About the story
This book is a perfect introduction to the life in the wild of one of Earth’s most popular species. Elephants seem huge and strange to us, yet in many ways their social and family groups have characteristics we can identify with, particularly in the way elephant mothers care for and raise their young.

The book follows the story of a baby African elephant as she takes her first wobbly steps, learns to use her trunk, travels with the herd in search of water, and narrowly escapes being attacked by a hungry lion. It explores the differences between African and Asian elephants, and the places where they live. It ends with the birth of another baby elephant – a new member of the elephant family.

About the author
Kate Davies grew up in London, and started writing stories at an early age. When she was little, she mostly wrote about fairies, princesses and ghosts, but now she writes children’s books about everything from knights and castles to football and tennis. In her spare time, she likes dancing and visiting interesting cities.
Elephants • Teacher’s notes

Before reading
See how many objects you can find, or pictures of objects, that incorporate elephants. These might be: children’s toys, books, movies, ornaments, clothing, food packaging (especially Asian food), decorative details of monuments or buildings.

Show the students the items you have collected, and see how quickly they can spot the common theme. You could ask them to bring in their own elephant items at a later date. See how much students know about elephants: where do elephants come from? How many different kinds of elephant are there? You could draw up a K-W-L chart (“What I Know”, “What I Want to know”, “What I Learned”), taking suggestions from the class to fill in the first two columns. You will find some interesting and surprising facts about elephants when you get to page 46 of the book.

Reading or listening
You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

pp4-5 How are elephant babies similar to human babies? How are they different? [e.g. they can stand up soon after being born.]

p9 What do you think elephants use their tusks for? [You’ll find the answer on p46.]

p13 ...and what do you think they can use their trunks for? [You’ll find some answers on the next page; also, they can suck up water for washing or keeping cool, or keep hold of each other as on p24.]

p27 What do you think the elephants will do?

p33 How do you think the baby elephant can keep safe?

p40 How long does a human baby take to grow inside its mother?

p43 Can you remember what a baby elephant does next?

p46 How do you think you can tell whether an elephant is left- or right-tusked? [It will lean its head, using one tusk more than the other.]

After reading
If you made a K-W-L chart, ask students to help you fill in the last column. What is the most surprising or interesting thing they have learned?

Think about the ways elephants are similar to humans and the ways in which they are different. These can be physical [we don’t have tails or trunks] or behavioural [we like swimming too].

If students can use the internet, encourage them to visit the recommended websites on Usborne Quicklinks (follow the instructions on p47). These include a slide show, sound and video clips, a puzzle, a picture to colour and an e-card to send, as well as lots more information about elephants.