

## Discussion and Activity Guide

# *Orphan Eleven*

by Gennifer Choldenko

### PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION (FROM THE BOOK JACKET)

An engaging adventure from a Newbery Honor-winning storyteller for readers who love the circus, and anyone who has dreamed of finding the perfect home. Four orphans have escaped from the Home for Friendless Children. One is Lucy, who used to talk and sing. No one knows why she doesn't speak anymore; silence is her protection.

The orphans find work and new friends at a traveling circus. Lucy loves caring for the elephants, but she must be able to speak to them, and to warn others of danger. If Lucy doesn't find her voice, she'll be left behind when the circus goes on the rails. Meanwhile, people are searching for Lucy, and her puzzling past is about to catch up with her ... full of marvels and surprises.

### ABOUT GENNIFER CHOLDENKO

Gennifer Choldenko has published sixteen books for children that have earned many awards, including the CLA Focal Award for *Chasing Secrets*. She has also received the Newbery Honor, the California Young Readers Medal, and The Garden State and Keystone State Children's Choice Award for the New York Times bestselling *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. Her historical fiction series, *Tales from Alcatraz*, has sold more than 2 million copies. Gennifer's books have been translated into thirteen languages. She says that her mentor is her editor, the astute and gracious Wendy Lamb.

Gennifer loves reading as much now as she did when she was a kid. As a child she looked forward to fieldtrips to Pickwick Books in Hollywood (she grew up in Los Angeles and now lives in San Francisco), being read to by her older sister, the day the Scholastic book order came to school, the smell of the pages of new books, and the antique volumes in her father's library.

Some of her favorite books are: *Holes* by Louis Sachar, *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis, *One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams Garcia, *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness, *El Deafo* by Cece Bell, and *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani.



## ADDITIONAL BOOKS BY GENNIFER CHOLDENKO

*Moonstruck: The True Story of How the Cow Jumped over the Moon* (1997) – Picture Book  
*Notes from a Liar and Her Dog* (2001) - Novel  
*Al Capone Does My Shirts: A Tale from Alcatraz* (2004) - Novel  
*How to Make Friends with a Giant* (2006) – Picture Book  
*If a Tree Falls at Lunch Period* (2007) - Novel  
*Louder, Lili* (2007) – Picture Book  
*Al Capone Shines My Shoes: A Tale from Alcatraz* (2009) - Novel  
*A Giant Crush* (2011) – Picture Book  
*Guys Read: The Snake Mafia* (2011) – Short Story  
*No Passengers Beyond This Point* (2011) - Novel  
*Al Capone Does My Homework: A Tale from Alcatraz* (2013) - Novel  
*Chasing Secrets: A Deadly Surprise in a City of Lies* (2015) - Novel  
*Putting the Monkeys to Bed* (2015) – Picture Book  
*Dad and the Dinosaur* (2017) – Picture Book  
*Al Capone Throws Me a Curve: A Tale from Alcatraz* (2018) - Novel  
*One-Third Nerd* (2019) – Novel  
*Orphan Eleven* (2020) – Novel



Explore [Gennifer Choldenko's website](#), or follow her on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter \(@choldenko\)](#) for more information about this book, her other works, and Choldenko herself.

**A NOTE TO TEACHERS:** The following questions and activities support the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

