ELEPHANATICS

LETTERS FOR LIFE

Grades: All Grades

Objectives: By the end of this lesson students will-

- Be able to empathize with elephants
- Be able to identify the elements of a letter
- Be able to apply the elements to compose a persuasive letter in support of elephant conservation
- Be able to recognize that letter writing is an important civic action in a Representative Democracy

Materials:

- Note paper
- Pens/pencils
- Optional- Letter Writing: Facts for Students from http://www.forteachersforstudents.com.au
- Optional- Video for older students for background https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/history-ivory-trade/ Optional- PDF of the 2018 New York Conservationist for Kids Magazine for background https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/0218c4kivory.pdf

Background Information for Teachers: A shocking 20,000 elephants are killed every year for their ivory. Scientists and conservationists agree that at this rate, both African and Asian elephants will be extinct in the wild within our lifetime. Even so, at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, Canada was one of only four countries to oppose the closure of domestic ivory markets across the globe. The Convention of International Trade in Flora and Fauna, (CITES CoP-18), held August 2019, confirmed their commitment to the closure of domestic ivory markets, agreeing by consensus to focus scrutiny on remaining open markets such as Japan and the EU. Furthermore, parties that have not closed their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw &

worked ivory will be requested to report on what measures they are taking to ensure that their domestic ivory markets are not contributing to poaching or illegal trade.

Ivory is so valuable on the black market that organized terrorism syndicates such as the Lord's Resistance Army are committing mass slaughter using helicopters and AK-47 rifles. In 1980, Africa had more than 1.3 million elephants – today it has approximately 415,000. In the last century, the Asian elephant population has declined by over 50% and African elephants have plummeted by 97%. Following population declines over several decades due to poaching for ivory and loss of habitat, the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) is now listed as Critically Endangered and the African savanna elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) as Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

In 1989, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) made it illegal to sell elephant ivory internationally. But each country makes its own laws regarding the sale of ivory within their borders. When domestic trade is allowed it permits illegal ivory (poached after 1989) to be sold along with legal ivory because it's difficult to differentiate between old and new ivory without extensive and costly testing. The only way to protect elephants from extinction is to ban ALL elephant ivory trade. China is the largest consumer of ivory in the world. It shut down its domestic ivory trade at the end of 2017. Australia and Israel and several US states have closed their domestic markets.

In November of 2023 the Canadian government finally banned the domestic trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn, to include the import of hunting trophies containing these parts. This historic ban fulfills a 2021 Ministerial mandate and is a critical step in protecting these iconic species. This followed a seven-year campaign by Humane Society International/Canada and had overwhelming support from leading conservationists, African nations, animal protection groups - to include Elephanatics who created the IvoryFreeCanada campaign and petition that garnered over 700,000 signatures - which then led to the coalition of Canadian organizations listed below.

For Canadian Teachers: Elephanatics, Jane Goodall Institute of Canada, World Elephant Day, Global March for Elephants and Rhinos – Toronto, Humane Society International, Canada, formed a coalition and created the **#IvoryFreeCanada** campaign to help keep our elephants alive. We sent letters on March 14, 2018 and again on July 5th, 2019 to the Canadian government, requesting a ban on the domestic trade of elephant ivory in Canada. Over 120 Canadian and international scientists, conservationists, politicians and animal organizations co-signed our letter! In November, 2023, our hope became a reality with the announcement of the historic ban. The ban took effect on January 8th, 2024. However, it's not all good news. The size and scale of wildlife trafficking is truly a global challenge. The value of

illegal trade has been estimated at between $7 and $23 billion per year and combating it demands urgent action by all countries. There are significant gaps in the current international legal framework to prevent and combat wildlife trafficking. Canadians are extremely grateful the Canadian government implemented a ban on ivory, but we also realize that more still needs to be done to make sure these new regulations are adhered to.

We ask the government of Canada to:

1. To tackle wildlife trafficking at the international level by mandating the criminalization of wildlife trafficking (and related offenses).
2. To encourage the Government to further consider the merits of an additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) creating a global agreement against wildlife trafficking.

For additional information visit these sites:
https://endwildlifecrime.org/ and read the press release Dec 7th- *UN Report shows clear majority of States now favour a new global agreement against wildlife trafficking-*
https://endwildlifecrime.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PRESS-RELEASE-07-DEC-UN-report-shows-clear-majority-of-States-now-favour-a-new-global-agreement-against-wildlife-trafficking-.pdf

For United States Teachers: The United States adopted a near total ivory ban on July 6, 2016 under the Obama Administration. But the federal law did not address commerce within states, which has led eight states to enact laws restricting or banning the sale of ivory and rhino horn within their borders. This includes: California, Hawaii, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Illinois and Washington and the District of Columbia. However, on March 1, 2018, the Trump Administration lifted the ban on the importation of elephant trophies and rolled back previous protections, once again threatening the extinction of the world's elephants.

