

Bedtime stories about elephants.

3 stories to read aloud at bedtime, each with its own picture and a calm, sleepy ending. Written for ages 3 to 8.



Nia Knows the Rumble

about 3 min

The Gentle Trumpet

about 3 min

The Path to the Resting Trees

about 3 min

Reading times assume a slow bedtime pace of about 110 words a minute. Every story is also free to read online at pimlo.app/bedtime-stories/elephants.



Nia Knows the Rumble

Nia was a young elephant with big flappy ears and a trunk she was still learning to use. All afternoon she had played by the waterhole with the other calves, splashing and squirting and rolling in the cool red mud.

Now the sun was going down, and the savanna was full of evening sounds. Zebras snorted. Birds chattered in the acacia trees. A hippo grunted from the water, deep and grumbly. Nia stood still and flapped her ears, listening.

Elephants can talk in a very low voice, a rumble so deep that you can almost feel it in your feet more than hear it. Nia's grandmother had taught her that every family's rumble is a little different. Nia had been listening to hers since the day she was born.

She listened past the zebras, past the birds, past the grumbly hippo. And there it was, coming through the warm ground: a low, slow rumble, like distant thunder that was being gentle on purpose. Grandmother. Calling her home.

Nia rumbled back, as low as she could, which wasn't very low yet. Then she trotted toward the sound, her small trunk swinging. She found her family standing together under a big tree, and squeezed in between her mother's legs, where it was warm and safe. Her grandmother touched Nia's head with her trunk, softly, as if to say: there you are. And as the stars came out over the savanna, Nia leaned against her mother and closed her eyes.

The end. Goodnight.



The Gentle Trumpet

Every evening at the waterhole, the animals played the quiet music game. Each one made a small, soft sound, one after another, until together they made a kind of lullaby for the savanna.

The weaver birds went first: tweet, tweet, twitter. Then the frogs: rrrrip, rrrrip. Then the old giraffe, who could only hum, which she did very nicely: mmmmm. Then it was Tembo's turn. Tembo was a young elephant, and he raised his trunk and trumpeted with all his might. PAAARP!

Birds flew up out of the trees. The frogs stopped. The giraffe nearly dropped her leaf. "Oh," said Tembo, lowering his trunk. "That was too loud, wasn't it?" "A little," said the giraffe kindly. "But every song needs your sound. Can you find a quieter one?"

Tembo thought. He tried trumpeting softly, but it came out as a squeak, and everyone giggled, including Tembo. Then he dipped the tip of his trunk into the waterhole and blew, very gently. The water bubbled: blub, blub, blub. It was a soft, round, happy sound.

So they played the game again. Tweet, twitter. Rrrrip. Mmmmm. Blub, blub, blub. It was the best lullaby yet. The sun slipped down behind the hills, and one by one the animals went home to sleep. Tembo walked back to his family, still blowing tiny bubbles in his mind, and fell asleep with the gentlest sound on the savanna.

The end. Goodnight.



The Path to the Resting Trees

When the sun turned orange and touched the edge of the savanna, the elephant family knew it was time to walk to the resting trees. They had walked the same path for years and years. Grandmother led the way, because she remembered it best.

First they passed the great baobab tree, with its fat trunk and its branches like roots reaching up into the sky. Little Zuri always stopped to touch it with her trunk. It felt rough and warm from the day's sun.

Then they crossed the dry riverbed, where the sand was soft and cool under their wide feet. Their footprints made round dents in the sand, big ones and small ones, side by side. Zuri tried to step exactly in her mother's footprints, but they were much too far apart.

Then they passed the tall termite mound, red as a sunset, and the rock where the lizards slept. Birds were flying home overhead in long, dark lines. The sky turned pink, then purple, and the grass whispered in the evening breeze.

At last they reached the resting trees, a grove of flat-topped acacias where the ground was soft and the air was still. The family gathered close together, the grown-ups standing in a ring around the little ones. Zuri leaned against her

mother's leg. Her grandmother rumbled softly, once, which meant all is well. And under the first stars, the family rested, the way they always had, in the place they always came back to.

The end. Goodnight.