## BEFORE YOU READ

1. You may have heard the expression, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” The truth is, a **book’s cover** (front and back), end papers, title page, dedication, contents, etc. can actually tell you a lot about what is inside that book before you even begin reading. Examine the cover of *Orphan Eleven*. Based on the graphics, title, book summary, author information, title page, dedication, parts of the book and chapter titles, and quotes from others who have read the book, what do you think *Orphan Eleven* will be about? What do you already know before you begin reading? What do you want to find out?
2. The title of the book is *Orphan Eleven*. Define the word “**orphan**.” As you read, look for clues as to why the book is named *Orphan Eleven*.
3. Much of the story takes place in fictitious towns called **Riverport** and **Karaboo**. Lucy is from **Chicago**, and for most of the book she is trying to get back home. Locate Iowa and Chicago, Illinois, on a map.
4. The **circus** is a central setting for *Orphan Eleven*. Have you ever been to a circus, read about the circus, or seen a circus in a movie or on television? Jot down and discuss some of your general impressions of what a circus is – what it includes, how it operates, as well as its sights and sounds and smells and tastes.
5. The story takes place in **1939**. What do you know about America in 1939? Check out [this short video and article](#) about what was happening in America in the 1930’s.
6. *Orphan Eleven* is a work of **fiction**, specifically **historical fiction**. Define and discuss the difference between fiction and **nonfiction**. Define and discuss historical fiction.
7. Historical fiction requires that the author do meticulous **research** in order to create an authentic time and place. She or he might use **primary** and/or **secondary resources** to complete this research. What is the difference between a primary and secondary resource?
8. At the end of this guide you will find a list of **vocabulary** words found in *Orphan Eleven*. Circle the words with which you are already familiar.

## AS YOU READ – THINK, DISCUSS, DO

1. As you read, pay attention to the **chapter titles** which include the chapter number, the dates, and the chapter name. See if you can figure out why the author chose to name each chapter as she did. The story takes place over how many days?
2. What were your impressions when you read the **first lines of the novel**: “Most kids who ran away got caught. Or they came back on their own sorry feet. Nobody had anywhere to run to or they wouldn’t be in the Home for Friendless Children in the first place.” (p. 3)

Later, after Lucy and her friends run away, she, “...didn’t think Matrons Mackinac and Grundy would waste more time looking for them. No one cared about orphans. That was why they were orphans.” (p.



15) Talk about this statement. How do you think Lucy came to this conclusion? Do you think that it is true? Why or why not?

3. Lucy carries several items of importance with her at all times, her **treasures**. Throughout the novel she acquires a few more precious items that she carries with her. Where did she get each of these items? Why are they important to her? What does each item symbolize?

- ❖ folded paper with a list of the week's vocabulary words
- ❖ blue button
- ❖ baby tooth
- ❖ pencil stub
- ❖ three pachyderm tail hairs in a silk purse
- ❖ paper
- ❖ route card

Do you have a place where you keep special treasures – a box, a scrapbook, your pocket? Discuss one of the items that you keep there and why it is special to you – a feather, a special note or letter, a book, a photo. Do you keep these items hidden, as Lucy does? Why or why not?

4. Lucy Simone Suavé is the **protagonist**, or main character, of the story. Describe her physical appearance, her actions, her qualities, and what we learn about her past. How do you feel about her? What makes her unique from others?
5. An **antagonist** in a story is a person or force who opposes the protagonist, the “bad guy,” so to speak. Who and what are the antagonistic forces in this story? What makes them antagonists? How do they impact the protagonist of the story, Lucy, and her fellow runaways?
6. Because the story takes place in **1939**, Gennifer Choldenko includes authentic words, phrases, and details of the time and place. Look up words like:
- |                                     |                         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ❖ oxfords (p. 5)                    | ❖ orphan swear (p. 152) |
| ❖ dame (p. 17)                      | ❖ cummerbund (p. 165)   |
| ❖ orphan borrow/pinched (p. 19, 20) | ❖ candelabra (p. 168)   |
| ❖ chassis (p. 59)                   | ❖ gruel (p. 233)        |
| ❖ dungarees (p. 75)                 | ❖ camphor (p. 245)      |
| ❖ pinafore (p. 120)                 | ❖ vestibule (p. 277)    |
| ❖ pomade (p. 122)                   |                         |

