



The Blind Men and the Elephant

5

✔ **Lesson Objectives**

Core Content Objectives

Students will:

- ✓ Demonstrate familiarity with the poem, “The Blind Men and the Elephant”
- ✓ Describe the characters, plot, and setting of the poem, “The Blind Men and the Elephant”

Language Arts Objectives

The following language arts objectives are addressed in this lesson. Objectives aligning with the Common Core State Standards are noted with the corresponding standard in parentheses. Refer to the Alignment Chart for additional standards addressed in all lessons in this domain.

Students will:

- ✓ Ask and answer questions requiring literal recall and understanding of the facts and/or details of the fiction read-aloud, “The Blind Men and the Elephant” (RL.2.1)
- ✓ Answer questions that require making interpretations, judgments, or giving opinions about the fiction read-aloud, “The Blind Men and the Elephant” (RL.2.1)
- ✓ Recount the poem and explain what the author meant by, “each was partly right, but all were in the wrong” (RL.2.2)
- ✓ Describe how each of the blind men in “The Blind Men and the Elephant” respond to what they felt on the elephant (RL.2.3)
- ✓ Describe the rhyme scheme of the poem (RL.2.4)
- ✓ Describe the characters and setting of “The Blind Men and the Elephant” (RL.2.5)
- ✓ Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters by speaking in a different voice for each character while acting out the poem (RL.2.6)

- ✓ Use information gained from the illustrations and words in “The Blind Men and the Elephant” to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot (RL.2.7)
- ✓ With assistance, organize predictions about what the characters will say about the elephant in the poem, “The Blind Men and the Elephant” onto a two-column chart (W.2.8)
- ✓ Generate questions and gather information from multiple lessons to answer questions about ancient India (W.2.8)
- ✓ Use irregular past tense verbs correctly in oral language exercises (L.2.1d)
- ✓ Create sentences using irregular present and past tense verbs in shared language activities (L.2.1f)
- ✓ Identify real-life connections between words—*grope*, *disputed*, *resembles*, and *observation*—and their use (L.2.5a)

Core Vocabulary

bawl, v. To cry out loudly

Example: Oliver’s baby sister would bawl whenever she was hungry.

Variation(s): bawls, bawled, bawling

grope, v. To reach about or search blindly and uncertainly

Example: Elaine had to grope around the cupboard for candles after the power went out.

Variation(s): gropes, groped, groping

marvel, n. Something wonderful

Example: Juanita thought the painting a marvel with its bright colors and wonderful shapes.

Variation(s): marvels

observation, n. The act of paying close attention to or studying something

Example: After much observation, the scientists finally decided on a name for the mysterious, deep-sea creature.

Variation(s): observations

resembles, v. Has a likeness to or is similar to something

Example: Looking up at the sky, Hernando thought to himself, “That cloud resembles a rabbit.”


Variation(s): resemble, resembled, resembling

Vocabulary Chart for The Blind Men and the Elephant			
Core Vocabulary words are in bold . Multiple Meaning Word Activity word is <u>underlined</u> . Vocabulary Instructional Activity words have an asterisk (*). Suggested words to pre-teach are in <i>italics</i> .			
Type of Words	Tier 3 Domain-Specific Words	Tier 2 General Academic Words	Tier 1 Everyday-Speech Words
Understanding	Hindustan tusk/spear	approached bawl <i>disputed</i> grobe observation* opinion resembles	blind elephant knee/tree side/wall tail/rope
Multiple Meaning		marvel	ear/fan trunk/snake
Phrases	partly in the right all were in the wrong	satisfy his mind	
Cognates		<i>disputaron</i> observación* opinion	elefante

Image Sequence

This is the order in which Flip Book images will be shown for this read-aloud. It uses the same sequence as the *Tell It Again! Read-Aloud Anthology*.

