatever you like!" She laughed. "Hanley Industrial Museum is not like other museums!"

Kieran gazed at the visitor pack, suddenly unsure of what to say. Beside him, Tam started to giggle.

"If you need any help, I'll be just here," said the woman.

As soon as they rounded the corner, snorts of laughter

exploded from Tam. "You should have seen your face! You looked so worried!"

"Leave it out," Kieran muttered, focusing on the question sheet.

"Swot," said Tam.

Kieran clenched his jaw in annoyed silence.

"Want to know what my dare is?" asked Tam.

Kieran shrugged.

"Actually, I'm still thinking. But it's going to be good..."

Kieran dropped his gaze to the wooden floor and traced lines of old polish with the tip of his trainer. A football-sized knot formed in the pit of his stomach. Right now, a dare from Tam was the last thing he needed. If there was so much as a hint of trouble so soon after the last incident, Mum was sure to ground him.

For the next twenty minutes, he trudged round the museum, scrawling answers on his paper. Only one question left. Hope flared within him. Perhaps Tam had changed her mind about the dare.

"What was originally manufactured in the Hanley Industrial Museum buildings?" His eyes darted round the room, noting photographs of long gone potteries, old bones and an ancient poster advertising Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He wrote down: 'Clay for the local potteries.'

Crash! Tam had skidded into a glass-fronted display cupboard. "I've decided," she announced, "about your dare..."

Kieran sighed.

She gestured towards the cupboard. "Maybe there's one of those yellow hand stickers in there," she said, mimicking the old woman.

"I don't think these cupboards are..."

“Duh!” interrupted Tam. “I know that.”

Kieran sucked in a deep breath, the stale museum air dry in his mouth. “It’s probably alarmed,” he muttered, nodding towards the far corner of the room, where a red light flickered like a broken traffic light.

Tam reached up and twisted the brass handle of the cupboard. “Nope! No alarm!” The door opened a fraction before snagging. She thumped it with her elbow and it swung open to reveal three shelves cluttered with dull, green crockery and ornaments.

“I dare you to drink out of one of those cups.”

Kieran’s eyes opened wide in surprise.

“That one.” She pointed at a cup and saucer on the middle shelf, nestled between a grey ceramic elephant and a brass bell.

“I dare you to drink out of that cup,” she repeated, her

voice loud in the quiet of the museum.

For a moment their eyes locked.

There was a label beside the cup. “The Elephant Tea Cup,” Kieran read. “English bone china cup dating from the late 1800s. Manufactured in a Hanley pottery using local clay.” A shiver of goosebumps swept up his arms, he wasn’t sure why.



With a sly grin, Tam jerked a bottle from her rucksack.  
“You can drink this.”

“What?”

“I’m so nice; I’m sharing my drink with you!”

Kieran shifted from one foot to the other, a curl of anxiety twisting up through his body. “It’s a stupid idea,” he mumbled.

“Stand in front of the cupboard. Go on. Take a picture of yourself with the cup.”

Kieran snapped a couple of pictures with his phone.

“Now get the cup.” There was a hint of menace in Tam’s voice.

Kieran knew when he was beaten. He lifted the bone china cup down from the shelf and cradled it against his fleece. The china was so delicate the flickering museum lights shone right through it.

With a pleased smirk, Tam sloshed her drink into the translucent cup. The bright orange liquid fizzed and bubbled as it spun round, forming a mini whirlpool.

Kieran gazed into the cup. The movement of the spinning liquid was strangely hypnotic. A sticky heaviness slipped over



him and his eyelids began to droop. Now the room was spinning too. A bubble of panic floated up within him. He tried to shout but the words slipped into the room as a mere whisper.

Kieran staggered against the cupboard. Tam's face blurred and faded. A confusion of sounds filled his ears: roaring, bells, trumpeting.

The last thing he saw, as darkness enveloped him, was a ray of light, slicing at him like a knife.

## Comprehension Questions

1. *Kieran and Tam sprinted up the pathway to the museum. Neck and neck, they burst through the entrance doors and skidded across the foyer.*

Why did Kieran and Tam skid?

- a because the floor was wet
- b because they were in a foyer
- c because they were neck and neck
- d because they had been running fast
- e because they were in a museum

2. The woman at the museum told the children that...

- a they could touch all the exhibits.
- b they could only touch items marked with a yellow sticker.
- c they shouldn't run in the museum.
- d they could do whatever they liked with any exhibit.
- e they had to complete the question sheet.

3. *For the next twenty minutes, he trudged round the museum, scrawling answers on his paper.*

What does the word *scrawling* tell you?

