Elephant Walk

Does your teacher take a bus, a car or a subway to school? In parts of Thailand, where buses and cars are scarce and there are no subways, teachers ride elephants to class.

In 2001, Thailand's Non-Formal Education Department began using elephants to transport teachers, books and televisions into the **remote** hills of this **Southeast Asian** country. There are 46 villages in the northern part of the country that are **accessible** only by foot.

"We've used horses and mules, but they can only serve some areas", said Wichai Lowilert, an education **official** in Thailand.

Education officials decided to transport teachers and books using the sure-footed **pachyderms** because Thailand has a **surplus** of elephants. Farmers use elephants to **plow** fields and transport rice.

Three teams of elephants, their handlers and two teachers began stomping about the hills of Thailand at the end of November 2001. In addition to books and video equipment, the teachers carried a satellite dish to help them connect with the outside world. Approximately 4 million of Thailand's 69 million people are illiterate, which means they cannot read or write.

"They're illiterate because the place basically has nothing to **stimulate** them", said Wichai. "The TV, videotapes and **community** activities will make them learn willingly."

NON-FICTION

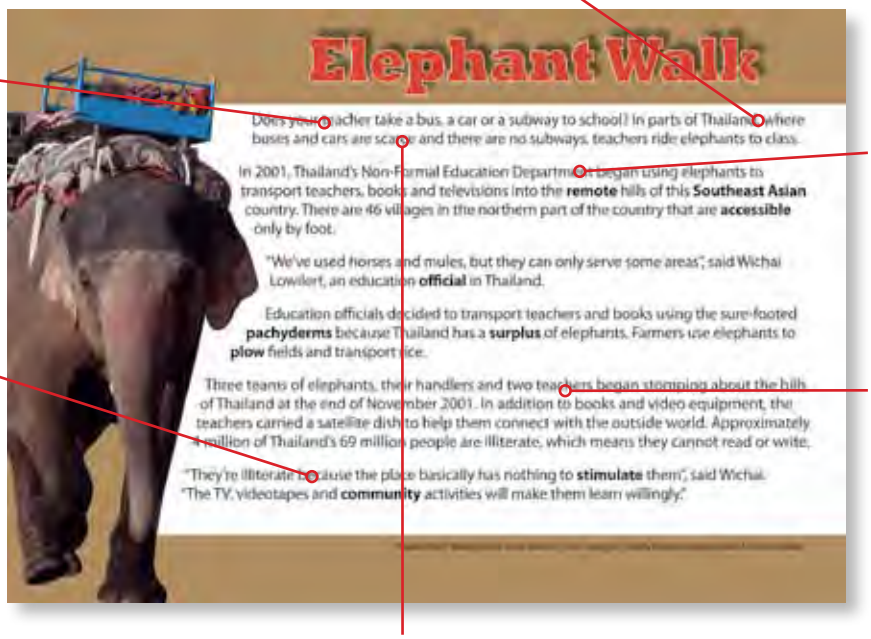
Drawing Inferences

Elephant Walk

The comma between "Thailand" and "where" tells the reader that what follows is (grammatically) nonessential information. That means that all of the material between the commas could be removed and the sentence would still make sense. The sentence has two different meanings depending on whether there is a comma after "Thailand" or not: with the comma, the meaning is, "Buses and cars are scarce in Thailand. In some parts of Thailand, teachers ride elephants to class", and without the comma, the meaning is, "Teachers ride elephants in those specific parts of Thailand where buses and cars are scarce".

This opening immediately establishes the target audience of the text.

After attributing a general statement to government officials in the paragraph above, the text offers evidence to support this attribution by quoting an official's actual words on the same topic.



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Pupils can use their existing understanding of these terms to discuss the possible responsibilities of this department.

If there were two teachers, why might three teams of elephants be required?

Pupils can draw an inference as to why this is.

Lesson focus

Pupils will learn to enhance their comprehension of a text by using information in the text and their knowledge to infer deeper meanings and draw conclusions.

Text type

Report

A report is a text that records and communicates factual information. This text piece contains descriptive, sequential, cause/effect and problem/solution text structure features.

Pages 141–144 of this book include the following vocabulary support for EAL pupils and struggling readers:

accessible, community, official, pachyderms, plow, remote, scarce, Southeast Asian, stimulate, surplus

Follow-up activity

Page 18 Co-operative Activity Book

Lesson focus

In this lesson, you will learn to enhance your comprehension of a text by using information in the text and your knowledge to infer deeper meanings and draw conclusions.

Note: Before you begin the lesson, mask the text so that only the title shows.

Prior to reading

- State the lesson focus. Display the title and read it aloud. Invite the pupils to make predictions (predictions are a type of inference) about the text. Ask them to do this by drawing inferences from the words, font and design of the title. This serves to activate their prior (world) knowledge. Discuss their predictions and model your own.
- Display the remaining text.
- Skim and scan the text.