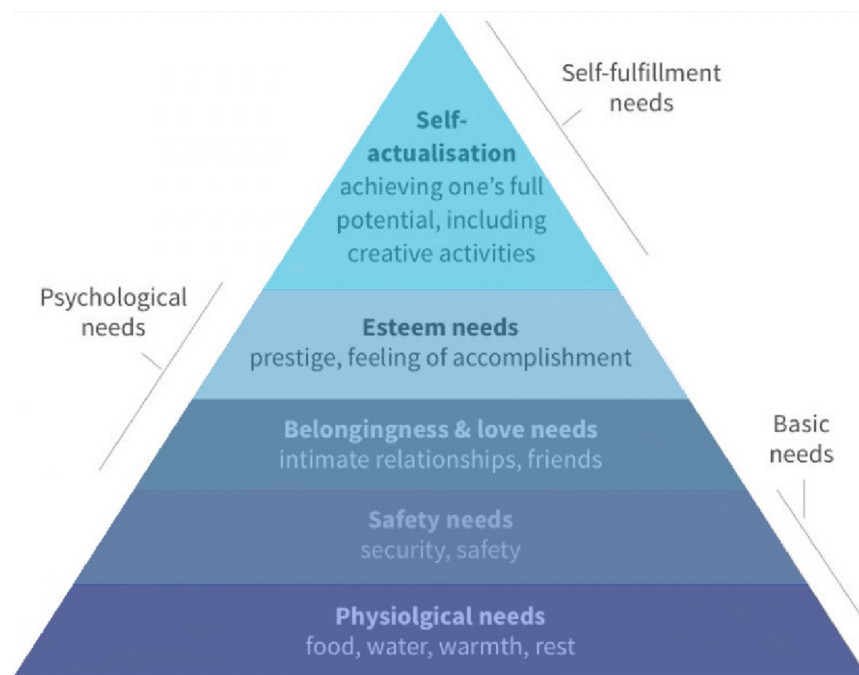


Dungarees. Russell Lee, Migrant boys in back of auto, Muskogee County, Oklahoma, June 1939. Credits: Russell Lee; The Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division



Oxfords (photo: 123rf.com)

7. **Nico, Eugene, and Doris** all run away from the orphanage with **Lucy**. Describe each of them. Discuss their backgrounds. What brought them to the orphanage? What makes them want to run away? What strengths and weaknesses do each of them bring to the group? How do their respective strengths and weaknesses affect their interactions with each other?
8. Discuss the ways in which the characters in the story (including the animals) **communicate** with one another – spoken words, tone of voice, written notes, written letters, sounds, movement, etc. Because Lucy does not speak, she has learned to observe others carefully and has become really good at reading the **nonverbal communication** (facial expression, gestures, tone of voice, posture, appearance, and spatial distance between individuals) of others. Give examples where Lucy is able to use this skill to her advantage. Do an experiment where you, for a set amount of time (a day, an hour) try communicating completely without words. Record your observations. How did you communicate? How effective was your communication? How did you feel? Interview those with whom you were trying to communicate about their observations. Discuss your findings with the group.
9. **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** tells us that humans have basic needs (food, safety) that must be met before more higher-level needs can be met (being truly happy). (illustration: Wikimedia Commons)



In the story we find out that Eugene is sent away from home because he shared his food with a neighbor. Why might this be a reason to send your child to an orphanage, as many families did at this time? What basic needs do the children in the story have that are not being met? How does this impact them? How are their basic needs eventually met? How do things change for them once their basic needs are met?

10. Dilly says in one of her letters,

“I would rather sew dresses than read, because when I’m done sewing I have a new dress and when I’m done reading I have stories in my head that make me wonder about the world. It’s okay to wonder, but not when you have nobody to talk to about the wondering.” (p. 94)

Talk about what she means in this statement. Describe the role that **sewing** plays in Dilly’s life? How did she learn to sew? How does this skill literally save both her and Lucy?



(photo: Wikimedia Commons)

11. When the group finally arrives at the diner, there are many clues that something is not right. When an author gives clues and hints about what might happen later in the story, it is called **foreshadowing**. Give some examples of foreshadowing found in Chapter 5 that tell the reader that things are not going to work out with Frank and Alice the way that Nico and the other children had hoped. Look for more examples of foreshadowing throughout *Orphan Eleven*.

12. Lucy has faced many challenges in her life. However, she has found ways to cope with these challenges. For instance, “In school when there was a problem she couldn’t solve, she would write down all her possible choices. It was comforting to see things on paper, easier to decide what to do.” (p. 47) We call this a **coping strategy**. Sometimes individuals choose positive ways to cope with challenges. At other times individuals choose less than helpful, even harmful, coping strategies. Can you give examples of each? Discuss other ways that Lucy and the characters in *Orphan Eleven* cope with difficulties. What are some strategies that you use to solve problems?

