



# Elephant Run

*Roland Smith*

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## **Elephant Run** Roland Smith

In 1941, bombs drop from the night skies of London, demolishing the apartment Nick Freestone lives in with his mother. Deciding the situation in England is too unstable, Nick's mother sends him to live with his father in Burma, hoping he will be safer living on the family's teak plantation.

But as soon as Nick arrives, trouble erupts in this remote Burmese elephant village. Japanese soldiers invade, and Nick's father is taken prisoner. Nick is stranded on the plantation, forced to work as a servant to the new rulers. As life in the village grows more dangerous for Nick and his young friend, Mya, they plan their daring escape. Setting off on elephant back, they will risk their lives to save Nick's father and Mya's brother from a Japanese POW camp.

In this thrilling journey through the jungles of Burma, Roland Smith explores the far-reaching effects of World War II, while introducing readers to the fascinating world of wild timber elephants and their mahouts.

## **Elephant Run Details**

Date : Published September 25th 2007 by Hyperion Books for Children

ISBN : 9781423104025

Author : Roland Smith

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Adventure, War

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## From Reader Review Elephant Run for online ebook

### Philip says

I liked this book. It took a while for the story to develop and for me to care about the characters, but once it did it was fine.

There are so many books out there that kids read in school about WWII that take place on the Western Front. This was a nice change, and we may ask the LA dept. to switch one of their current titles with this one.

We're looking for books that we could tie into our content area - so, any suggestions would be great...

Content Area (7th grade) Includes:

Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam

Southeast Asia, Australia

Ethnocentrism, Urbanization, Industrialization, Colonialism, Imperialism...

There are plenty more I could write down, and maybe I will... but hopefully that will bring in a couple suggestions.

If you were looking for a synopsis of the book, sorry. There are plenty of goodones here. Just click on the title and look around. I suggest if you see any you like, click the like button for that person's review. They'll appreciate it.

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### Emily Bezman says

One of my favorite books! Love how Roland Smith writes! In every book of his, he has lots of action and different cultures or learning. I just love all the adventure!

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### Dalilah says

I know what you're thinking right now, "Elephant Run" is a weird title for a book. Well that's what I thought too about the title when I read it. But just to tell you, your minds going to change after reading this. The genre of this book is historical fiction since it takes place in 1941 and that it is not true. I think this a super interesting book with lots of action.

This book takes place in two places, India & Japan. In 1941 Nick Freestone lives in London where bombs are landing everywhere from the Japanese. So his mom thinks it's safer if Nick goes and lives with his father, Jackson Freestone at Burma. But after that the Japanese start invading over Burma. Then Nicks father is taken to be a prisoner and forced to work. Now Nick is taken to work at a plantation for the Japanese. He

knows 2 people there, their names are Mya and Hilltop. Hilltop is Mya's grandfather. So after they had enough for about a year, they plan an escape. Then 3 go on elephant back to go and save Nick's father at the plantation while he's in very critical condition. They all save him by sneaking him out of the plantation. Nick and Jackson are super happy again to see each other again. Although Nick doesn't ever see Hilltop again he has Mya and her brother Indaw. I was really surprised when Hilltop didn't come with Nick, Indaw, and Mya, and Jackson. This would be a person vs. person because Nick, Hilltop, Mya and Jackson have problems with Colonel Naygayoshi. I liked the way the author wrote the book in 3rd person, it gave me a different experience in books. I could just tell how different it was between 3rd and 1st person point of view.

My favorite part was when Nick and the others freed his dad. I thought the ending of this book was really good, it ended happy at the end. A major event that changed the character was when Nick kissed Mya!!!! I was so surprised at that part. The author's purpose was to obviously entertain with all the action. The main character was Nick of course. I say that because he was the character that was being focused on mostly.