1. 5A-1: Elephant
2. 5A-2: Feeling the elephant's side
3. 5A-3: Feeling the elephant's trunk
4. 5A-4: Six blind men and the elephant

At a Glance	Exercise	Materials	Minutes
Introducing the Read-Aloud	Story Review	Sequencing the Story (The Tiger, the Brahman, and the Jackal); world map	15
	Introducing “The Blind Men and the Elephant”		
	Vocabulary Preview: Grope, Disputed		
	Purpose for Listening	Instructional Master 5A-1	
Presenting the Read-Aloud	The Blind Men and the Elephant		15
Discussing the Read-Aloud	Comprehension Questions		10
	Word Work: Resembles		
 Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day			
Extensions	Rhyming Words		20
	Syntactic Awareness Activity: Irregular Past Tense Verbs		
	Vocabulary Instructional Activity: Observation		
Take-Home Material	End-of-Lesson Check-in	Response Cards 1–4	

Advance Preparation

For Story Review, have students use Sequencing the Story for “The Tiger, the Brahman, and the Jackal” (Instructional Master 4B-1) while they retell the story to their partner.

For Introducing “The Blind Men and the Elephant,” you may wish to add marks, like arrows on sticky notes, to image 5A-1. Mark the elephant’s side, tusk, trunk, knee, ear, and tail. You may also wish to make a Prediction Chart (a two-column chart) that lists the class’s predictions on the left (label *Class*) and what the poem says on the right (label *Poem*).

Make a copy of Instructional Master 5A-1 for each student. Refer to it as Response Card 4 (The Blind Men and the Elephant). Students can use this Response Card to discuss, review, and answer questions about this poem.

For End-of-Lesson Check-In, prepare questions about ancient India that students can answer by holding up or pointing to specific items on their Response Cards.

Note to Teacher

You will read this poem twice. The first time, you will read the poem, clarifying vocabulary and adding commentary to help students understand the poem. The second time, invite six students to play the role of the six blind men. (You may wish to have more than one student play the role of one blind man so that everyone who wants to has a chance to act.)

To help students listen for rhyming words, say the first four lines in a stanza and repeat the last word of each line (e.g., for stanza one: *Hindustan, inclined, elephant, blind*). You may wish to assign the final words of the first four lines to different students. Invite each student to say his or her word out loud. Then have the rest of the class listen for the two words that rhyme (*inclined* and *blind*). Finish the last two lines of the stanza and have students listen for the rhyming word (*mind*).



The Blind Men and the Elephant

5A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

15 minutes

Story Review

- Ask students what kind of story they heard in the previous lesson.
 - trickster tale
- Ask students where the trickster tale is from.
 - India

[Have a student point to India on a world map.]

- Have students recount the story, “The Tiger, the Brahman, and the Jackal,” to their partner. Encourage students to use temporal words and describe how the Brahman and the tiger react to the jackal.
- Ask partner pairs to determine whether this story has a central message or lesson and what that message or lesson might be.

Introducing “The Blind Men and the Elephant”

- Tell students that today they will hear a poem. The characters in this poem are six blind men and an elephant from Hindustan. Tell students that the word *Hindustan* means “the land of the Hindus”; it is an old name for the northern part of India. Invite a student to point to the northern part of India on a world map.



← Show image 5A-1: Elephant

- Ask students what they see in this picture. Have students describe this elephant to their partner.
- Remind students that they used their sense of sight to describe the elephant. Tell students that in this poem the six blind men cannot see. They are trying to discover what the elephant is like without being able to see the elephant.
- Point to the following parts of the elephant: side, tusk, trunk, knee, ear, and tail. Point again to these different parts and have students name the parts out loud.

- Ask students to predict how the blind men will describe what an elephant is like. [Suggested sentence frame: “An elephant is like a/an ____.”]
- Keep a record of class predictions on a Prediction Chart. Refer to the chart and fill in the right column during the first reading of the poem. A finished Prediction Chart may look like the following.

Class	Poem
[insert class predictions]	wall spear snake tree fan rope

Vocabulary Preview

Grope

1. In today’s poem, the blind men *grope* the elephant.
2. Say the word *grope* with me three times.
3. To *grope* means to search for something, using your fingers, or sense of touch, to help you. [Act out *grope* by closing your eyes and feeling for something and have students do the same.]
4. Ms. Martinez had to grope around for the light switch in the dark room.
Jimmy likes to close his eyes and grope to find his way around the room.

[You may wish to invite volunteers to close their eyes as you place an item in their hands and ask them to figure out what it is.]

Disputed

1. The six blind men *disputed* what the elephant is really like; they each thought the elephant was something different.
2. Say the word *disputed* with me three times.
3. *Disputed* means argued.
4. Ling and Lina disputed who could have the larger piece of pie. Max’s parents disputed where to go for vacation; his mom wanted to go to the Grand Canyon, but his dad wanted to go to Canada.
5. Have you ever disputed something with someone else? Tell your partner about it.