13. Some of the **adults** in the novel can be considered antagonists, like Matron Mackinac. However, there are many others who go out of their way to help Lucy, Nico, Eugene, and Doris. Bernadette, for example, picks them up off the side of the road, gives them food and lodging, drives them to Chicago, and introduces them to Jabo. We learn that,

“It had been a long time since Lucy had known a nice adult. Miss Ellie, the teacher, had been nice. All the girls cried when Miss Ellie left. Bernadette had been nice, but she was so young. The meanness of adulthood hadn’t taken over yet.” (p. 50)

Discuss this statement. Name and talk about other adults in the story who are positive influences in the lives of these children. In what ways do they show that they believe in Lucy, Nico, Eugene, and Doris?

14. In Part Two, Chapter 8, we are introduced to the **circus** as it would have been in 1939. This chapter is called, “Encyclopedia of the Incredible.” What do you think this means? Why do you think the author gave the chapter this name? Describe the incredible sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings that the children experience when they first arrive.

15. One of the things that Gennifer Choldenko does to lend an authentic feel to Saachi's Circus Spectacular is to use **words and phrases** that would have been used in 1939 by those who worked in the circus such as:

- ❖ apprenticeship/apprentice – p. 60, 102, 148, 273, etc.
- ❖ Winter Quarters – p. 60
- ❖ rail show – p. 60
- ❖ stand – p. 60
- ❖ roustabouts – p. 98
- ❖ boil up – p. 103
- ❖ aerialist – p. 123
- ❖ red-lighted – p. 147, 148
- ❖ route card – 148, 179, etc.
- ❖ menagerie – p. 155, 272, etc.

Keep a list of these terms and any others that you find as you read, along with their definitions. (Note that there is a **glossary** of circus terms at the back of the book where many of these terms are defined.)

16. Jabo gives each of the children a gift. This item symbolizes where they might fit into Saachi's Circus Spectacular and the "...**three mistakes** - errors in judgment, if you will..." (p. 60) that they will be allowed as they try to earn an apprenticeship with the circus. What is each child given? What do you think his or her gift symbolizes? Do the gifts turn out to be appropriate for them? Why or why not? Discuss the mistakes that each of the children make along the way and what the consequences of those mistakes are? Do you think that we deserve second chances when we make mistakes? Do the children all earn apprenticeships that are appropriate for them? Explain.

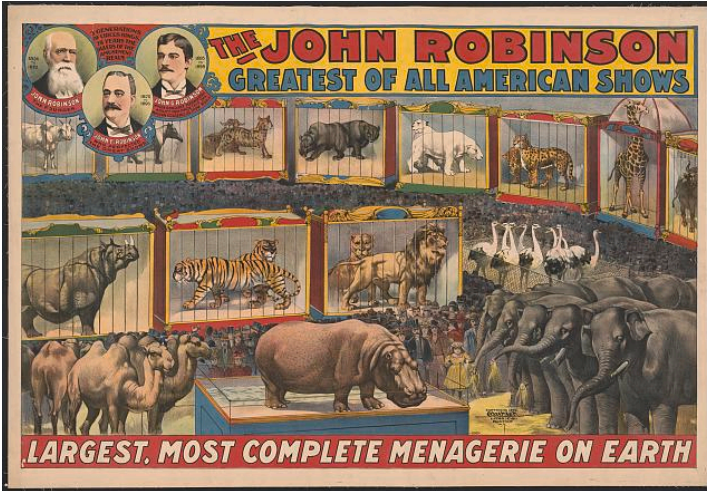
17. What does "**OOFO**" stand for? What is their mission? What does this mission tell you about the people who are a part of the circus and this organization?

18. Describe the character of **Jabo** – the physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of who he is. For instance, one thing you might mention is that he uses lots of big, sophisticated words like "gastronomical" (p. 79) and "compatriots" (p. 80). Is he a protagonist or an antagonist? What makes him special and unique from the other individuals that Lucy, Nico, Eugene, and Doris meet while working in and around the circus? In what ways is he like the others?