This book was one of the most interesting books I read this year so far. To me this book is 9 out of 10 stars. I rate it 9 because how there was never a boring part in the book. I promise you will never get bored reading this. Also that it wasn't confusing like some books I read. Like some are just confusing that you don't get sometimes. I recommend this book to someone who wants their book to be not that long and not that short. Like you won't spend too much time on it and it won't be too short for you, it's a perfect size book. `But yes I really loved this book and I really think you should read it.

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## **Josh Goytia says**

Elephant Run caught my eye because of its ever changing setting from London to Burma and its time during World War II. I enjoy reading many war and historical fiction books but this one, just reading the summary on the back, it immediately got my attention. On the front page of the book, you'd think this book would be about elephants, and it is, just not the background of World War II affecting the story in such great ways.

In my opinion, this book was amazing! It had me wanting to actually read and keep on reading because it was so action-packed. It was especially a page turner, it has so much drama that each chapter had me on the edge of my seat. The book itself was pretty easy to read and explained everything so well like the surroundings, the emotions, and character's facial expressions, that I thought I was actually living the story with them.

Elephant Run takes place in 1941, Burma as World War II is beginning for the United States and Japan is invading the country. Nicholas was living with his mother in London when the bombing of the city began and they were forced to stay in the sewers for long periods of time with no food or water till the bombing halted. For the time being his mother sends him off to live with his father living in Burma. When he arrives he's astonished to see his father's huge plantation and the remarkable elephants it holds. He befriends a young woman by the name of Mya who he will later come to know as his best friend while in captivity by the Japanese.

This book is extremely detailed but sometimes I do feel like they load it up with too many complex words like putting extra butter on your popcorn. It will eventually lose its taste like the first few paragraphs of the story. Other than that the only other thing I can say is the ending is kind of dull for such an exciting book overall. The entire book is full of excitement and then the ending throws you off guard by giving it an open ended ending.

The story can show readers that having someone to endure hardships with is better than doing it alone and can motivate you to break away from it. It's also one of those books that gives you insight on World War II around the world and not just in Europe and the Atlantic. Me personally though, this story had shown me that anything you believe in is worth fighting for.

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### **Orange Shirted Kid says**

Hello Again Berwick Academy... It is I... Definetly NOT an Isopod. I want to tell y'all 'bout my new website I am making called Isopod Central. If You are interested on getting on the side that will take over the world, contact pyreswrath@gmail.com to be on the high council. See Y'all later.

Sincerely,

Not An Isopod

p.s. No Isopods are trying to recruit an army of followers to take over the world. Because when we do you will want to be on my side.

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### **Art says**

WWII and sent away from London to be safe from the Blitz and end up in the middle of the takeover of Burma by the Japanese.

One young man must grow up and prove that he is his father's son, while a young burmanese girl, desires to prove that she is as good as her father is with the elephants.

Thought of "Operation Dumbo Drop" and "Elephant in the Garden".

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### **Kristen Jane says**

I enjoyed the Burmese setting, cultural reference and brand new vocabulary. It was a true YA book, and really wonderful for historical fiction and WWII genres. I liked it!

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### **Tyler Hall says**

This book was great! Very action packed. Nick is a great fit for this book. His journey is very heart-felt and I just wanted to keep reading. This isn't usually my type of genre but I liked this story from the start.

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## William C says

This book is *Elephant Run* by Roland Smith. This book falls into the realistic fiction genre because there are events that have taken place before and events that can take place today. Which engages the reader more because they can connect to the events more. Nick is a 13 year old kid sent to live with his father in Burma because of bombers, and a dangerous living environment in London where he used to live with his mom. This is taking place in the 1940's period during World War 2. Nick's dad is a secret FBI agent. After living in Burma for awhile and just getting used to the environment he met a friend Mya, and the Japanese invade and capture Nick's father Nick and his friend Mya. Nick's dad is sent to an internment camp and Mya and Nick are sent to prison and they hope to plot an escape. The internal conflict is that Nick has troubles fitting in at first because his dad isn't always around and he has to get up and work and it's a big change for him and he was new and he didn't always know directions. Also the external conflict is that the Japanese capture Nick, his dad, and Mya and he has to figure out a way to break out save his dad and escape the Japanese. I liked this book. There was lots of detail and many intense scenes where you just want to read more. I would rate this book 4/5 stars. I would say that anybody ages 10-16 would like this book.

