

THIS IS OUR BABY, BORN TODAY

About the book:

A baby is born and the world rejoices!

With a loving mama, a trumpeting herd, curious cousins, and even some dancing peacocks heralding this little one's arrival, it is apparent that the joy and wonder a new baby brings is shared by all!

Varsha Bajaj's lilting prose and Eliza Wheeler's enchanting scenes of a wideeyed baby elephant and its smitten family celebrate the importance of family and community in every child's life. Set in the lush wilds of India, this is an endearing, beautifully illustrated tribute to little ones getting their first warm welcome to the world.

Age Range: 3 - 5

Grade Level: Grades PK-K

Publisher: Nancy Paulsen

Books

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About the Author - Varsha Bajaj:

Varsha Bajaj (www.varshabajaj.com) grew up in a rambling house in Mumbai, India, surrounded by coconut, guava and betel nut trees. When she came to the United States to obtain her master's degree, her adjustment to the country was aided by her awareness of the culture through books. She has written a number of picture books, as well as the middle-grade novel *ABBY SPENCER GOES TO BOLLYWOOD*, which was shortlisted for the Cybils Award. Her work has been included on the Spirit of Texas Reading Program and was awarded the 2020 Literary Excellence award from the Houston Public Library Foundation. Varsha lives in Houston, Texas.



About the Illustrator - Eliza Wheeler:

Eliza Wheeler is an illustrator/author who grew up in northern Wisconsin in a family of artists and teachers. Her picture book, *MISS MAPLE'S SEEDS* (Penguin), debuted on the New York Times Best Seller list, and her picture book with Pat Zietlow Miller, *WHEREVER YOU GO* (Little Brown), received a Crystal Kite Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Other books with her illustrations include *JOHN RONALD'S DRAGONS: THE STORY OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN* by Caroline McAlister (MacMillan), *TELL ME A TATTOO STORY* by Alison McGhee (Chronicle), *THE LEFT-HANDED FATE* by Kate Milford (MacMillan), and Holly Black's Newbery Honor winning *DOLL BONES* (Simon & Schuster). Eliza received the SCBWI National Grand Prize Award for best portfolio in 2011. She currently lives with her husband in Los Angeles, California. Visit her online at www.wheelerstudio.com.



Pre-Reading Discussion:

- Study the illustration on the cover of the book. Identify the plants and animals featured there.
- Describe the elephants' expressions. How do they feel about each other? How do you know?
- The title of the book is *THIS IS OUR BABY, BORN TODAY*. If the small elephant is the baby, how is the big elephant related to the little one? How do you know?
- Illustrations tell stories with pictures. What is the story this illustration is telling?
- Predict what this story is going to be about.

Post-Reading Discussion:

***This is the Mama,
loving and proud,
who birthed the Baby
born today.***

- Study the spread featuring the mother elephant and her baby. Describe the action taking place in this illustration.
 - Explain how the mother elephant feels about her baby. How do you know?
 - Identify ways that the baby elephant depends on its mother for survival. Where will she find food to feed her baby? Where will she find water and shelter? How do you know?
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***This is the Earth,
Fertile and firm,
that supports the Baby
born today***

- The baby elephant's home is the Earth. The forest or jungle that he lives in is called a habitat. The baby elephant and family find all that the food and shelter that they need in their habitat. List things that the baby elephant might need to survive.
 - The elephants in this story are known as Asian elephants. Asian elephants are the largest land mammals in the world! These elephants spend the better part of the day feeding on grasses, tree bark, roots, leaves and small stems. Consider how many trees and grasses are necessary to keep baby elephant's family alive.
 - Asian elephants must live near a fresh source of water. Predict how the elephants' s habitat provides water for the elephant family.
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***This is the Baby,
wrinkled and gray,
who warms the hearts
of the world today.***

