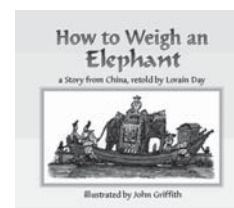


# How to Weigh an Elephant

a story from China retold by Lorain Day  
illustrated by John Griffiths



## Book Summary

Clever Little Tsao has the solution to the problem perplexing her elders. Her biggest problem is getting them to listen to her!

## Features of the Book

- A clear introduction, middle, and conclusion.
- A clear sequence of problem-solving skills – problem identified, possible solutions considered, one course of action chosen, success gained, and success acknowledged.
- The use of mathematical language – “weigh,” “add,” “heavier,” “scales,” and “numbers.”
- The math concepts involving weight and displacement.
- The use of various word endings – “ier,” “ed,” and “ing.”
- Present and past forms of verbs – “take” and “took,” “weigh” and “weighed,” “work” and “worked,” “pay” and “paid.”
- The use of italics for emphasis.

## Purpose

*How to Weigh an Elephant* can be used in a guided reading setting to introduce and reinforce the following skills and strategies:

- S** comparing books by different authors written in the same genre;
- S** understanding the function, feature, and category of new words encountered in the story;
- S** developing the skill of writing in a sequential manner.

## Introducing the text

Look at the cover illustration and discuss the setting, long ago in ancient China.

– *How could we weigh an elephant these days?*

Get the children’s ideas on why someone might want to weigh an elephant and how the characters in the story could go about it. Write the names “Tsao Tsao” and “Little Tsao” on the board.

## Reading the text

- S** Comparing books by different authors written in the same genre.
- S** Understanding the function, feature, and category of new words encountered in the story.

Pages 2 and 3 – Discuss the size of the elephant.

– *Can you find the reason the boatman wants to weigh the elephant?*

Pages 4 and 5 – Look at the picture and discuss the size of the scales.

– *Could you weigh an elephant with these?*  
– *What is the wise man’s name?*

Pages 6 and 7 – Discuss the illustration on page 7.

– *Who might the child be? What is she saying to the men? Can you point to what she tells them?*

Pages 8 and 9

– *Why is she getting them to put the elephant in the boat? How could drawing a line help?*

Pages 10 to 13

– *Can you guess why she is telling them to take the elephant off the boat? What will she get them to do next? How could stones be helpful?*

Pages 14 to 16

– *Were your predictions right?*

Children now read the book independently.

## Revisiting the text

Look at the words “wanted,” “asked,” “heavier,” and “loudest.” Discuss the word endings.


– *What are the root words?*

Look at the word in italics on page 5.

– *Why is the word “really” written like that?*

## Following Up

- S** Developing the skill of writing in a sequential manner.

 The group could make a flow chart showing how the characters solved the problem in the story, numbering each step.

- B** Complete the blackline master opposite.