- a he wrote with speed and precision
- b it took him a long time to write each answer
- c he used his neatest handwriting
- d he drew pictures
- e he wrote carelessly

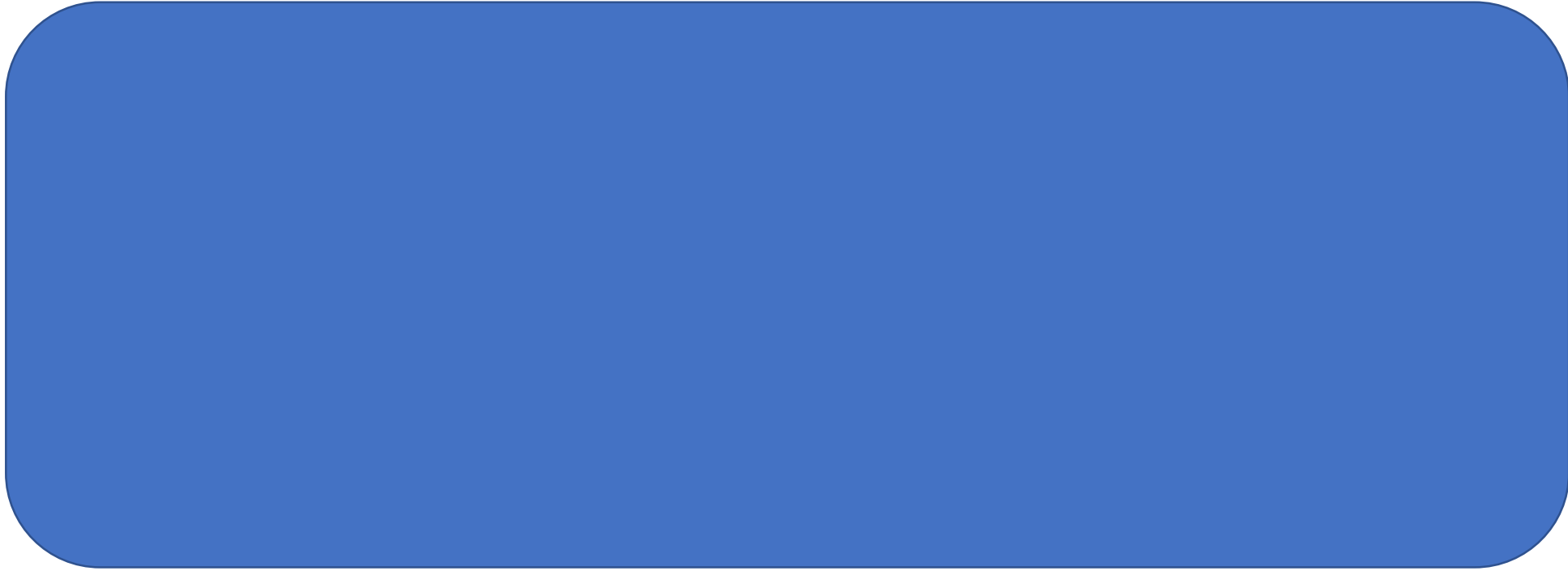
4. What did Tam dare Kieran to do?

- a take a cup down from the cupboard
- b run through the galleries
- c move the yellow stickers around
- d drink from the Elephant Tea Cup
- e steal some artefacts from the museum

5. Why was the Elephant Tea Cup translucent?

- a because it was so delicate
- b because it was magical
- c because it was so old
- d because it had been in a cupboard for so long
- e because it shouldn't be touched

How well did you understand chapter 1?

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# Chapter 2



## Chapter two

Kieran lay motionless, eyes clenched shut and hands balled into tight fists. A warm breeze ruffled his hair. Close by, a blackbird chirped out a warning call. Kieran uncurled his fingers and tentatively pressed down; the museum's polished, wooden floor had vanished. In its place was soft, damp grass.

"Tam?" he called out, his voice wobbly and unsure.

Silence.

Stay calm. But his brain screamed AAGHH and his body pumped out

adrenaline, setting his heart galloping.

He opened one eye and squinted into shafts of dazzling sunshine sparkling through a canopy of leaves. There was no sign of Tam or the tea cup.

He closed his eyes again, struggling against a chaos of thoughts. He was dead! Tam had poisoned him! He was a zombie!

Something rough brushed the tip of his nose. Then a damp nudge against his cheek and, close by, the gentle sound of bells jangling. There was a snuffling noise and a soft rush of warm air, followed by a rasping sound, like a monster breathing.

Kieran's eyelids flickered open. He didn't dare breathe.

A mass of grey loomed over him and something snake-like slid under his waist. He squirmed away, his fingers pushing at it. He gasped at the feel of rough, wrinkled skin. All of a sudden, his world tilted and he felt himself lifted off the ground.

Kieran found himself staring directly into two burning orange eyes. He flinched away from a waft of dry, peppery breath as the monster snorted. He gasped.

It was an elephant!