- Turn to the last spread in the book. Describe the action taking place in the scene.
 - What is the mother elephant doing?
 - Identify the baby elephant's family members. How do they feel about the baby elephant? How do you know?
 - All the animals surrounding the baby elephant form a what is a called a community. A community is formed by a group of individuals who live together and care for one another. Discuss ways this community will help baby elephant to grow up strong.
 - Examine the baby elephant's habitat. Explain how the Earth provides for the baby elephant's survival.
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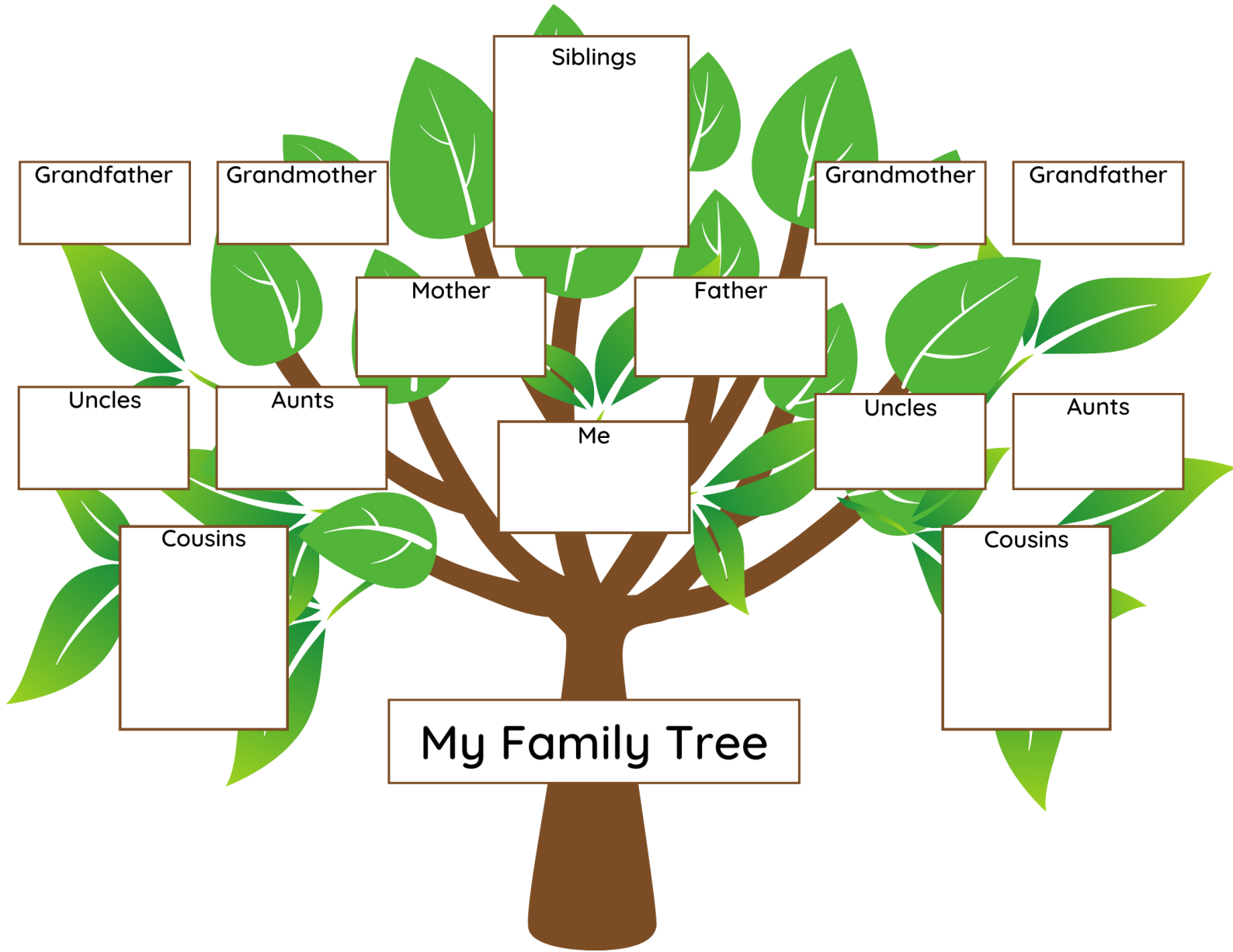
Writing Activity:

The family of Asian elephants featured **THIS IS OUR BABY, BORN TODAY** live in the jungles and forests of India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and other countries in Southeast Asia where their habitats provide all that they need to survive. How about you? Where do you live? What is your home like? Who do you live with? Who cares for you? Write and illustrate a story about your home and your family. Share your work with the class.

Create Your Family Tree:

Like the baby elephant in the story, you have an extended family, too. Use the Family Tree graphic on the following page to record the names of the members of your family tree. As an extended activity, create a poster featuring pictures of your family members to share with the class.

Activity: My Family Tree



Guide created by
Debbie Gonzales, MFA

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

Reading: CCRA-R.1, R.2, R.10

Language: CCRA-L.1, L.6

Writing: CCRA-W.2, W.4

Speaking & Listening: CCRA.SL.1, SL.4, SL.6

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS:

K-LS1-1: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: Animals, Plants & Their Environment