Purpose for Listening

Remind students that they will hear a poem called, “The Blind Men and the Elephant.” Give students Response Card 4 (The Blind Men and the Elephant) and have them point out the six men and the six parts of the elephant the men are next to. Tell students to listen carefully to hear if any of the class predictions are correct.

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- ✓ Demonstrate familiarity with the poem, “The Blind Men and the Elephant”
- ✓ Describe the characters, plot, and setting of the poem, “The Blind Men and the Elephant”

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Note: First, read this poem clarifying vocabulary and adding commentary. You may wish to fill in the Prediction Chart as you find out what each blind man thinks the elephant is. Check to see if any of the class predictions are correct.



← **Show image 5A-1: Elephant**

It was six men of Hindustan,
To learning much inclined,

[Explain that these blind men like to learn.]

Who went to see the elephant,
(Though all of them were blind);

That each by **observation**

[—or by paying close attention]

Might satisfy his mind.

[—or his curiosity about the elephant]

[Ask students, “How will the six blind men make observations about the elephant if they cannot see?”]



← **Show image 5A-2: Feeling the elephant's side**

The first approached the elephant,

And happening to fall

Against his broad and sturdy side,

At once began to **bawl**,

[—or cry out loudly]

“Bless me, it seems the elephant

Is very like a wall.”

The second, feeling of his tusk,

[Point to the tusk.]

Cried, “Ho! What have we here

So very round and smooth and sharp?

To me ’tis mighty clear

This wonder of an elephant

Is very like a spear.”

[Define *spear* as a weapon with a long handle and sharp point at the end.]



← **Show image 5A-3: Feeling the elephant’s trunk**

The third approached the animal,

And happening to take

The squirming trunk within his hands,

[Point to the trunk.]

Then boldly up and spake.

[—or spoke up loudly]

“I see,” quoth he, “the elephant

Is very like a snake.”

[Ask students, “Does this illustration show what the elephant really looks like or how the blind man imagines it looks? How do you know?”]



← **Show image 5A-4: Six blind men and the elephant**

The fourth stretched out his eager hand

And felt about the knee,

[Point to your knee. Have students find their knees.]

“What most this mighty beast is like

Is mighty plain,” quoth he;

“’Tis clear enough the elephant

Is very like a tree.”

The fifth who chanced to touch the ear
Said, “Even the blindest man
Can tell what this **resembles** most;
[—what this looks like most]
Deny the fact who can,
This **marvel** of an elephant
[—or this surprising, beautiful, and amazing elephant]
Is very like a fan.”

The sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to **grope**
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
“I see,” cried he, “the elephant
Is very like a rope.”

And so these men of Hindustan
Disputed loud and long,
Each of his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

Read It Again

Note: Have students pretend there is a large elephant in the room. Invite six volunteers to act out the part of one of the blind men. Have these six students stand at various parts of the invisible elephant. Prompt students to repeat their lines after you.



← **Show image 5A-1: Elephant**

It was six men of Hindustan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the elephant,
(Though all of them were blind);
That each by **observation**
Might satisfy his mind.



← **Show image 5A-2: Feeling the elephant's side**

The first approached the elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to **bawl**,
“Bless me, it seems the elephant
Is very like a wall.”

The second, feeling of his tusk,
Cried, “Ho! What have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an elephant
Is very like a spear.”



← **Show image 5A-3: Feeling the elephant's trunk**

The third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Then boldly up and spake.



“I see,” quoth he, “the elephant
Is very like a snake.”

← **Show image 5A-4: Six blind men and the elephant**

The fourth stretched out his eager hand
And felt about the knee,
“What most this mighty beast is like
Is mighty plain,” quoth he;
“’Tis clear enough the elephant
Is very like a tree.”

The fifth who chanced to touch the ear
Said, “Even the blindest man
Can tell what this **resembles** most;
Deny the fact who can,
This **marvel** of an elephant
Is very like a fan.”

The sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to **grope**
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
“I see,” cried he, “the elephant
Is very like a rope.”