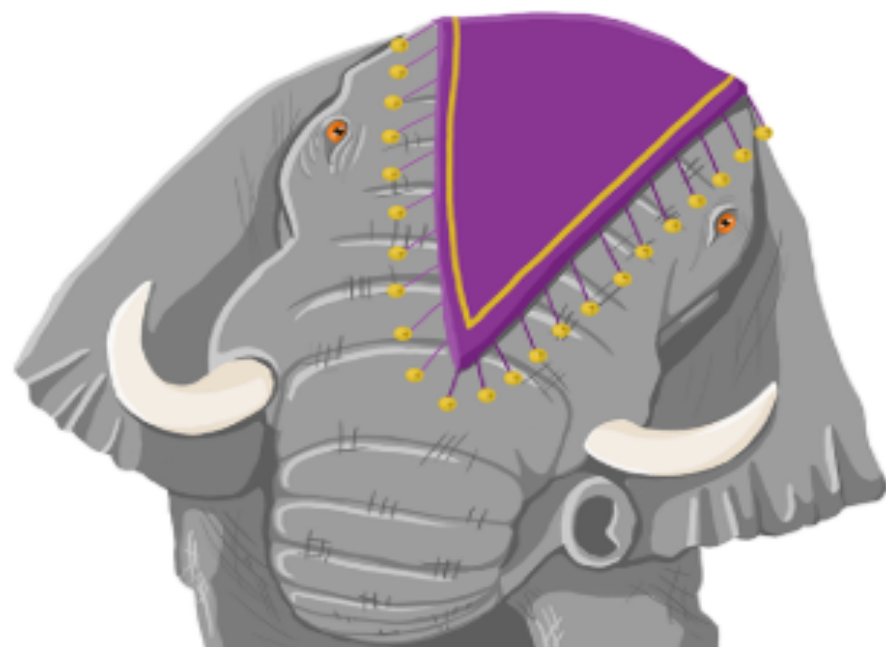
It wore a bright purple, tasselled triangle of velvet on its head, fringed with bells. Clearly, it was not a wild elephant.

It placed Kieran gently back onto the grass and nudged him with the tip of its

trunk, like the tentative poke of a finger.

Kieran eyed the two sharp tusks.

Suddenly, the elephant snatched up Kieran's cap and placed it on its own head. It blasted the air with a triumphant trumpet and opened its mouth, as if in a smile.



Raising himself up onto one elbow, Kieran peered round. His mind struggled to make sense of the situation. One minute, he'd been in the museum and the next, he was in a wooded copse with an elephant.

"Hi," Kieran said, hysterical laughter rising within him.

With every nod of the elephant's enormous head, the bells jangled. Its trunk swung backwards and forwards, pendulum-like, then curled towards Kieran, the tip stroking his arm, as if encouraging him to stand.

Kieran heaved himself upright and leant unsteadily against the solid animal. He rubbed his hand across the side of the elephant's belly, patting it like a dog. The hairy skin spiked his palms. A smile spread across Kieran's face.

The elephant suddenly turned away, as if bored with Kieran. It yanked at a tree branch with its trunk and snapped off

tender young shoots which it stuffed into its mouth. Kieran listened to the loud munching sound.

"Hey!" A shout rang out and a girl appeared on the path. She carried a bell, just like the ones the elephant wore, only larger. As she waved, the elephant paused in its munching, raised its trunk and puffed a soft welcome.

Kieran looked intently at the stranger, wordlessly taking in her appearance: a leather dress, moccasin shoes and a purple scarf that held back a long, dark plait. The scarf matched the triangle on the elephant's head. On any other day, her clothes would have seemed ridiculous. She couldn't have been much older than him;

twelve at the most. Something about her seemed familiar, but he wasn't sure what.

"You found Ellie!" the girl exclaimed.

"Ellie?"

"Yes." The girl pointed at the elephant.  
"Ellie!"

She eyed him for a few moments with dark brown eyes full of puzzlement. "You're not from around here, are you?" she said.

Kieran gaped at her, uncertain what to say.

"It's just, well, you look different," she added. "I've never seen clothes like yours

before."

"I could say the same about you," said Kieran with a nervous laugh.

"You should see the rest of us!" she said with a grin. "My name's Gentle Dove."

"Kieran," he said.

"Come on. We can't be late." She began to lead the elephant along the path and Kieran found himself following.

"Late?"

"For the procession." She cast him a curious look. "Aren't you coming to watch?"

"Watch?" Kieran's face was blank.



She laughed, a gentle sound that seemed to bubble around him. “Yes, watch! Didn’t you see our posters? Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show is in town. It’s an amazing show!”

“I... I...” stammered Kieran. The image of a circus poster flashed into his mind. Of course he’d seen the poster—in the museum! Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show had visited Hanley more than a hundred years ago!

At that moment, they emerged from the clump of trees, Ellie the elephant still snatching branches with her trunk at every opportunity. An enormous circus big top was pitched next to the railway station. Kieran gaped as a steam train, pulling wagons for the circus, puffed into the sidings.

He gazed around, struggling to make sense of his surroundings. He recognised the church tower, but where was his block

of flats? And the multi-storey car park had vanished. This was Hanley, but it wasn’t his Hanley. This was Hanley long ago...



## Comprehension Questions

1. *He opened one eye and squinted into shafts of dazzling sunshine sparkling through a canopy of leaves.*

Why did Kieran squint?

- a because he didn't want to be seen
- b because he was tired
- c because the canopy of leaves was above him
- d because he was feeling confused
- e because the light was so bright

2. *A mass of grey loomed over him and something snake-like slid under his waist.*

What slid under Kieran's waist?

- a a monster's arm
- b a snake
- c an elephant's leg
- d an elephant's trunk
- e a scarf

3. What did the elephant do with Kieran's cap?

- a ate it
- b tossed it up into the canopy
- c wore it
- d stamped on it
- e sat on it

4. After pulling himself up off the ground, Kieran...

- a stroked the elephant's belly.
- b yanked at a tree branch.
- c noticed the purple triangle of velvet on the elephant's head.
- d heard the jangling of the elephant's bells.
- e turned away from the elephant.