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## Adrienne says

The Blitz is raging, and Nick's mother sends him away from the dangers of London to the relative safety of his father's plantation in the midst of the Burmese jungle. Nick loves the plantation and has greatly missed it, his father and the elephants in the years that he lived with his mother and step-father. But Nick's stay in Burma is anything but peaceful. The war has followed him to southeast Asia; the Japanese are taking over the continent, and many of the Burmese workers on the plantation are tired of British rule and agree with the Japanese slogan, "Asia for Asians."

Nick's father is desperate to get Nick out of the country, but the Japanese take both of them prisoner and send Nick's father to a labor camp. How will Nick survive his captivity at the hands of the Japanese? Will his father die in the camp? And what about Nick's Burmese friend Mya? She's as much a prisoner as he is, and possibly in even more danger...

I enjoyed the setting of *Elephant Run* - most novels about World War II that I have read have taken place in the United States or in the European theater, so it was a treat to see the events in Southeast Asia get their due. The characters are interesting - the Japanese sergeant in particular is quite memorable - and the plot moves along at a good pace. I would recommend this book to anybody who would like a different perspective on the Second World War.

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## Lincoln Shaw says

The plot of this book is that there is this kid who lives with his mom and stepdad in London. Then the blitz happens and his mom and his biological dad decide that it is safer in Burma where his dad lives and runs a timber elephant thing. The elephants harvest special trees and then the people that live in Burma, they sell them. Nick (the main character) goes to live with his dad, and then the Japanese take over the little very little town. It's funny he moves from London to avoid the war and now the Japanese take over the town and he is in the middle of the war now.

The main problem is the Japanese have taken over the camp and Nicks dad is a POW. The only help he has is this girl he meets, and some 110 year old monk. They come up with this crazy plan to get Nicks father out of prison. Some how their plan works, and they escape. Another problem is some of the people that live in the town passed information to the Japanese that's how they got in so easy. When Nick and his dad were gone they attacked and every body surrendered because they didn't know what to do without a leader.

I like the plot. It was pretty great. It didn't seem impossible for that story to happen. I also liked the characters some of which I have not mentioned. They seemed really nice. I disliked, even though it probably happened, the parts where the Japanese captain decapitated multiple people.

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### **Nate S says**

This is possibly one of the most disappointing books I have ever read. I feel like the book had a lot of potential but none of it was tapped into. I read this in 8th grade. I wasn't expecting a whole lot out of it considering the fact that its a young adult book but honestly I don't see anything that makes this book worth reading again.

But where do I start. Well the first thing that comes to mind is the fact that it feels like the pacing in this book is just entirely off. When Nick gets to Burma almost immediately they are over run with Japanese and all of a sudden they are captured within just a few days of arriving. All of this just sort of makes Nick's dad seem like a terrible person. They say oh sure he just wanted to be with his son, but he knew they would invade soon so he basically brought his son into all this chaos knowing he either die or be captured

There are many things that I can complain about but honestly after writing this review its bringing back memories of the book and honestly it just is not a good book and I don't feel like wasting your time by having to read a review about a terrible book.

The main problem that I had with this book was probably the fact that the characters are dull boring and just awkward. I am done with this review so I just am going to leave you with the point in which I gave up on the book.

There is a part of the book in which Mya walks in to Nicks room and he happens to be naked then all of a sudden its like oh woah he's naked and they basically completely forget about it this could have led to some actual character development but NO it just doesn't happen

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### **Christina says**

To protect him from the bombing in London, fourteen year-old Nick is sent to live on his father's plantation in Burma a few days before the Japanese invade during World War II. As an adult reader, I enjoyed viewing WWII from the Japanese/Burmese angle and I thought this was the best crafted of the four Roland Smith novels I've read, but I'm not sure whether many of my sixth-grade students will enjoy this book. The plot is fairly complicated and dark. All in all, I probably will continue to recommend Peak (also dark but less complicated) to my students who have read Zach's Lie and Jack's Run and are eager for more Roland Smith.

