



Don't Judge Too Soon (1) The Blind Men and the Elephant

LEVEL	Elementary to Intermediate
AIMS (Aspect of Pestalozzi)	To illustrate Pestalozzi's beliefs that we should not make judgements until we know all sides of an argument and that we should respect others
FURTHER AIMS	To practise use of similes
MATERIALS NEEDED	A large outline drawing of an elephant

The teacher puts a large outline drawing of an elephant on the wall and, pointing to a certain part of its body, asks the students what it is and what it is like. For example: The side of the elephant's body is like a wall. The elephant's ear is like a fan. The elephant's trunk is like a snake. The elephant's tusk is like a spear. The elephant's tail is like a rope. The elephant's leg is like a tree trunk.

The students copy the outline elephant in pencil and add, in colour, pictures of the similes used, for example by making the elephant's tusk like a spear.

The teacher explains that a fable is a short story, typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral, and that this fable originated in India and is about six blind men who are asked to touch different parts of the elephant. After touching it, they each think the elephant is different things. They argue over what the elephant is like.

The teacher asks the students what point they think the fable is supposed to make. For example: All the blind men are both right and wrong. The truth is many sided. It is important not to make judgements until you know everything about something. It is important to be open to the opinions of others and to be willing to see things from all sides. The teacher asks students if they know of similar fables and mentions Gandhi (the major political and spiritual leader of the Indian Independence Movement), explaining that he used this elephant fable to illustrate the point that all religions reveal some truths, that no-one can understand the whole truth, that different religions should share each other's experiences and that we should respect all religions if we want to live peacefully. The teacher points out that Gandhi and Pestalozzi had much in common, including their non-judgemental, peaceful search for the truth. *(NB: Detail given depends on the age, ability and knowledge of the students.)*

Pestalozzi believed that each of us should learn to judge for ourselves and not be led by others. We should not talk about things we do not properly know about and we should only make judgements when we know all sides of an argument. In this way we can learn to recognise the truth and true liberty and true democracy can be achieved. He was respectful of other religions and of the opinions of others.