

**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 [www.forteachersforstudents.com.au](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](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 last IUCN World Conservation Congress, Canada was one of only four countries to oppose the closure of domestic ivory markets across the globe. 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%. Poaching for ivory threatens the very survival of our elephants.

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. If China can stop their domestic trade, why can't Canada and the United States.

**For Canadian Teachers:** Did you know it is still legal to buy and sell ivory in Canada? Both African and Asian elephants may be extinct in the wild in our lifetime, mainly due to poaching. Elephanatics created the **#ivoryfreecanada** campaign to help keep our elephants alive. We sent a letter on March 14, 2018 to the Canadian government, requesting a ban on the domestic trade of elephant ivory in Canada. Over 95 Canadian and international scientists, conservationists, politicians and animal organizations co-signed our letter! We feel new legislation can protect both elephants and the indigenous trade of narwhal and walrus. We ask the government of Canada to:

1. ban all domestic trade of elephant ivory; and
2. make the import, export and re-export of all elephant ivory illegal.

Let's make Canada one of the many countries changing their laws to allow the survival of the world's largest land mammal before it's too late. Sign for an #ivoryfreecanada.

**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 seven 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.

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. For additional US related information, visit these sites:

The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee <https://www.elephants.com>

Wildlife Conservation Society <https://www.wcs.org/our-work/species/african-elephants>

The Elephant Project <https://www.theelephantproject.net/>

### **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/>
- 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](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 an ivory ban.
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 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

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- 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:***

***For Canadian Students:***

- Download the #ivoryfreecanada [mini-poster](#) or create your own with the same hashtag. Take a photo of you holding it and post it on your social media with these tags: **#ivoryfreecanada** and **@elephanaticsbcc**. Challenge your friends to do the same to save elephants.
- Email **your #Ivoryfreecanada** photo to **elephanaticinfo@gmail.com** and we will add it to this page.
- Sign the [petition](#) that will also go to the government. We have over 330,000 signatures to date. Canadian **AND** international citizens can sign.
- Share the petition (<http://www.change.org/p/you-can-make-history-ban-the-sale-of-ivory-in-canada-ivoryfreecanada>) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

***For US Students:***

- For US students that don't live in one of the seven states that have passed laws restricting or banning the sale of ivory and rhino horn within their borders, have them research if their State has anything in the works to protect elephants. Have the class discuss actions they could take to urge their State government to pass an ivory ban. Have the class take action for the protection of the world's elephants.
- Sign and share the petition (<http://www.change.org/p/you-can-make-history-ban-the-sale-of-ivory-in-canada-ivoryfreecanada>)

**For All Students:**

- Tell your friends and family about the elephant crisis and how a domestic ban on elephant ivory trade 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/>

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust: [sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/](http://sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/)The Northern Rangeland Trust: [nrt-kenya.org/](http://nrt-kenya.org/)

Tsavo Trust: [tsavotrust.org/](http://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](http://ifaw.org/united-states)

Mara Elephant Project: <https://maraelephantproject.org/>