19. Talk about the **friendship** that develops between Lucy, Nico, Eugene, and Doris. One of the themes of the story is that friends have "...to have each other's backs" (p. 97) and that it's "...all of us or none of us." (p. 97) What do these statements mean? Do these characters have each other's backs or not? Give examples to support your answers. How does their friendship grow and change as the story progresses? Do you think that they will remain friends after the story?

20. The **elephants**, Jenny and Baby, are two important characters in the story. Describe them and their relationship with Lucy. What qualities do you think Lucy possesses that allow her to develop such a special relationship with the elephants?

21. **Circus posters and banners** were an important tool that circuses of the time used to advertise their shows. Circus art from this period is now considered very desirable. There are many collectors of these vintage posters and banners, and many can be found in museums. As you read, make a list of all of the different circus acts that are mentioned in *Orphan Eleven*, such as the Zebra Lady, Chicken Man, the strong woman, unicyclists, and tightrope walkers. Design and create your own circus poster or banner for Saachi's Circus Spectacular featuring one or more of these acts. Examples of circus posters and banners from the era can be found on the [Library of Congress](#) website.



22. The term “**John Robinson**” is very significant to all of those who work in Saachi's Circus Spectacular. What does it mean and why is it so important? How does it impact Lucy's ability to earn an apprenticeship as a bull girl?
23. On page 107, Nevada warns Lucy to stay away from **Diavolo**, an example of **foreshadowing**. Lucy learns this the hard way when he takes her on as an apprentice. Who is Diavolo? Why does he choose Lucy to be his apprentice? What does he expect from her? Discuss what happens. When she runs away from him, she thinks, “I am no one's target girl.” (p. 127) Explain what this means, both literally and figuratively. What does it tell us about Lucy?
24. What does Grace teach Lucy about **elephants** and how to handle them? What kind of care do they require? Check out Chapter Sixteen, especially. At one point, Grace's notes say, “Elephants respond to kindness. You will never get them to do their best work, unless they trust you.” (p. 130) Apply this statement to not only Jenny and Baby, but to Lucy and the other orphans, to yourself, and to people in general. Give an example of how another person's kindness led to you doing your best work.
25. When fictional stories are told through letters, they are called **epistolary novels**. Parts of *Orphan Eleven* are told through the letters that Dilly writes to Lucy and others. What do we learn about Dilly from her letters?

Write an **informal letter** to someone whom you love and have good memories with. Be sure to include the five parts of an informal letter: date, salutation/greeting, body, closing, and signature. Check out this video from [mysimpleshow.com](#) for information about how to write a letter. Mail that letter. Discuss why you chose to write to this person. Share any responses that you might get back from the intended receiver.



26. Consider the **roles of the females and males** in the circus of 1939. For instance, in Chapter Eighteen Pink Cheeks tries to tell Grace how to handle the elephants. When she dismisses him, he says, “‘I’m excused?...Who thought it was a good idea to put a lady in charge?’” (p. 155) Later Frank tells Nico, “‘I taught you well...You’ve got yourself a dame and everything. But don’t forget what I told you about dames: there’s always another one in the next town. Say goodbye to her, Nico.” (p. 196) There are several statements made by characters in the story that might be considered **sexist** today. In addition, in Chapter Nineteen Lucy is surprised to find that some of the women who work in the circus wear pants. Come up with more examples of how **gender** impacts the roles of those who work for the circus in 1939. How might the circus look different today in this regard?

27. Once Lucy earns her apprenticeship with Grace and the elephants, Grace gives her three **rules** (p. 187):

- ❖ “‘One: Animals first. Before you eat, the animals eat...Your job is to make sure my animals are healthy and happy.’”
- ❖ “‘Second: Go the extra mile.’”
- ❖ “‘Third: Don’t lie, don’t cheat, don’t steal, don’t sneak. I need to be able to trust you.’”

Do you agree that these rules are important? Why or why not? How can we apply these rules to life in general? How might they benefit us?