5. What is the name of the girl who came to collect the elephant?

- a Ellie
- b Molly
- c Hanley
- d Gentle Dove
- e Moccasin

How well did you understand chapter 2?

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# Chapter 3



## Chapter three

Kieran stared with incomprehension. The streets were filled with people wearing old-fashioned clothes, as if the whole of Hanley had entered a fancy dress competition.

"We're camped over there," said Gentle Dove, pointing just beyond the big top. As they entered the circus encampment, a wave of sound enveloped them; a mixture of music, shouting and hammering. No one paid them any special attention as Ellie halted by a railway carriage; the words Ellie the Elephant were painted in red across its side.

"Do you live around here?" Gentle Dove asked.

Kieran nodded. "Kind of."

"Are you alright? You've gone white."

Kieran hesitated. "I do come from Hanley but not this Hanley."

She looked puzzled.

"I'm not sure how to explain."

"You're making this sound very mysterious!"

"You'll think I'm crazy but..." Kieran hesitated. "I think I've gone back in time."

Gentle Dove stared at him.

After a few moments of silence, Kieran added, "I live one hundred years in the future."

She rolled her eyes and laughed uncertainly.

"I was in a museum holding a tea cup and the liquid was spinning and I felt really odd and then I was here."

"That's crazy!"

"It's true, and I think there's a connection with Ellie."

"What?"

"The tea cup I was holding was called the Elephant Tea Cup."

"Where's the cup now?" she asked.

Kieran shrugged. "I don't know. One moment I was in the museum, the next I was with Ellie in the wood. I don't know what happened to it. And I have no idea how I'm going to get back home." With those words, his stomach tightened into a knot.

Gentle Dove sat down on the ground. "That's a pretty unlikely story..."

"It's not a story," interrupted Kieran.

"Your clothes are odd," she muttered, "but..."

"But what?"

"Well, have you got anything that proves you're from the future?"

Kieran's face suddenly lit up. He pulled his mobile phone from his pocket and tapped it. "No signal," he muttered to himself. He hadn't really expected to get one!

"What's that?" she asked.

"Proof."

She stared at it blankly.

"It's a mobile phone. Look. I took these photographs this morning! That's me outside the museum and there's the cup."

Kieran snapped a picture of Ellie and Gentle Dove and showed it to her.



Gentle Dove's face turned white.

"Now do you believe me?"

"It's impossible, but yes, I think I do!"

Relief flooded through Kieran.

"Don't worry; we'll find a way to get you home. There are loads of potteries round here. We'll find another elephant tea cup!" Gentle Dove said.

Suddenly, Kieran felt hopeful.

"But until we find one, you'd better stay close."

Kieran nodded. Now he'd shared his secret with Gentle Dove, it didn't seem half as scary. "Maybe Ellie is some kind of portal!" he said.

"I have no idea what a portal is but I



do know that Ellie is the star of this show and we're late for rehearsals! If you're going to join the show, we'd better get you changed!"

"Join the show?" Kieran blurted out in surprise.

Gentle Dove nodded.

"Awesome!" murmured Kieran. He couldn't stop grinning.

Inside Ellie's railway carriage, Gentle Dove rummaged through a chest filled with costumes. The whole while, Kieran bombarded her with questions.

Gentle Dove told him everything. Other circuses had elephants too, but not

like Ellie. She was the biggest. That's why she had her own railway carriage.

"Can I give her a treat?" he asked. No sooner had he said the words than he realised he had no idea what an elephant ate.

"We'll feed her after rehearsal. Why don't you stroke her ears instead? She likes that."

Kieran reached out tentatively. "I never realised elephants were so big."

"She's an African elephant. They've got the biggest ears. They're much bigger than Asian elephants." Gentle Dove held up a cowboy hat. "This is perfect for you!"

Kieran pulled off his school fleece and she handed him a pair of funny-looking trousers and a tasselled shirt.

Once he had changed into his cowboy outfit, Gentle Dove regarded him thoughtfully. "I'll have to figure out a story for why you're joining the show. Until I do, you'd better wait here." She pointed towards a group of whooping men. "If you stand here," she said, "you'll have a good view of the practice for 'Custer's Last Stand'. I won't be long. Don't move!"

Kieran watched Ellie and Gentle Dove disappear around the corner. The events of the last few hours chased round and round in his head. Every so often, trumpets blared in the big top. After a few minutes, he could

resist it no longer. With a quick glance over his shoulder, he ducked under a canvas flap into the big top. He perched on a wooden bench, breathing in the excitement, his heart racing.

Without warning, there was a loud cry. "WATCH OUT!"

Kieran looked up in time to see a mass of canvas hurtling towards him. A moment later, a tangle of tent struck him, knocking him to the ground. A great weight of material pressed down on him, pinning his arms to his side. This is it, he thought.

Suddenly, the canvas twitched. The tip of Ellie's trunk appeared, snuffling his face as if reassuring him. The material trembled and edged upwards. After a

moment, Ellie's trunk coiled round his waist and pulled.

"Ellie!" gasped Kieran as his head emerged from the canvas.

In answer, the orange eyes blazed and Kieran felt himself squeezed even tighter by the trunk.

"I owe you," Kieran whispered.



