



Elmer

Reviewed by Sara Alswager

Author & Illustrator: David McKee

Age Range: 4-9 years

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32 pages, part of a Elmer book series,
plush Elmer available for purchase

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Themes: Inspiration, open-mindedness, creativity, celebrating differences, happiness and laughter, community building, watercolor illustrations.

Summary: Born to a herd of gray elephants, Elmer was certainly "not elephant color." Despite his differences, he was embraced by all and had a wonderful social life. One night in deep thought, Elmer decides he no longer wants to be different. He finds a "bush covered in elephant colored berries" and rolls in them. Patchwork colors hidden, Elmer returns to the herd. A gray life leaves Elmer perplexed. Where is the laughter? Who brings the colorful joy? Heavy rain suddenly reveals Elmer's true colors. The other elephants burst into celebration, proclaiming it "Elmer Day."

Review: My dear friend Sarah Jensen (Sioux Valley Orff Chapter) introduced me to *Elmer* the patchwork elephant. *Elmer* reminds us that life should be colorful. Joy lives in our differences. This book has many applications in the classroom beyond community building. Movement or instrument sounds pair well with action words. A melody (with movement? instrument ostinatos?) could compliment each page turn. A folk dance brings life to the final elephant celebration. Students could act out the elephant narrations while others play instruments, sing, and/or perform movement. One could reproduce Elmer's patchwork squares and distribute for accompanying rhythm, pitch, or timbre activities.

Favorite Quotes:

"It was Elmer who always kept the other elephants happy."

"A large bush covered in berries. A large bush covered in elephant colored berries."

"Elmer laid down and rolled over and over. This way, that way, and back again."

"When he finished, Elmer looked like any other elephant."

"After a while, Elmer felt like something was wrong, but what? He looked around. Same old jungle, same old bright sky. Same old rain cloud that came over from time to time."

"The more he looked at the serious, still, standing elephants, he wanted to laugh."

"The rain cloud burst. And when the rain fell on Elmer, his patchwork started to show..."

"On one day a year, they decorate themselves and parade. On that day, if you happen to see an elephant ordinary elephant color, you will know it must be Elmer."