28. A “**con man**” is defined in the *Cambridge Dictionary* as, “a person who uses tricks to cheat people, especially to get their money or possessions.” Eventually, we figure out that Frank is not the good guy that Nico says he is. Describe Frank and the many ways that he cons others. In the end, how does Nico get revenge by turning the tables and conning Frank? Can any of the other characters in the novel be considered cons? Explain.

29. From the start, Lucy is in search of her **sister, Dilly**, whom she first mentions on page 5. What do we know about Dilly? What do we learn about the relationship between the two sisters as the story progresses? How did they get separated? Discuss all of the missed communications between the two of them and the way in which this adds to the tension and suspense in the story. How does this impact the moment when the two of them finally find one another? What do we learn about the bond between sisters from this story?

Discuss this statement: “Their bond was blood and bone and breath and something deeper than that. Sisters can be separated, but they can’t be torn apart.” (p. 265) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Give an example from your own life that either supports or negates this statement.

30. A **theme** is defined at [study.com](http://study.com) in this way:

“The theme in a story is its underlying message, or 'big idea.' In other words, what critical belief about life is the author trying to convey in the writing of a novel, play, short story or poem? This belief, or idea, transcends cultural barriers. It is usually universal in nature. When a theme is universal, it touches on the human experience, regardless of race or language. It is what the story means. Often, a piece of writing will have more than one theme.”

One of the most significant themes found in *Orphan Eleven* is the idea of **finding one’s voice**, both figuratively and literally. As you read, trace and discuss Lucy’s journey to find her voice. Why does she not speak? What finally inspires her to speak?

What Lucy experiences is based on an actual study called “The Fluency Study.” It was conducted at the University of Iowa under the direction of a professor named Wendell Johnson. Read more about this study, and Gennifer Choldenko’s use of it in *Orphan Eleven*, on pages 295 – 302. How do you feel about the use of orphaned children to conduct this experiment?

31. The **climax** of a story is the high point, the moment of greatest intensity and impact. It is often a turning point for the protagonist of the story. At this point everything changes. The climax in this story might be when Miss Mackinac and Miss Grundy find Lucy and eventually take her to the University where she discovers a file folder marked “ORPHAN ELEVEN, GROUP B, FLUENCY STUDY.” What does she find in the folder? How does Lucy feel about this discovery? How did you feel at this moment as you read the story? How does this moment change everything for Lucy?
32. Discuss the **metaphor of the fence** as it is used throughout the story. On page 217, after her discovery of the ORPHAN ELEVEN file, Lucy thinks, “Soon, the wrought-iron fence and the sad gray cottages of the orphanage came into view. How familiar and how different they looked. The fence was tall, but it was just a fence. It made her ashamed of the power she’d let it have over her. She wouldn’t let their fence stop her again.” Discuss this statement. What have been the literal and figurative fences in Lucy’s life? How does she eventually break free of the fences that have surrounded her?
33. Talk about the end of the story. Where do each of the central characters end up: Lucy, Dilly, Nico, Eugene, Doris, Jabo, Frank, Miss Mackinac, etc.? Did you find the ending of the story satisfying and believable? Why or why not?

#### AFTER YOU READ

1. Again, consider the **cover** and **title** of the book. Do you think it prepares readers well for what they are about to read? Why or why not? If you were the author and/or cover designer, would you have done things the same or differently?
2. Read the “**Author’s Note**” found on pages 291 - 302 and answer the following questions:
  - ❖ Gennifer Choldenko discusses the **research** that she did before writing this novel. Find an example of both a **primary** and a **secondary resource** that she used to complete her research. What effect does Choldenko’s research have on *Orphan Eleven*?
  - ❖ Discuss this statement, found on page 292:

“Many people who did not fit into the narrow constraints of 1939 America became a part of the circus family. Women certainly had more agency in the circus than they did in ordinary life.”