## Comprehension Questions

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How well did you understand chapter 3?

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# Chapter 4



It was almost time for the show procession to begin. Gentle Dove explained to Kieran that they always had a procession when they arrived in a new town. It was meant to get people to come and watch the show. Ellie was the star attraction because most people had never seen an elephant before.

Kieran spotted a crowd of scruffy-looking kids gathering in the High Street. He could sense their growing excitement.

“Do you want to help me get Ellie ready?” asked Gentle Dove.

He nodded. "What can I do?"

She handed him a cloth. For the next half hour, he concentrated on Ellie. He polished her tusks, cleaned her saddle and shined her silver bells. He even buffed her feet. All the while, he murmured into her flapping ears. Every now and then, she curled her trunk around his waist and nudged him. They worked in companionable silence.

Finally, they were ready. Ellie sparkled! She seemed to suck up the anticipation and excitement of the crowd, waving her trunk and blowing, as if to say, "Look at me!" The procession snaked the entire length of the High Street; camels and horses jostled with acrobats, lion tamers

and jugglers.

This time, Kieran and Gentle Dove didn't walk alongside Ellie; they rode on top! For the first few minutes, Kieran didn't dare look round. It took all his concentration not to slide off. But before long, he got used to the rhythm of her walk, anticipating each step and beginning to roll with them. He looked around self-consciously, feeling silly in his floppy cowboy hat. But no one seemed to pay him any attention. After a little while, he began to wave at the crowd. He soaked up the sound of their cheering and shouts and felt proud to be with Ellie.

By the time the procession had reached the end of the High Street,



Kieran's arms ached from waving and his backside was bruised from bumping on Ellie.

"Had enough?" asked Gentle Dove with a sympathetic smile.

Kieran never thought he'd tire of Ellie, but he nodded.

"The procession will go on for a while yet, so it won't matter if we take a quick break." She slid down onto Ellie's leg and then hopped to the ground. She steered Ellie away from Hanley High Street and they turned into a narrow, cobbled street that sloped towards the canal.



Kieran sat bolt upright with a jolt of recognition. "I know this!" he yelled, pointing with excitement to the other side of the canal. "Over there. Look. It's the museum! I'd know that building anywhere!"

Gentle Dove furrowed her brow. "I don't think Hanley has got a museum, and if it does, that's certainly not it. That's where they make clay." She pointed at a canal boat moored next to the building. "See? They're loading up the boat with clay for delivery to local potteries."

"Potteries!" exclaimed Kieran. "That must be the connection with the Elephant Tea Cup. Ellie is so famous the cup must have been made to celebrate her performance in Hanley. Come on. We need to get to the potteries." Kieran slid off Ellie, bounced onto the ground and raced towards the bridge, his feet slipping on the damp cobbles.

"Wait!" called Gentle Dove. "The

potteries are that way." She gestured towards a row of giant brick bottle kilns set back from the canal.

Kieran hesitated, unsure which way to go but eager to be doing something about finding another elephant tea cup.

Gentle Dove moved away from Ellie and took Kieran's arm. "We will find one. But rushing around won't make it happen any faster."

"I guess," Kieran said despondently as he glanced back at Ellie. Unattended, she seemed content to pass the time pulling off fresh shoots for herself from bushes dotted along the edge of the canal. She appeared oblivious to Kieran's excitement, happily munching on her

freshly foraged snacks.

“Let’s rejoin the procession,” said Gentle Dove in a quiet voice.

Disappointment engulfed Kieran and his body sagged, but he nodded. Deep down, he knew she was right. He walked over to the canal boat and gazed at its load of clay.

Gentle Dove followed him. “Come on,” she said.

Unwatched, Ellie seized her opportunity. She trampled through a row of lavender plants and reached over a wall surrounding a churchyard to yank off some tender young branches. Delighted with her sudden freedom, she stuffed her mouth

with tender yew tree foliage.

“No!” shouted Gentle Dove. “Stop her!”

A finger of fear slid up Kieran’s back. He watched with apprehension as Gentle Dove struggled to pull leaves from the elephant’s mouth.

“Yew is poison to an elephant!” she cried, tugging at a shoot still protruding from Ellie’s mouth.



"I don't think she ate much," said Kieran. Angrily, he pulled off branches from the offending yew tree, snapping them in two and hurling them into the canal, furious at himself for putting Ellie in danger. "I

always ruin everything," he muttered. "I was too busy worrying about finding a tea cup when I should have been concentrating on Ellie."

