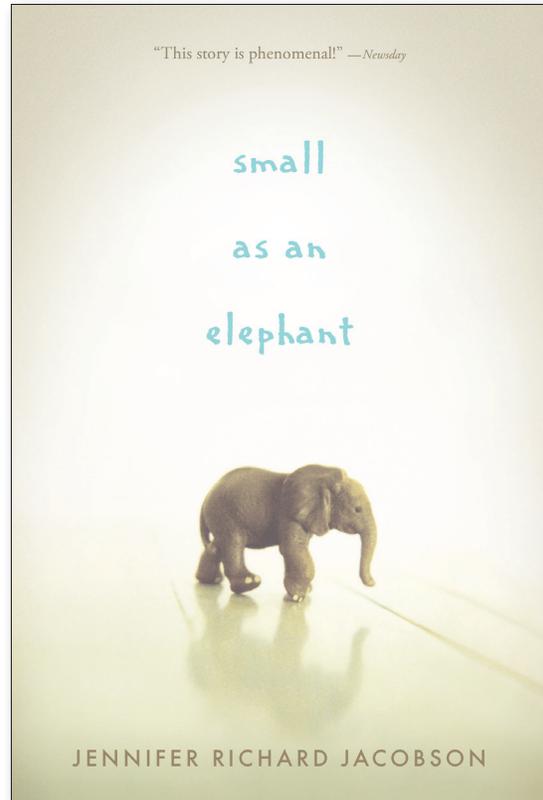


small as an elephant

BY JENNIFER
RICHARD JACOBSON

ABOUT THE BOOK

Ever since Jack can remember, his mom has been unpredictable—sometimes loving and fun, other times caught in a whirlwind of energy and spinning wildly until it's over. But Jack never thought his mom would take off during the night and leave him at a campground in Acadia National Park with no way to reach her and barely enough money for food. Any other kid would report his mom gone, but Jack knows that he needs to figure things out for himself—starting with how to get from the backwoods of Maine to his home in Boston before DSS catches on. With nothing but a small toy elephant to keep him company, Jack begins the long journey south, a journey that will test his wits and his loyalties—and his trust that he may be part of a larger herd after all.



HC: 978-0-7636-4155-9 PB: 978-0-7636-6333-9
E-book: 978-0-7636-5456-6 Also available in audio

“A classic journey story, this is a very believable and exciting adventure with modern accoutrements.”

—*Library Media Connection*

A *Horn Book* Summer Reading List Selection

An International Reading Association Young Adults' Choice

A Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award Master List Selection (Vermont)

A Great Stone Face Book Award Nominee (New Hampshire)

A Lupine Award Winner (Maine)

A Maine Student Book Award Master List Selection

A Truman Readers Award Nominee (Missouri)

A William Allen White Children's Book Award Nominee (Kansas)

A Georgia Children's Book Award Nominee

A South Carolina Junior Book Award Nominee



CANDLEWICK PRESS
www.candlewick.com

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Jack's mom leave him? Is it his fault?
2. What would you do if you were Jack? How would you feel?
3. What does Jack mean when he says that his mom is "spinning" (page 70)? Why does that happen?
4. Why are elephants so important to Jack?
5. Why is it important to Jack to see the elephant Lydia?
6. What are some strategies that Jack uses to survive on his own?
7. Is it ever OK to steal? Why or why not?
8. Do you think Jack is better off living with his mother, or should they be separated?
9. Who helps Jack along the way? Why do each of these people assist him?
10. Do you think Jack's decision to look for his mom on his own is a good decision? Why or why not?

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Small as an Elephant works well as a Mentor Text for teaching these Common Core State Standards:

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

The author uses many similes throughout the story. For example:

"The ocean air smelled like warm olives" (page 12).

"Song rose up, and, even though he was too tired to concentrate on the words, it tucked in around him like a soft blanket" (page 181).

"It was strange; hunger was like an alarm clock. It sounded for a while, but if you ignored it, it would eventually give up" (page 215).

If you are reading the book aloud to your class, pause when you come to similes. Ask, What makes this form of figurative language effective? If you are not reading the whole book aloud, use some of its similes as part of a lesson on figurative language. Invite students to make their own similes for the things Jack describes, such as ocean air, the sound of singing, or hunger.

On page 269, Jack says to Big Jack: "Tell her I got it. I got my Monopoly." Ask students to identify this form of figurative language (metaphor). Ask, What does the game Monopoly represent to Jack? What additional meaning does this metaphor provide?

DIALOGUE

Help students to understand that authors create dialogue with two purposes in mind: to increase readers' understanding of character or to advance the plot. Examine the dialogue between Jack and other characters in the story (for example, between Jack and Sylvie on pages 201–203) and discuss what the dialogue accomplishes. Help students understand that dialogue is seldom idle chitchat.

Invite students to take a second look at the dialogue they've used in their own narrative pieces. Does it serve one or both of these purposes?

POINT OF VIEW

Small as an Elephant is written in close third person, which means that although the author uses the pronoun *he* when telling Jack's story, we're still able to know the thoughts and feelings of the character. Choose several paragraphs (such as the one below, from page 25) to demonstrate how the author is able to achieve a close perspective.

On the way back to his campsite, he passed bundles of wood for sale—only two dollars—but he was out of money. His mother better pay him back tomorrow; that was his souvenir money he'd spent on food. Buying food was her responsibility.

Invite students to:

1. Rewrite a paragraph from *Small as an Elephant* in first person point of view. Explain how this perspective is different from third person. Discuss why an author might choose one over the other.
2. Write a journal entry from the point of view of Becky Martel, Jack's mother.

WRITING STORIES WITH DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS

Visit Jennifer Jacobson's website, www.jenniferjacobson.com, where she invites students to write and submit stories that answer this question: If Jack passed through your town on his journey, what might he have experienced? Encourage your students to use specific references to your town or city, with plenty of descriptive details.



ABOUT JENNIFER RICHARD JACOBSON

Jennifer Richard Jacobson is the author of numerous books for children and young adults, including the Andy Shane early chapter books, illustrated by Abby Carter. About *Small as an Elephant*, she says, "I believe in Jack and his ability to understand his mother in shades of gray. I believe in his ability to be fiercely independent: to try and try and try . . . and at the same time to recognize that he needs others—that others are right there, waiting to catch him." She lives in Cumberland, Maine.

ESSAY WRITING

Use the following questions as springboards for personal narratives, arguments (opinions), or analytical essays. Remind students to include specific details and evidence from the text to support their positions.

- Do you think Jack's mother is a good person? Why or why not?
- Does stealing come easily to Jack? Is it ever right to steal?
- What is the smartest (or the least smart) decision Jack makes on this journey?
- Can someone help another without knowing it? How does this happen in the book? Has it ever happened to you?
- Should elephants be kept in captivity? Should people be allowed to ride elephants?
- What is the main theme of *Small as an Elephant*?
- To Jack, it seems as if every decision he makes has both good consequences and bad consequences. Write about a time when you were forced to make a decision that had both positive and negative results.
- Choose an epigraph at the beginning of a chapter and discuss its connection to the content of the chapter.

