

The Elephant Orphanage

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April 6, 2009



- 1 Stories about an orphanage are bound to pull at your heartstrings. All these orphans are from East Africa. They were all **abandoned** when they were very young, less than two years old — and they're all elephants. This orphanage is in Kenya, near Nairobi, and has been around almost 30 years.
- 2 Each orphan has a private room. There is a communal¹ bath, a playground, and a dining area. There are as many as 14 orphans here at any one time, and they stay a number of years before going back to the bush.²
- 3 Just about the best people you've ever met are the **gentle** men who work here. They are called keepers, and they have **extraordinary** jobs. There is one keeper per elephant; he spends 24 hours a day with his charge, seven days a week. A keeper feeds his elephant every three hours, day and night, just like mom would. He keeps his elephant warm, not like mom would, but with a blanket. He even sleeps right next to his elephant. The keepers are **rotated** now and then so that no elephant gets too **attached** to any one of them.
- 4 The keepers also teach the elephants how to be elephants. There are **wild** elephant things these kids don't know how to do — mother wasn't around to teach them. Things like covering themselves in dust³ to prevent sunburn. The keepers do it with shovels,⁴ until the elephants **pick it up** themselves. It's actually a pretty **lush** life for the young elephants at the orphanage. But it's not the life of a wild elephant.
- 5 So like any good school, this place prepares its young charges to leave. But not right away. You don't go straight from a nursery to the jungle. You need more schooling first. Therefore, the orphanage **runs** a sort of junior high school in Tsavo National Park, the biggest park in Kenya. In the park, there is a lot less **supervision** and a lot less milk. The elephants find most of their food themselves. There is no longer any concern about their survival. They are healthy and strong now. Not only that, they hang out with elephants in the wild. They're in the process of becoming wild. One day, each elephant just wanders off into the wild and stays there. It is not at the **prompting** of anyone in the orphanage. It is whenever an elephant feels that he is ready to go back where he belongs.

¹ **communal**: shared by a group

² **the bush**: wild country in Australia and Africa that has not been cleared

³ **dust**: dry powder that consists of small pieces of dirt

⁴ **shovels**: tools with a long handle used for digging or moving earth

A Main Ideas

Write the number of the paragraph that matches each main idea from the reading.

Paragraph ____ describes what the elephants learn at the orphanage.

Paragraph ____ describes the elephants' living conditions.

Paragraph ____ is about the people who take care of the elephants.

Paragraph ____ gives general information about the orphans and orphanage.

Paragraph ____ explains how the orphanage prepares the elephants to return to their natural environment.

B Close Reading

Complete each sentence with the correct word or phrase from the box. One word will not be used.

about	get along with	one	protected
decide	less	own	survive

1. The elephants became orphans when they were _____ than two years old.
2. The elephant orphanage began _____ 30 years ago.
3. The elephants have their _____ rooms.
4. Each keeper is in charge of _____ elephant and is like a mother to that elephant.
5. The elephants learn how to _____ other elephants and how to _____ in the wild.
6. The elephants live in a _____ area of a national park before returning to the wild.
7. The elephants _____ when they are ready to go back to their natural environment.