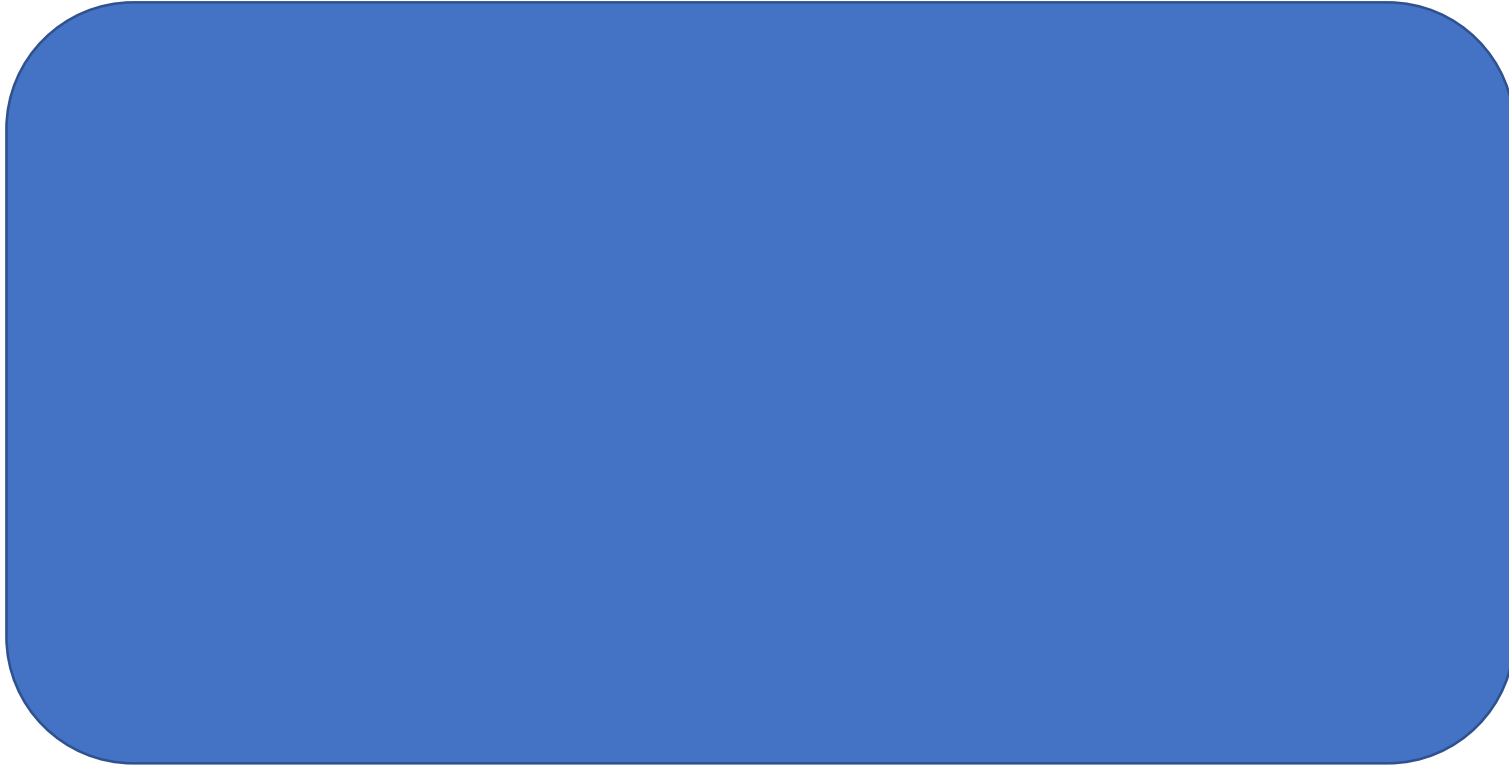
"Hurry," Gentle Dove said, "we need to get her back to her carriage."

"She'll be alright, won't she?" Kieran asked in a voice filled with dread.

## Comprehension Questions

1. Kieran helped to prepare Ellie for the procession. What did he do to keep Ellie calm?
  - a polished her tusks
  - b murmured into her flapping ears
  - c buffed her feet
  - d cleaned her saddle
  - e shined her silver bells
2. The children decided to take a break from the procession...
  - a to find the potteries.
  - b to find some food for Ellie.
  - c because they were feeling sore.
  - d to explore the local area.
  - e because the crowd had become too noisy.
3. *"Had enough?" asked Gentle Dove with a sympathetic smile.* Which word most closely matches the meaning of the word *sympathetic*?
  - a compassionate
  - b friendly
  - c callous
  - d bright
  - e brief
4. *"I guess," Kieran said despondently as he glanced back at Ellie.* What does the word *despondently* tell us about how Kieran was feeling?
  - a he was feeling hopeless
  - b he felt encouraged
  - c he was full of anger
  - d he was feeling excited
  - e he felt curious
5. Gentle Dove was concerned about Ellie because...
  - a she was taking plants from a churchyard.
  - b she was eating something poisonous.
  - c she had been unwell recently.
  - d she was an old elephant.
  - e she was on a special diet.

How well did you understand chapter 4- did you get all the answers correct?





# Chapter 5



By the time Kieran, Gentle Dove and Ellie returned to the circus field, Kieran could feel Ellie trembling.

He moved his hands across the tips of her ears and murmured soothing words. His eyes blurred with tears but he fought back sobs, determined to be strong for her. “What can we do?” he asked. He searched Gentle Dove’s face for any sign of hope.

“We’ll make her comfortable in her railway carriage,” she said, “but she needs a veterinary surgeon as soon as possible. Yew is very bad for an elephant.”

"Is there one with the show?"

She shook her head. "No."

"Will you fetch one? Do you know where to go?" he asked in a trembling, desperate voice.

"They've already sent for one but I don't know how much he'll know about elephants..." Her voice trailed off.