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## **Tuckerm says**

Elephant Run is one of the greatest non-fiction books I have ever read. Although I had some doubt in the beginning, the book really pulled through in the third or fourth chapter. Also I likes how the author really describes the characters.

The book start off in London during World War 2 were a boy named Nick Freestone. Nick lives with his mom because of his parent's divorce. After Nick's apartment was bombed, his mother didn't think that it was safe for him in London so she shipped him off to his father's elephant plantation. Little does she know that the Japanese have captured Rangoon. When Nick arrived at his fathers plantation he discovered that the Japanese took his father to a work camp. He also discovers that he has fell captive too. While Nick is in the camp he makes friends with a local monk and a native girl. And with the help from his new friends the escape the camp and save Nick's father. And that concludes this book.

I think that this book was very well written. Although the first couple of chapters were very badly written. But it really pulled through at the end. I choose this book because it had a very interesting cover, and it was the only book I could find on short notice. I likes this book because it was filled with action and very interesting. It was interesting because it was historical-fiction so it taught me a lot about World War 2. Over all this book was great and I would recommend it to all

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## **Ashley says**

Another middle school, math class read of mine. I remember trying not to cry in class while finishing this book.

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## **Paige Y. says**

After the London apartment in which Nick Freestone lives with his mother and stepfather is bombed during World War II, Nick is sent to live with his father in Burma. Unfortunately, by the time he arrives at his father's teak plantation, it is obvious that the Japanese are going to take over the country. Nick's father is determined to get Nick out of the country and to safety in Australia, but before that can happen, the Japanese arrive and take everyone captive. Nick's father is sent to a work camp, along with the most trusted of his mahouts (men who train and work with the elephants on the plantation). Nick is left to be a servant to the Japanese occupiers. He is determined to escape and to rescue his father. A Burmese girl, Mya, is left an orphan when her father is murdered by the Japanese and she also wants to escape and rescue her brother, one of the mahouts now forced to work on a railroad being built by the Japanese. Nick and Mya do have some help – Mya's great-grandfather who just might be able to make the attempt a success.

Like all of Roland Smith's books, Elephant Run is action-packed. I do have a few quibbles about it, but I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The quibbles: First, Smith focuses on the points of view of two characters, Nick and Mya, but there were times that I had trouble moving from one point of view to the other. My second quibble deals with the way Smith teaches the reader about the region and the time period. It is obvious that most of his readers will come to this book with little knowledge of Burma, the Japanese invasion of the country, and of elephant training so Smith has a lot of information to get across. It does feel like in certain places it's almost as if he's saying, "OK, here's a little lesson for you about . . ." and after a paragraph or so then proceeds with the narrative.



Despite these quibbles, I was really drawn to the book. The almost non-stop action helped, as did my interest World War II. I also really liked the characters and cheered for them as they faced such terrible odds in their attempt to escape and free their family members. I loved the sections with the elephants and enjoyed learning about them. I think this will be a great book for my middle school boys – especially those in 7th grade who study Asia

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## **Heather says**

So I'm not sure if this will be a book for my kids to read. I thought it was okay, even interesting at times.

Set in Burma during WWII I learned a lot about timber elephants, the Burmese culture and traditions as well as a little about Buddhism. When the Japanese take control of the surrounding area things get ugly and several people are killed or tortured or put in POW camps. While not overly graphic, it wasn't pretty and I don't know where I stand on that yet. I want my kids to know that war is ugly and bad guys are bad, but I'm not sure I want it right there in front of them. Moving on....I appreciated how the author showed that there were good and bad guys in all the groups depicted. And that for the most part they were just people "stuck in the middle of a war".

