



Balarama: A Royal Elephant

Ted Lewin , Betsy Lewin (Illustrator)

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Ted and Betsy Lewin's illustrated travelogue of their trip to southern India, where they meet Balarama, the lead Royal Elephant who will make his debut in the traditional parade that concludes the celebration of Dasara in the city of Mysore.

Balarama: A Royal Elephant Details

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Author : Ted Lewin , Betsy Lewin (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Balarama: A Royal Elephant for online ebook

Anahi T says

i liked this information book. it was about elephants in india and people ar going to visit the elphants are in in parade and it,s important because the king wanted elephants for the festivals. my schema is that the pesons was decorade sow pretty the elephants to parade party. questions-my sguetion is that the elephants and the horses too that party because he can win. recomment-i recomment this book to Justen bieber.

Denise Z says

My opinion of the book is that i like it.My genere is memoir.The book is about a elehant that is name Drona she was a great elehant.On 1998 Drona was eating leaves and she pull a branch put she pull a power line and she was electrocuted instandly.And Balarama took her lace of carring the golden howdah.Balarama did awosome and every body was so shocked cause it was her 1 time whih the golden howdah.My shema is that i want to see a elephant.My question is why did Drona pull a branch whith a power line.I will recommend the book to Litzzy cause she likes elephants.

Karin Gallian says

I thought the book did a good job of explaining the annual ritural/ceremony and the importance of elephants to this annual event. The illustrations make you feel like you are a part of the ceremony and shows the rich detail of how decorated these animals become as they are prepared for the procession. The story shares a custom from India and shares the story of Drona and how these elephants are trained and respected by their mahoot. I liked that the book included a glossary and pronunciation guide to help non-Hindi speakers.

Stephanie Croaning says

Ted and Betsy Lewin wrote and illustrated this non-fiction picture book that highlights their trips to India to learn about the Mysore Dasara, a Hindu festival, and the royal elephants used in the procession. Told in story form, a great deal is learned about Indian culture and, of course, elephants. Background information about elephants, the royal elephants of Mysore Dasara, and a glossary and pronunciation guide (very helpful!) are contained in the back of the book.

I really wasn't sure that I was going to like this book when I saw the cover, but I loved the narrative format and was caught up in the suspense of how Balarama would do in his inaugural procession.

The illustrations in the book intrigue me, and I can't decide if they are distracting or appropriate for the different tones of the text. Ted and Betsy Lewin are both children's book illustrators. Betsy is probably more well-known to children for her collaboration with Doreen Cronin in the *Click, Clack, Moo* series. Ted's work is more formal and are the watercolor illustrations that occur on the cover and predominately throughout the book. Ted's formal illustrations accompany informative parts of the text that tell of Indian customs and

traditions and highlight the importance of the Dasara religious festival. Betsy's whimsical drawings are used for the sections that are less formal, sometimes funny, or personal. In theory, the two illustrative styles make sense, but because the majority of the illustrations are Ted's watercolors, Betsy's illustrations seem out of place. I think it would have worked better if the mixture was closer to 50/50, but frankly the text is more formal and doesn't call for that.

Overall, if students are studying other cultures, particularly India, this is an interesting, yet highly informative text.

Angie says

Oh so lovely. The illustrators took a trip to India and this tells the story of one of the elephants there. I forsee some fun activities related to elephants correlating to this book!

I will say this, though. It's a little confusing the way the two very different artistic styles are put together. Ted Lewin's watercolors are very soothing. Betsy Lewin's work is more ... cartoony. Which is not to say I don't love her work, because I do. It's just very different from her husband's.

paula says

The Lewins continue their accounts of their worldwide adventures, here with two voyages to southern India.

On their first trip, they visited a camp of trained elephants and their handlers in the forest and learned of the royal elephants used for festivals. They met Drona, who was to lead the annual Dasara procession in Mysore in the fall, and they were so enraptured that they decided to return for the festival. Upon their arrival, they learned that Drona had died, and that a new elephant had been chosen to lead the procession.

Ted Lewin's brilliant, realistic watercolors capture the sun-drenched pageantry of Mysore as well as the dusty, filtered light of the forest, while Betsy Lewin's lively cartoons aptly depict the action and personalities involved. The story has pathos and tension, and the Lewins' narration takes readers into the forest, to the grounds of the maharaja's shining palace, along the parade route, and eye-to-eye with the majestic animals.

Facts about elephants and brief biographies of some of the royal elephants are a welcome addition, and a glossary—with pronunciation help—is provided. If the art doesn't grab children, the elephants surely will. Wonderful.

Written for 9/1/09 School Library Journal
More like this on Pink Me: <http://pinkme.typepad.com>

The Rainbow Zebra says

I received this book through GoodReads "First Reads" Giveaway. I love Children's/Young Adult books, and since the subject matter was elephants and India, I knew I would like this before it even got here.

Based on two trips made by authors Ted and Betsy Lewin, Balarama tells the story of an elephant by that name who will be leading the procession of a parade during Dasara, a holy festival in India. Accompanying the text are the dazzling paintings done by Betsy Lewin.

While this book is aimed at ages 9-12, I read it aloud to my 7 year old son, who enjoyed it as much as I did. We both learned several words in Hindi and Kannada (there is a glossary at the back) and marveled in the artwork. Truly, I think this is the most beautiful illustrated books I have ever seen--my son argued with me over one painting of the parade of elephants, insisting that it must be a photograph.

I can see the use of this book in the study of India, elephants, and religious/cultural customs for a few age ranges. A section in the back discusses the differences between Asian and African elephants as well as the anatomy of elephants. One final section lists the lineage of the Royal Elephants who participated in Dasara.

I have to admit, based on story alone, I would have given it 4 stars. Betsy Lewin's glorious paintings earned an extra star on its own. I have looked up a few more titles of theirs and will be sure to purchase them.

I feel so fortunate that this book found its way to me; I hope other readers are as equally delighted.

Charlyn says

In stunning watercolors and clear prose, the Lewins present their travels to India to see the elephants of India, focusing on the Royal Elephant chose to lead the Mysore Dasara yearly celebration. After meeting Drona, the leader of the celebration for several years, they choose to return the next year during Dasara to see him carry the holden howdad in the parade. When they arrive they learn that Drona has died and another elephant, Balarama, has been chosen to replace him. Through their artwork, the Lewins reveal the wonder and splendor of meeting Balarama and watching him lead the celebration.

Elephant facts with a chart comparing the Asian and Indian elephants are included at the end along with information about other Royal Elephants of the past and a glossary.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

Every year a special elephant is chosen to lead the parade in a big celebration in India. Balarama is the latest elephant to be so honored.

Both Ted and Betsy Lewin are children's picture book illustrators. In this book, both draw parts of the story. They have very different styles, with Ted painting big beautiful and realistic illustrations, and Betsy doing cartoon-like drawings.

A little:

"Balarama moves majestically toward one of the palace gates, leading a mile-long procession. Band after band and unit after unit of guards and soldiers march smartly past the stage, following Balarama onto the packed streets of Mysore. Throngs of people push forward to see Balarama in his first ceremonial parade. We are bursting with pride. He is doing great."

Richelle says

Authors Ted and Betsy Lewin recount their trip to India to see Balarama, the elephant chosen to lead the procession in the Mysore Dasara, a Hindu festival. This nonfiction book covers the history of camp elephants in India, elephants that are trained to do a variety of activities and work, as well as the cultural importance of the chosen royal elephant. Told through simple, yet descriptive language, the authors deftly craft a bit of suspense when talking about Balarama's first try at leading the royal procession. The illustrations are stunning watercolors that capture the colors and beauty of India and these great elephants. The book also includes elephant facts, a listing of other royal elephants, and a glossary.

Amie says

A cool look at one of the festivals in India focusing on elephants.

Melissa says

I enjoyed learning about elephants in India and found the book well-written. I imagine writing and drawing (and traveling/researching) this book as a couple would be hugely enjoyable. While I admire each artist's work individually, for me the juxtaposition of their work was jarring. I particularly like the lush watercolors that span two pages. After a set of these, the pen drawings looked odd. But I've enjoyed her art in other books so I think it was just too much contrast for me within one book.

Eileen Corbett says

This nonfiction book shows the importance of elephants to the Indian culture. Elephants are trained to do work and to participate in festivals. Dasara is a festival that is celebrated each fall, and the elephant, Drona, has led the festivities for many years. When Drona dies another elephant must be chosen to take his place. This elephant will carry the howdah, a golden ceremonial carriage. Is Balarama worthy to become the new royal elephant?

This book uses a captivating story to teach readers about Indian culture. The detailed illustrations use vivid colors to match the colors of India. Sections for "Elephant Facts", "Royal Elephants of the Mysore Dasara", and a "Glossary and Pronunciation Guide" all serve to make this an informative book.

Barbara says

Watercolor illustrations are blended with spot illustrations created with reed pen and sumi ink with

watercolor washes to capture perfectly Dasara, an annual Hindu festival celebrated in India. Captivated by Drona, the lead elephant in the parade, the couple who have created the book return the next year. Sadly, Drona is no longer alive, and after paying tribute to him, they await the new lead elephant, Balarama, to see if he can live up to his predecessor. Although there is quite a bit of text in the book, readers will be captivated by the description and the elephant facts that are part of the back matter as well as being embedded in the text. So well described is this slice of life that I don't feel as though I need to travel to the festival in order to experience it.

Eyesinthestars says

Beautifully illustrated book. The illustrations, especially of the elephants themselves, are simply breathtaking. Perfect for spreading Indian culture and teaching children about the elephants who live there! It's a book I hope to keep for a long time.