We ask the government of the United States to:

1. Ban all domestic trade of elephant ivory and trophies; and
2. Make the import, export and re-export of all elephant ivory illegal. Let's make the United States one of the many countries changing their laws to allow the survival of the world's largest mammal before it's too late.
3. To tackle wildlife trafficking at the international level by mandating the criminalization of wildlife trafficking (and related offenses).
4. To encourage the Government to further consider the merits of an additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) creating a global agreement against wildlife trafficking.

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Activities:
Optional activities to use prior to activity introduction if you haven't covered the ivory trade yet or would like to provide additional information and background to students.

- ✂ Older students- https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/history-ivory trade/
- ✂ Older students - https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/economics-illicit-ivory-trade/
- ✂ Younger students- The 2018 New York Conservationist for Kids magazine is all on ivory and a great introduction for younger students. https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/0218c4kivory.pdf

***Activity 1*- Introduction**

1. Explain to your students that their words have power and can help bring about change. Both Canada and the United States have Representative Democracies. This means citizens have the right to participate in making decisions that affect them. In a Representative Democracy, citizens elect people to represent them in making decisions at different levels of the government. These elected officials are to represent the people. For that to happen, they need to hear from people just like you. One powerful way to reach your representatives in government is to write letters. This is one way you can let them know what is important to you. Now that they have learned about the ivory trade and how it impacts elephants, they will be writing letters in support of strengthening the international legal framework for international cooperation to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in

wildlife.

2. Explain that with digital technology email and social media can make it easy to contact representatives but hand-written letters are still the most effective way to share their concerns. Today they will be learning to write persuasive letters in support of elephant and all wildlife conservation.

***Activity 2*- Parts of a letter (for younger students)**

1. Using the white board explain to your students that there are five parts to a letter. These parts include:
   a. The Heading- includes the students return address and today's date b. The Greeting- this is the "hello" that usually starts with Dear …….. c. The Body- is the main part of the letter that contains the message you want to send and/or why you are writing the letter
   d. The Closing- is the "goodbye"
   e. The Signature- is who wrote the letter
2. Put the following questions on the board and discuss as a class. Taking notes that the students can reference as they write their letters
   a. What is the problem we want to address in our letters?
   b. What information should we include in the letter?
   c. What facts have we learned that we can use in our letter to help make our case?
   d. What do we want them to do about this issue?
3. Have your students construct their letters. When they are complete, have them go through their letter using the letter-writing checklist. (Found at the end of this lesson)

Activity 2- What is a Persuasive Letter (for older students)

1. Ask your students if they know what a persuasive letter is. Explain that a persuasive letter is a letter written to persuade an individual or an organization to accept the writer's opinion, perspective, or interest. A persuasive letter is a formal letter that tries to raise awareness of the matter being addressed. Persuasive letters have a specific purpose. For these letters to be effective they need to be well written. A persuasive letter tells the reader that you really care about the issue.
2. Put the following questions on the board. Your students will construct

answers to these questions and use them to craft their letter.

a. What is the issue you are writing about?
b. Who is your audience?
c. What is the problem?
d. How will you appeal to why your audience should care about this issue?
e. What background information will you include to help make your case?
f. Do you have facts, details, examples etc. to back up your claim/stance?
g. What are you asking for?

3. Have your students construct their letters doing any additional research on the ivory trade they need to help make their case.
4. Upon completion of their letters, have them exchange their letters with a classmate. Have the partners read the letter using the Letter Writing Checklist (older students) to look for areas that are missing or could be strengthened.
5. After review, have the students make any changes they need to their letters.

Additional Activities:

- ✂ Tell your friends and family about the elephant crisis and how a domestic ban on elephant ivory trade and stronger international protocols would help.
- ✂ Put together a screening for your school or community of the film ***The Last Animals*** by Conflict photographer Kate Brooks. Information about the film can be found here- http://thelastanimals.com/about/
- ✂ Visit https://www.elephants.com/resources for an age appropriate elephant reading list

Resources: The following organizations are helping to protect elephants for future generations. You can learn more about the issues facing elephants and how you can help by visiting their websites.

Elephanatics: https://elephanatics.org/
Mara Elephant Project: https://maraelephantproject.org/
The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust: sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/

Tsavo Trust: tsavotrust.org/
World Wildlife Federation: https://gifts.worldwildlife.org/
Save the Elephants: http://www.savetheelephants.org/
International Elephant Foundation: https://elephantconservation.org/
Amboseli Trust for Elephants: https://www.elephanttrust.org/
International Fund for Animal Welfare: ifaw.org/united-states
Wildlife Direct: wildlifedirect.org
Elephant Nature Park: https://www.elephantnaturepark.org/
Jane Goodall Institute of Canada: https://janegoodall.ca/ivory-free-canada/
Humane Society International Canada: https://www.hsi.org/