The family dynamic portrayed was interesting. Nick, the main character, was born in Burma and lived there until he was 5 when his mom took him away and never returned (I'm guessing because she didn't like it there and was worried for his safety). She meets up with an old friend and decides to divorce and then marry this guy (biting my tongue now). It seems that all the grown-ups have a good relationship and they talk to each other and like each other and do what's best for Nick. The new step-dad is rather nice, mom and ex-hubby are friendly. I think it's a good example of how divorce doesn't have to get all nasty.

The book started out slowly and then picked up. The characters were a little flat. I am interested now in knowing how historically accurate this is, which I guess says something good about the writing.

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## **Heather says**

It's 1941 and World War II is literally at Nick's doorstep in London. In an effort to keep Nick safe, his mother sends him to live with his father on a teak plantation in Burma. Unfortunately, the Japanese army arrives just after Nick does, literally making him a prisoner in his own home. After ten brutal months, Nick decides it's time for an escape and to try to rescue his father, who is being held at a POW camp.

This is such a different look at WWII. I am so used to just reading about the war from the European perspective, with the occasional book about life on the homefront or in a Japanese camp. This gives you a glimpse into the war as it impacted lives literally a world away. Add a house with secret passages, trained elephants and a monk that keeps showing up just when you need him, and you have the makings of a truly unique historical fiction for teens.

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## **Aidan F. says**

Elephant Run, by Roland Smith, is a very interesting read during the time of World War II. Nick Freestone lived in London with his mother until the Germans bombed their apartment and Nick's mother decided to send him off to Burma to live with his father on his plantation. When he arrives, he sees that there is a bit of an issue with the Japanese taking over Asia, due to their slogan "Asia for Asians". When Nick sees his father, he confirms that there is an issue with Japan and that Nick may not be in Burma as long as they had planned. Since the plantation they own works exclusively with elephants to do labor work, Jackson, Nick's father, decides to bring Hannibal, his own personal elephant that is extremely dangerous, to an island to hide, just in case the Japanese invade the country and their plantation. Jackson was right: soon after taking Hannibal to the island, their plantation is captured and Nick is taken prisoner, while his father is taken as a Prisoner of War to do labor on railroads and POW camps. 10 months later, Hilltop, Mya's great grandfather, plans an escape for Mya, who has become a servant under Japanese rule, and Nick, who is being practically tortured by those loyal to the new leaders. In the process, Nick and Mya hide in the walls of Hawks Nest, literally. Hawks Nest belonged to Nick's generation, since his great grandfather founded the plantation. And when he built Hawks Nest, he installed secret passageways from all fireplaces leading all throughout the house. That's where Nick and Mya hid until they could go break out Jackson and Indaw, who is Mya's brother. During their journey, they encounter many dangerous people, such as Captain Moto and Colonel Nagayoshi. What the message of this story is that no one should ever take their family for granted, because as Nick's father says, "In the end, the only thing that really matters is family. These are the ones who will be at your bedside when you die. Or you at theirs."

My favorite character in the book is Sergeant Sonji. Sergeant Sonji was the soldier who found Nick when the Japanese were capturing the plantation and is by far the most sympathetic in the entire war. Roland Smith states, "The soldiers who had taken [Nick's father] were nothing like the soldier who had taken Nick." He helped Nick get through his time as a prisoner by giving him books to practice Japanese and teaching him the art of Haiku, which is a form of Japanese poetry. Also, he helped Nick's father escape by putting him in a grave, putting a hollow bamboo stick in his mouth and saying he died. He was soon enough dug up and taken to safety. Sonji was forced to become a soldier, but couldn't be forced to change his sympathy to others affected by the war.

In my opinion, I found Elephant Run to be very exciting and insightful on what's important. It teaches you how life could be much worse and to never fully trust someone who you have wronged. I would recommend it to anyone who likes learning about things while reading and who enjoys books set in the 1940s, and World War II.

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## **Lauren says**

I loved this book. It was very exciting, and enjoyed most of it. The beginning was a little slow, but as you continue reading it gets better. I didn't understand the ending very much, but that may just be me. I would recommend this book to everyone who like elephants.

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