And so these men of Hindustan
Disputed loud and long,

Each of his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

Discussing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

Comprehension Questions

If students have difficulty responding to questions, reread pertinent lines of the read-aloud and/or refer to specific images. If students give one-word answers and/or fail to use read-aloud or domain vocabulary in their responses, acknowledge correct responses by expanding students' responses using richer and more complex language. Ask students to answer in complete sentences by having them restate the question in their responses. Model answers using complete sentences as necessary.

1. *Literal* What is the title of today's poem? Who are the characters in this poem? What is the setting of this poem?
 - The title of today's poem is "The Blind Men and the Elephant." The characters are six blind men and an elephant. The setting of this poem is Hindustan.
2. *Evaluative* Were your predictions about the way the six men would describe the elephant correct? [You may wish to refer to the Prediction Chart.]
 - Answers may vary.
3. *Inferential* The first blind man touched the elephant's side. What did he say the elephant's side resembles, or is like? Why do you think he said that?
 - The first blind man said the elephant's side is like a wall because it is big and strong.
4. *Inferential* The second blind man touched the elephant's tusk. What did he say the elephant's tusk resembles, or is like? Why do you think he said that?
 - The second blind man said the elephant's tusk is like a spear because it is long and sharp.

5. *Inferential* The third blind man touched the elephant’s trunk. What did he say the elephant’s trunk resembles, or is like? Why do you think he said that?
 - The third blind man said the elephant’s trunk is like a snake because it is squirmy and long.
6. *Inferential* The fourth blind man touched the elephant’s knee. What did he say the elephant’s knee resembles, or is like? Why do you think he said that?
 - The fourth blind man said the elephant’s knee is like a tree because it is wide, round, and rough like a tree trunk.
7. *Inferential* The fifth blind man touched the elephant’s ear. What did he say the elephant’s ear resembles, or is like? Why do you think he said that?
 - The fifth blind man said the elephant’s ear is like a fan because it is thin and flaps back and forth like a fan.
8. *Inferential* The sixth blind man touched the elephant’s tail. What did he say the elephant’s tail resembles, or is like? Why do you think he said that?
 - The sixth blind man said the elephant’s tail is like a rope because it is long and swings back and forth.

[Please continue to model the *Think Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

I am going to ask a question. I will give you a minute to think about the question, and then I will ask you to turn to your partner and discuss the question. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

Sentence Frames:

Were all of the blind men’s observations correct? (Yes/No)

I think the author of the poem meant that . . .

Although the blind men . . . , none of them . . .

9. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* What do you think the author of the poem meant when he wrote, “Though each was partly in the right, / And all were in the wrong!”?
 - Each of the blind men correctly described the part of the elephant they were able to touch, but none of them described what an elephant was actually like.
10. After hearing today’s read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these questions.]

Word Work: Resembles

1. In the poem you heard, “Even the blindest man/ Can tell what this *resembles* most;/ Deny the fact who can,/ This marvel of an elephant/ Is very like a fan.”
2. Say the word *resembles* with me three times.
3. *Resembles* means to look like someone or something.
4. Kia resembles her mother because she looks like her mother. Sometimes you might notice that someone in your family resembles someone else in your family, like your little brother resembles your older cousin.
5. Tell me about two people in your family who resemble one another. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “My _____ resembles my _____.”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about?

Use a *Making Choices* activity for follow-up. Directions: I am going to list three objects. Only two of these objects will be like one another, or will resemble one another. Then you will say, “_____ resembles _____.” For example, if I say, “A cat, a horse, a kitten,” you would say, “A kitten resembles a cat.”

1. a puppy, a dog, a fish
 - A puppy resembles a dog.
2. a girl, her sister, a stranger
 - The girl resembles her sister.
3. a pony, a lion, a horse
 - A pony resembles a horse.
4. a computer screen, a television, a radio
 - A computer screen resembles a television.