With a great effort, Ellie climbed up into her railway carriage, stumbling halfway up the ramp. Emitting a great sigh, she dropped onto her knees before toppling onto her side. Kieran spread out fresh hay around her. He scooped up cool water with his hands and dribbled a few drops at a time into her mouth.

Gentle Dove curled up close to Ellie's head and placed her hands tenderly on her ears.



"Can I stay with her?" Kieran asked, his eyes pleading. He suddenly felt overwhelmed by the sense that he was

intruding. Ellie and Gentle Dove belonged together. He had no place here.

Gentle Dove raised her head just enough to nod.

Relieved, Kieran stroked Ellie's trunk over and over. "Please be okay," he whispered urgently into her ears.

As they waited for the arrival of the veterinary surgeon, Ellie began to twitch and sigh. This was followed by great shudders that shook her whole body. With each rise and fall, Kieran's sense of dread increased.

Around the show site, other animals began to roar and wail. The horses and some of the camels began to call out as if

sensing Ellie's pain and distress. The haunting sound made the hair on Kieran's arms stand on end.

Finally, Ellie let out a low moan. She stretched out her legs and laid her head down on the hay. Kieran crouched by her, feeling her quivering beneath his fingers. Her eyes opened briefly, long enough for him to see that the burning orange sparkle had been replaced by a dull glow. She moaned again, a low, deep sound that rattled the wooden floor of her home. Then she breathed out an enormous sigh and closed her eyes.

Kieran knew instantly. He didn't need a veterinary surgeon to tell him she was gone. His legs buckled and he fell forward

into the straw, his hands resting on Ellie's body, her skin still warm against his. He closed his eyes, great sobs welling up inside him. He pressed his face against hers and let out an enormous sob. The world seemed to melt away.

"She's gone," gasped Gentle Dove, her eyes full of disbelief and pain.

Kieran gazed at her. "This is my fault," he said.



She shook her head. "It was an accident. It's no one's fault."

"No!" Kieran's voice was loud and filled with fury. "If I hadn't been here, hadn't

been so wrapped up in wanting to find an elephant tea cup, Ellie wouldn't have eaten the yew." He slammed his fist into the wooden wall of the railway wagon. "If only I hadn't touched that cup in the museum. Everything is my fault! And I shouldn't be here anymore. Ellie was my link."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure." Kieran shook his head. "It just feels as though I shouldn't be here anymore. But I don't know how to get home..." His voice wavered and dwindled to nothing.

"Come on. Let's go." Gentle Dove held out her hand. "I don't want to be here when they come."

Kieran looked at her questioningly. "Who?"

"When the body is collected..."

"To be buried?"

"No," said Gentle Dove. "When an animal dies..." For a moment she broke down, unable to continue.

"What?" Kieran asked, a new sense of dread creeping over him.

"The body will be sold."

"What do you mean, 'sold'?" His voice was incredulous.

"Elephants are rare, especially ones

like Ellie. She's so big and an African. I don't know exactly who but it's what always happens when a show animal..."

"Dies," finished Kieran.

She nodded.

Kieran jumped up and dashed from the carriage. Outside, he stood with his hands shoved deep inside his pockets. He fiddled mindlessly with his mobile phone. Why am I here? he thought. Suddenly, nothing seemed to matter.

Gentle Dove joined him. They stood together and their tears merged on the muddy ground.

"Gentle Dove," he whispered. "No one

will ever forget Ellie. When I get home, I'll make sure of that..."



## Comprehension Questions

1. Ellie couldn't be seen by a vet immediately because...

- a she was an elephant.
- b the show didn't have its own vet.
- c they were in a remote location.
- d she was so unwell.
- e yew is very bad for an elephant.

2. What did Gentle Dove do to comfort Ellie?

- a placed her hands tenderly on her ears
- b dribbled cool water into her mouth
- c spread out some fresh hay
- d whispered into her ear
- e stroked her trunk

3. The horses around the show site were making noises because...

- a the show was about to begin.
- b the procession had ended.
- c it was nearly feeding time.
- d they could sense that something was wrong.
- e they were not used to the area.

4. What did Kieran notice about Ellie's eyes?

- a they were burning
- b they had been replaced
- c they looked smaller
- d they were orange
- e they no longer sparkled

5. *They stood together and their tears merged on the muddy ground.*  
What does the word *merged* tell you about what happened to the children's tears?

- a they splashed
- b they disappeared
- c they pooled together
- d they slid
- e they evaporated



Did you get all chapter 5's questions correct?



# Chapter 6



The railway carriage was empty. Ellie was gone. Kieran flopped down on the hay. He could almost imagine the outline of her there.

“So who came? Who took Ellie?”

Gentle Dove gestured towards the canal. “You know the building that you said is a museum?”

Kieran nodded.

“They took Ellie there.”

“I don’t understand.” Kieran stared at

her with a puzzled expression. "Why would they take her to a clay factory?"

Gentle Dove shrugged. "I'm not sure."

Kieran jumped down onto the ramp and stared up at the starry sky. With Ellie gone, he felt drained of life but at the same time he was filled with certainty that now he would be able to go home. "Well then," he murmured, "that's where I have to go. The answer to how I get back home must lie in that building. The link I have with Ellie and the museum being there, it's too much of a coincidence to ignore."

"I'm coming too," Gentle Dove said. "We're in this together."

