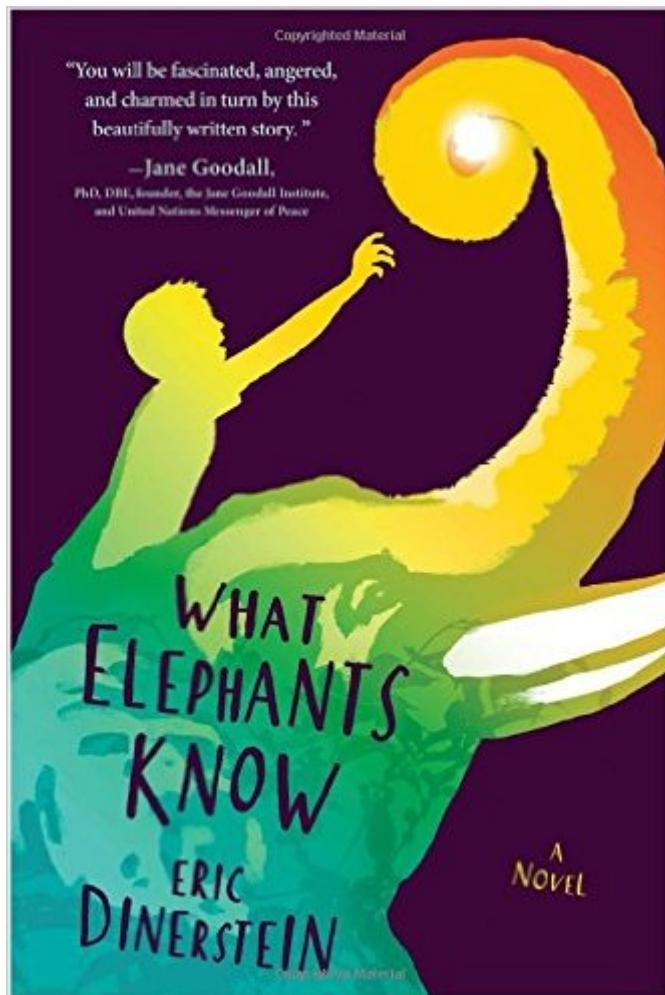


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# What Elephants Know



## Synopsis

Abandoned in the jungle of the Nepalese Borderlands, two-year-old Nandu is found living under the protective watch of a pack of wild dogs. From his mysterious beginnings, fate delivers him to the King's elephant stable, where he is raised by unlikely parents-the wise head of the stable, Subba-sahib, and Devi Kali, a fierce and affectionate female elephant. When the king's government threatens to close the stable, Nandu, now twelve, searches for a way to save his family and community. A risky plan could be the answer. But to succeed, they'll need a great tusker. The future is in Nandu's hands as he sets out to find a bull elephant and bring him back to the Borderlands. In simple poetic prose, author Eric Dinerstein brings to life Nepal's breathtaking jungle wildlife and rural culture, as seen through the eyes of a young outcast, struggling to find his place in the world.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 790 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Disney-Hyperion (May 17, 2016)

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Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars Â See all reviews Â (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #139,950 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #113 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Elephants #607 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Self-Esteem & Self-Respect #1093 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

I was intrigued by the premise of this book. And because I have a great love of children's books set in other places, I knew I needed to read this one. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. Dinerstein has done a fabulous job of creating not only the setting, but the characters and plot. The setting is so beautifully described that I would have guessed that the author had actually been there even if I hadn't already known that he had. The author's love for the land of Nepal shines through. I loved reading about the

jungle and the elephant stable that Nandu loves so much. Like Mowgli in Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, Nandu was found by the local dhole (wild dogs) and protected until the stable master found and adopted him. So, while Nandu was welcomed by the Subba-sahib and treated as his son, he looks different than those around him, and he feels like he doesn't fully belong. The feeling grows stronger when he goes off to boarding school. Not only do the Hindu boys not welcome him, but he is homesick for his father, home, and mother elephant, Devi Kali. But he does develop a connection to one of his teachers, Father Audry, who teaches Nandu about being a naturalist. But when the elephant stable is to be closed, Nandu must work with his adopted father and his new friends to save it before he loses what he prizes most. Dinerstein has done a fabulous job of creating a book that opened my eyes to what life is like on the other side of the world. Nandu is a character that I immediately felt kinship to as he struggles to find his destiny. And while the fate of the elephant stable provides the major plot point, there are several other subplots that all come together beautifully by the end.

This review originally published in [...] Rated 5.0 of 5I read/review approximately 200 books a year but very few of them are as simply beautiful as *What Elephants Know*, by Eric Dinerstein. Nandu is a child, abandoned in the jungle of the Borderlands of Nepal and watched over by a pack of wild dogs. He is found and raised by Subba-sahib, the head of one of the King's elephant stables, and by Devi Kali - a protective, affectionate female elephant. The story follows Nandu as rises to be one of the best elephant guides, despite his very young age. When Subba-sahib sends him away to school he learns how much of an outsider he really is, despite a wealth of knowledge of the natural world. And when the King announces that He can no longer support multiple elephant stables and that the Borderlands stable where Nandu has grown up will be shut down in a years time, Nandu and his stable family must convince the King of another plan, or face a bleak future. This story of a young man trying to find his place in the world, located in a part of the world that is so completely foreign to most of us, is tremendously powerful because the nature of humans and our desire to find our place in the world resonates across territorial borders and transcends class status. It is a timeless tale and will likely be read for many generations to come (or it should, at least). There are a great many similarities to Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, and Dinerstein recognizes this and pays homage to it by bringing the work directly into his story, which is quite wise - letting the reader know he is treading on some sacred literary ground. Part of what is so powerful about this book is the nature of the first person writing.

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