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



The Blind Men and the Elephant

5_B

Extensions

20 minutes

Rhyming Words

- Have students listen for rhyming words in the first four lines of a stanza by first saying the first four lines and repeating the last word of each line. You may wish to assign the last words to a different student and have each student say his or her word out loud while students listen for the two words that rhyme. Once the rhyming words from the first four lines have been identified, read the last two lines of the stanza and have students listen for the rhyming word.
 - Stanza one's rhyming words: *inclined, blind, mind*
 - Stanza two's rhyming words: *fall, bawl, wall*
 - Stanza three's rhyming words: *here, clear, spear*
 - Stanza four's rhyming words: *take, spake, snake*
 - Stanza five's rhyming words: *knee, he, tree*
 - Stanza six's rhyming words: *man, can, fan*
 - Stanza seven's rhyming words: *grope, scope, rope*
 - Stanza eight's rhyming words: *long, strong, wrong*

↔ Syntactic Awareness Activity

Irregular Past Tense Verbs

Note: The purpose of these syntactic activities is to help students understand the direct connection between grammatical structures and the meaning of text. These syntactic activities should be used in conjunction with the complex text presented in the read-alouds. There may be variations in the sentences created by your class. Allow for these variations, and restate students' sentences so that they are grammatical.

1. Many verbs are action words. We can change the way we say action words to show whether something is happening *now* or whether something *already happened* and is over and done with.

2. I will read two sentences related to something you heard in today’s read-aloud about the blind men and the elephant. One sentence will talk about something that is happening *now*, and the other sentence will talk about something that has *already happened*.

- The blind men *approach* the elephant.
- The blind men *approached* the elephant.

3. What is the action word in my sentences?

- *approach*

How does the action word change to let you know the action already happened?

- add /t/

[Remind students that when they are *writing* about actions that have already happened, they add *-ed* to the end of the verb or action word. When they are *talking* about actions that have already happened, they add sounds like /t/, /d/, or /ed/.]

4. Some verbs or action words are called *irregular verbs*—this means they are different from regular verbs. These verbs are irregular and different because you do not add *-ed* to the end of the word when you are writing about an action that has happened already. And you do not add the sound /t/, /d/, or /ed/ to the end of the word when you are talking about an action that has happened already.

Now I will say two sentences related to something you heard in the poem. One sentence talks about something that is happening now, and the other sentence talks about something that has already happened.

- The blind men *go* to see the elephant.
- The blind men *went* to see the elephant.

5. What did the verb *go* change into to show it already happened?

- *went*

6. Let’s practice using the irregular verb *go*. I’ll say something we go to today, and you tell me how to say it already happened yesterday.

- Today, we go to the library. > Yesterday, we went to the library.
- Today, we go to the park. > Yesterday, we went to the park.
- Today, we go to the supermarket. > Yesterday, we went to the supermarket.

7. [Invite partner pairs to come up with real-life sentences using *today/go* and *yesterday/went*.]

↔ Vocabulary Instructional Activity

Word Work: Observation

1. In the poem you heard, “[The blind men] went to see the elephant/ That each by *observation*/ Might satisfy his mind.”
2. Say the word *observation* with me three times.
3. An observation is when you look at and pay close attention to something in order to study it or learn more about it.
4. After many minutes of observation, the nurse finally found the little splinter in Rita’s hands.
Scientists use the microscope to make a close observation of things they cannot see with just their eyes.
5. Have you ever made a close observation of something? Tell your partner about it.

[Ask two or three students. If necessary guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “I made a close observation of ____.”]

Use a *Word to World* activity for follow-up. Directions: Pretend that you will pay close attention to or study the things that I say. Then tell me what kind of observation you might make about that thing or situation. [Suggested sentence frame: “The observation I might make is . . .”]

1. seed in a pot
2. baby brother or sister
3. eating a lot of candies
4. gray clouds in the sky
5. change of season from summer to autumn
6. change of season from winter to spring

10 End-of-Lesson Check-In

Ancient India

Choose four students to focus on, and record their scores on the Tens Recording Chart. For this kind of informal observation, you should give a score of zero, five, or ten based on your evaluation of students' understanding and language use.

0	Emergent understanding and language use
5	Developing understanding and language use
10	Proficient understanding and language use

- Ask students the questions you have prepared about ancient India. Students may answer your questions by holding up their response cards or pointing to specific items on their response cards.
- You may also wish to have partner pairs ask one another questions about what they learned about ancient India.
- Sample questions may include:
 - What is the name of a city in the Indus River Valley?
 - Mohenjo-daro
 - From which mountains do the Indus and Ganges Rivers flow down?
 - Himalayas
 - Which river is sacred to the Hindus?
 - Ganges River
 - Which character is the trickster in the Indian folktale that you heard?
 - jackal
 - What animal are the blind men trying to describe in the poem that you heard?
 - elephant