Side by side, they made their way

towards the canal.

"This is where I first saw Ellie," Kieran said, pointing at a wooded clearing close to the canal.

"I know."

"And the yew tree is just over there."

"Yes."

"Everything is by the canal."

She nodded.

"But it's not just the canal, is it? It's those buildings." He gestured towards the clay works. "Everything is connected to them." They crossed the cobbled bridge

and stood outside the factory, momentarily transfixed by the moonlight dancing on the calm canal water. On impulse, Kieran pulled out his phone and took a picture.

"I don't think we'll find an elephant tea cup here," said Gentle Dove. "I know everything seems to point here but it doesn't make sense. We need to go to the potteries. That's where tea cups are made."

Kieran shook his head. "We need to go here. I can feel it." He made his voice sound firm and confident but inside he shook. He darted into the shadows of the building and beckoned to Gentle Dove to follow.

There was a canal boat moored up by

the side of the building but the loading area was deserted. The doors stood wide open. Together, they raced through them and ducked down into the darkness of the building.

Without warning, Gentle Dove screamed.

"What is it?" Kieran asked, panic making his heart race.

She pointed.

Kieran tapped his phone, trying to switch on the torch but panic made his fingers fumble. Cursing under his breath, he tried again, finally pointing the torch in the direction of Gentle Dove's stare. He gasped. A huge elephant skull blocked their

way.



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Kieran heard his name being called but the voices seemed far away.

“Kieran? Can you hear me? Are you alright?”

He knew where he was before he opened his sore, tear-filled eyes. The wooden floor of the museum felt hard beneath his back. His fingers closed around the Elephant Tea Cup.

“Kieran? Stop mucking about.” Tam’s voice was full of worry.

“He must have fainted.” It was a different voice this time; a woman’s.

Kieran recognised the voice of the grey-haired woman from the museum that morning.

“Kieran?”

He forced himself to open his eyes. An enormous elephant skull hung on the wall in front of him. Memories flooded in.

He stared at the woman. With a start, he realised that her eyes were exactly the same soft brown as Gentle Dove's.

Understanding came in a rush. "You're Gentle Dove!" he whispered.

A look of shocked confusion crossed the woman's face. She shook her head and smiled. "I'm Susan Dove. Gentle Dove was one of my mother's relatives. Back in the 1800s, Gentle Dove came to England with...."

"Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show!" interrupted Kieran.

"That's right! But how do you know that?"

"It's a long story," said Kieran, suddenly weary. "But I need to know one thing." He held up the cup. "Why is this called the Elephant Tea Cup?"



The woman's expression became serious. "Gentle Dove had an elephant called Ellie. It died in an accident here in Hanley." She inclined her head towards the window. "They didn't waste anything in those days. Ellie was sold, every single bit of her. It's more than 100 years since she died. My mother often talked about her even though she was born many, many years after."

Kieran listened intently, desperate to understand. "And?" he prompted

"They used Ellie's bones. Ground them up to add to the clay."

"Why?"

"To make bone china! Have you never

wondered why bone china is so called?"

Kieran shook his head.

"Bone china is usually made with ground-up cattle bones. But in those days they included any bones they could get.

"They made clay with Ellie's bones?"

"That's right. But they kept Ellie's skull because it was so unusual." She nodded towards the skull hanging on the wall.

Kieran ran his fingers over the Elephant Tea Cup and gazed up at Ellie's skull. Relief flooded through him. It wasn't his fault that Ellie had died. He smiled to himself. Gentle Dove, Ellie, the Elephant



Tea Cup – he'd been right that they were all connected. Finally, he understood the secret of the Elephant Tea Cup.

*Author note:*

*'The Elephant Tea Cup' was inspired by a true story. In the late 1800s, a circus elephant died after eating poisonous leaves from a garden. Its carcass was sold and the bones ground up and added to clay to make bone china. Its skull can still be viewed today in the Etruria Museum near Stoke, England.*

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## Comprehension Questions

1. Where had Ellie been taken?

- a to the canal
- b to the museum
- c to the potteries
- d to the clay factory
- e to the nearest city

2. After crossing the cobbled bridge, Gentle Dove...

- a told Kieran that they were looking in the wrong place.
- b said that she wanted to go back to Gentle Dove's carriage.
- c pulled out her phone and took a picture.
- d spotted the yew tree.
- e noticed the moonlight dancing on the water.

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3. How did the children get into the building?

- a they climbed through an open window
- b they prised open a cellar door
- c they hid in some boxes
- d they distracted the guard
- e they sneaked in through some open doors

4. *An enormous elephant skull hung on the wall in front of him.*  
Which of the following words is an antonym of *enormous*?

- a gigantic
- b insignificant
- c colossal
- d huge
- e immense

5. Ellie's skull had been kept and put on display because...

- a Ellie's bones had been used to make china.
- b it was so large.
- c it was beautiful.
- d it was so different to the cattle skulls.
- e it was made of bone china.

# Did you enjoy this story?

- 1) To the clay factory
- 2) told Kieran that they were looking in the wrong place.
- 3) they sneaked in through some open doors
- 4) insignificant
- 5) it was so different to the cattle skulls.

Now that you have finished reading *The Elephant Tea Cup*, write a review about the story.

