

**ELA Grade 6 Unit 2 - Open Response - Print**

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**Excerpt from *The Call of the Wild***  
by Jack London

That night Buck faced the great problem of sleeping. The tent, illumined by a candle, glowed warmly in the midst of the white plain; and when he, as a matter of course, entered it, both Perrault and Francois bombarded him with curses and cooking utensils, till he recovered from his consternation and fled ignominiously into the outer cold. A chill wind was blowing that nipped him sharply and bit with especial venom into his wounded shoulder. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shivering to his feet. Miserable and disconsolate, he wandered about among the many tents, only to find that one place was as cold as another. Here and there savage dogs rushed upon him, but he bristled his neck-hair and snarled (for he was learning fast), and they let him go his way unmolested.

Finally an idea came to him. He would return and see how his own teammates were making out. To his astonishment, they had disappeared. Again he wandered about through the great camp, looking for them, and again he returned. Were they in the tent? No, that could not be, else he would not have been driven out. Then where could they possibly be? With drooping tail and shivering body, very forlorn indeed, he aimlessly circled the tent. Suddenly the snow gave way beneath his fore legs and he sank down. Something wriggled under his feet. He sprang back, bristling and snarling, fearful of the unseen and unknown. But a friendly little yelp reassured him, and he went back to investigate. A whiff of warm air ascended to his nostrils, and there, curled up under the snow in a snug ball, lay Billee. He whined placatingly, squirmed and wriggled to show his good will and intentions, and even ventured, as a bribe for peace, to lick Buck's face with his warm wet tongue.

Another lesson. So that was the way they did it, eh? Buck confidently selected a spot, and with much fuss and waste effort proceeded to dig a hole for himself. In a trice the heat from his body filled the confined space and he was asleep. The day had been long and arduous, and he slept soundly and comfortably, though he growled and barked and wrestled with bad dreams.

Nor did he open his eyes till roused by the noises of the waking camp. At first he did not know where he was. It had snowed during the night and he was completely buried. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great surge of fear swept through him—the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through his own life to the lives of his forebears; for he was a civilized dog, an unduly civilized dog, and of his own experience knew no trap and so could not of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a ferocious snarl he bounded straight up into the blinding day, the snow flying about him in a flashing cloud. Ere he landed on his feet, he saw the white camp spread out before him and knew where he was and remembered all that had passed from the time he went for a stroll with Manuel to the hole he had dug for himself the night before.

A shout from Francois hailed his appearance. "Wot I say?" the dog-driver cried to Perrault. "Dat Buck for sure learn queek as anyt'ing."

Perrault nodded gravely. As courier for the Canadian Government, bearing important dispatches, he was anxious to secure the best dogs, and he was particularly gladdened by the possession of Buck.

Read the excerpt from *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London that depicts Buck as both a pet and a pack animal. Write a short argument that supports or defends the position of keeping dogs as pets, considering they are naturally pack animals. Be sure to:

- introduce your argument with a claim that explains your position
- support your claim with evidence from the text
- organize evidence clearly
- provide a concluding statement that follows from your argument

## An Elephant's 'Aha!' Moment

by Stephen Ornes

*A young elephant named Kandula passes a tricky test.*

Kandula is a young Asian elephant that lives at the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C. He's a clever pachyderm. Scientists recently watched Kandula solve a problem in a way never before seen in elephants.

This test may have looked unusual. Scientists attached pieces of fruit to a branch and then hung the branch out of reach of the elephant's trunk. Unlike other elephants, this didn't stop Kandula: He used his trunk to roll a plastic box so that it sat underneath the branch. He then stood on the box, lifted his trunk and easily pulled down the branch. And ate the treat.

Elephants are smart. They have magnificent memories, they recognize themselves in mirrors and they can use simple tools. Until recently, scientists didn't know if the giant animals also could come up with a solution to a problem on the spot, called using insight. You use insight when you study a difficult puzzle for a while, leave to do something else and then suddenly see a solution. Insight is the ability to solve a problem in a flash.

"It's the lightbulb going on," said Preston Foerder, a comparative psychologist at the City University of New York. Comparative psychologists study animal behavior to understand how they think.

In previous tests, elephants haven't shown evidence of insight. Foerder was part of a team of scientists who went looking for elephant insight anyway. He designed tricky problems for Kandula and two other elephants at the zoo in Washington.

These elephants usually live in tropical forests, and Foerder told *Science News* that they regularly solve problems in their lives. The challenge for scientists was distinguishing whether the animals complete tasks by trial and error, by watching other animals or by quickly realizing the solution on their own (insight). The only way to know was to present an elephant with a problem and watch.

"If you're not there for the first time they do it, you don't know if it was insight," Foerder told *Science News*.

To probe how elephants solve problems, the researcher and his colleagues tested Kandula and two other National Zoo elephants—Kandula's mother, 33, and a 61-year-old elephant neighbor—in a series of experiments.

First, the scientists placed trays of fruit outside the animals' enclosure. The food was just out of reach. They also placed some sticks nearby. The elephants tried but failed to get the treat; they never used the sticks to draw the food closer.

They did use the sticks in other ways. "They would beat the wall, they would beat the floor, they would beat their toys," Foerder told *Science News*.

Next, the experiment moved outside. The scientists hung bamboo branches decorated with fruit high overhead. They also provided the elephants with sticks and a plastic box that could serve as a stepping stool. After six tries, Kandula wasn't able to get the food (though he did reach for it). In the seventh try, Kandula seemed to have been struck by the right idea and used insight to solve the puzzle. Foerder explained that in one smooth motion, the clever elephant rolled the box directly to the branch and stood on the box to get the food.

The other elephants didn't make the same connection.

Diana Reiss, a psychologist who tries to understand how animals think, also worked on the study. Reiss, who teaches psychology at Hunter College in New York, told *Science News* that maybe it's time to think differently about how elephants solve problems. Perhaps their brains do allow them to make easy connections among bits of information.

On the other hand, some scientists say elephants' brains have different strengths. Benjamin Hart is a veterinary science professor at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. He has studied elephant behavior and he told *Science News* that elephants' brains are built for long-lasting memory and social skills, but not so much for connecting the dots among different pieces of information.

Read the article "An Elephant's 'Aha!' Moment." Transform the article into a brief short story told from the point of view of Kandula the elephant. Be sure to:

- engage the audience by establishing a clear point of view
- use descriptive language and sensory details
- provide a conclusion that follows from the events of the story