Interacting with the text

- Read the second and third paragraphs aloud. Model how to draw an inference from the text. For example, "From the phrase 'they can only serve some areas', I can draw the inference that elephants can go places horses and mules aren't able to go".
- With your partner(s), discuss the inferences you can draw from the second and third paragraphs. Show your partner(s) evidence in the text to support your inferences.
- Read the remaining text aloud.
- Think, pair, share about the inferences you can draw from this last section of text.

Reflecting on the text

- Model how to draw an inference after reading. For example, "I can infer that government officials are hoping to raise the literacy rate in Thailand with this idea".
- With your partner(s), discuss any inferences you can draw while reflecting on the text you have read.
- Facilitate a whole-group discussion about how drawing inferences helps you get a better understanding of unfamiliar words or phrases, such as *pachyderms*.

Writing activity

- If you could have your teacher arrive at school on an unusual form of transportation, what would it be and why? Write a description.

A CHANGING CLIMATE

BY SOPHIE FERN

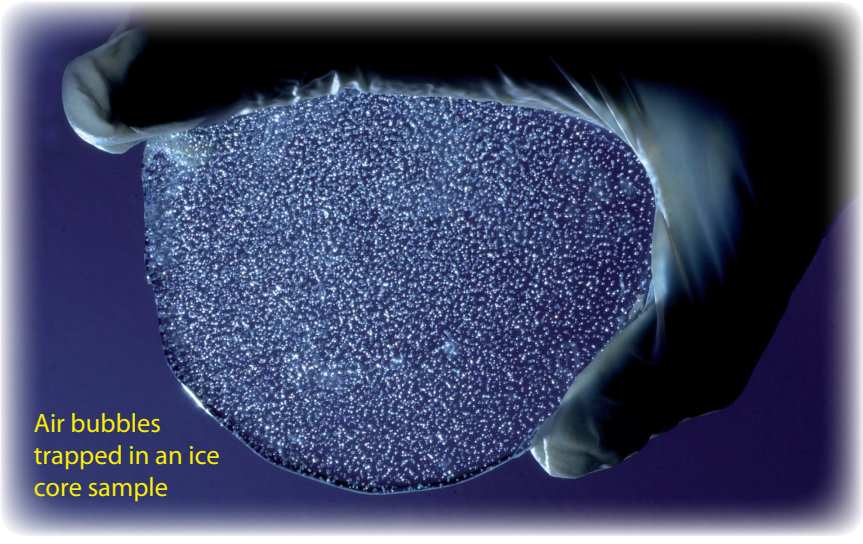
Scientists have different ways of learning about what the earth's climate was like in the past. Some glaciers and ice sheets have lasted through several ice ages. Each winter, the snow that falls gets packed down, trapping bubbles of air. Scientists count the layers – just like tree and coral rings – to find out the age of the ice. Then they look at the gas trapped in the bubbles inside each layer of ice. They test this gas to find out what the air was like when the bubbles were trapped.

For example, Dr Eric Wolff and other scientists have been studying ice in Antarctica, Greenland and other places. Dr Wolff has talked about what the **ice core** samples are telling us.

"It's very exciting to see ice that fell as snow three-quarters of a million years ago."

Looking at the evidence in the ice cores, Dr Wolff doesn't think we'll have another ice age any time soon, once the one we are in comes to an end.

"However, we may have a heat wave if we are unable to control carbon dioxide **emissions** and other greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere. Our next step is to investigate carbon dioxide in the ice cores, and by understanding what has driven the natural changes seen in the ice record, we will create better **models** to predict how climate might change in the future."



Air bubbles trapped in an ice core sample

Drawing Inferences

Before Reading

- Read the title.
- With you learning partner(s), predict what you will learn about climate from this text.
- Skim and scan the text.

During reading

- Read the text aloud or listen to the audio.
- Use your knowledge of global warming and carbon dioxide to infer why "Dr Wolff doesn't think we'll have another ice age any time soon".
- Place the transparency over the page. Using the marker, take turns circling the words or phrases in the text that helped you draw inferences.
- Discuss what inferences you can draw about carbon dioxide in the ice cores. How might investigating this gas in ice cores help scientists predict future climate change? Show your partner(s) evidence in the text that supports your inferences.

After reading

- Discuss how drawing inferences helped you to understand this text better.

Writing activity

- Work with your partner(s) to fill out the graphic organiser on page 61 of the Reflection Journal.

Name(s):

A CHANGING CLIMATE

How can bubbles in the ice help us to figure out what the climate was like thousands of years ago?

Draw an inference about why we might have a heat wave if we can't control greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere.