

Tonga: The African Elephant Story

Debbie Buttar

GMEC Publishing (2008)

ISBN 9780979430206

Reviewed by Cayden (age 4 ½) and Max (age 2 ½) Aures and Mom for Reader Views (4/09)

“Tonga: The African Elephant Story” is about a group of three elephants - Tonga, Zahara and Kora - who set out on a journey “to explore the open plains of Africa.” On their walk they see a horse, a red wolf, and a white-tailed-deer, among other animals. These do not seem to be animals native to Africa! Where are the hyenas, zebras, and lions?

Cayden: “I liked when they went on their adventure to find the animals but couldn’t find any of the ones that they were looking for. My favorite picture in the book was the one where they saw the bear catching a fish in the pond. It was fun to march around like elephants saying, “Ba-boom, boom, boom! It was really cool when we went on the computer and saw the elephant painting with his trunk!”

Max: “I liked being an elephant like in the book. We stomped our feet and marched! I liked seeing animals.”

Parent’s comments:

“Tonga: The African Elephant Story” is a cute story that my children truly enjoyed. As they stated, they loved to pretend they were the elephants searching for the animals and marched around the house saying “Ba-boom, boom, boom” like in the book. On the back cover it is written, “The details of this story were inspired by several non-profit sanctuaries that have provided home and protection to elephants rescued from zoos and circuses.” I thought it was very unique to see a children’s book told from this point of view.

We also enjoyed visiting the book’s corresponding website and learning different facts about elephants. The most fascinating feature on the website though was the link to rescued elephants painting self-portraits! Reading “Tonga: The African Elephant Story” was a very enjoyable and educational experience for my children and we look forward to future books from Debbie Buttar!