Give examples of characters from *Orphan Eleven* who joined the circus because they **did not fit in** anywhere else. In what ways did the circus provide them with a home and opportunities that they would not otherwise have had?
  - ❖ On pages 293 - 5 Choldenko tells us that the fictional **Home for Friendless Children** is based on an actual home for orphans, the **Iowa Soldiers’ Orphans’ Home** (later the Annie Wittenmeyer Home), which was open from 1876 to 1975. In what ways are the fictional orphanage and the actual orphanage the same, and in what ways are they different? Again, how does Choldenko’s research impact the novel?

3. Go back to the general impressions that you had of the **circus** prior to reading the book. How did those impressions match up with what you read in this novel? What new things did you learn?

### EXPLORE FURTHER

1. The **circus** was first developed in the 1760's by a British horse trainer named Philip Astley. Under Astley's direction the first circus performance, similar to what we now know, took place in Paris in 1782. It wasn't until the early 1800's that there were circuses in America.

If you are interested in finding out more about the history of the circus, and the circus in general, take a look at:

- ❖ "Circus Facts for Kids" at [Kiddle](#)
- ❖ "Short History of the Circus" at [Circopedia](#)



Painting: *Escenas del circo*, Arturo Michelena, in the public domain

2. Did you know that August 12<sup>th</sup> is World Elephant Day? Explore the modern-day state of **elephants** throughout the world.
  - ❖ Check out this live cam called "[African Animals - Watering Hole](#)" from Laikipia County, Kenya.
  - ❖ Find out interesting facts about both African and Asian elephants at [National Geographic](#), the [San Diego Zoo](#) and [Ele Aid](#). (Remember that elephants are considered **mammals**.)

Then look deeper into current trends in the use of animals, elephants in particular, in circuses. For instance, in a feature done by CBS News on elephants, it was reported that, “Between the years of 1994 and 2005, at least 31 elephants died prematurely while employed by a circus ... In response to reports of animal cruelty and premature elephant deaths involved in the practice, 16 countries have now banned the use of wild animals in circuses ... Many localities in Canada and numerous counties in the U.S. have also adopted bans...” However, many circuses still use elephants in their performances. How do you feel about the use of animals, especially the use of elephants, in circuses? Explain.

3. Check out the additional resources listed in Gennifer Choldenko’s “Author’s Note,” resources that she consulted when doing her research for the book, such as:

- ❖ [savetheelephants.org](http://savetheelephants.org)
- ❖ the [Circus Historical Society in Baraboo, Wisconsin](#)
- ❖ the [Little People of America](#)
- ❖ the PBS special, “[The Circus](#)”
- ❖ the [Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center](#) in Baraboo, Wisconsin



## ORPHAN ELEVEN

### LITERARY DEVICES ACTIVITY

Authors make use of different techniques to produce different effects in their writing. These devices help the reader to see, and hear, and smell, and taste, and feel what is happening in the story. Some examples of literary devices include:

**SIMILE** – a comparison of two things that are not alike, using the words “like” or “as” – “Mackinac had piercing eyes, lips the color of dead fish, and a heart like a lump of coal - black and dusty and small.” (p. 4)

**METAPHOR** – an implied comparison of two unlike things that does not use the words “like” or “as” – a metaphor often uses the words “is” or “was” – “Soon the old blue car was no bigger than a thimble, and then it disappeared entirely.” (p. 14)

**PERSONIFICATION** – giving human qualities to something that is not human – “The wood groaned under Lucy’s feet as she climbed the stairs.” (p. 27)

**ALLITERATION** – repetition of the same sounds at the beginning of words that are close together in a sentence – “Only the elephant car door was open, the steep steel ramp waiting.” (p.186)

**ONOMATOPOEIA** – a word that sounds like the thing that it describes – “The motor caught with a *ch-tick-ch-tick-ch-tick*. Then began to whirl.” (p. 123)

**SENSORY LANGUAGE** – using strong language to describe how something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels – “Lucy listened to a horse whinnying in the distance, the scratch of Nico shaving the pencil, and the clicks and ticks of the clocks.” (p. 83)

Indicate whether each example from *Orphan Eleven* below is an example of a simile, a metaphor, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and/or sensory language. Tell how you came to this conclusion. In the case of similes, metaphors, and personification, tell what is being compared and how the two things are alike. (Note that some of these quotes contain more than one of these literary devices.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. “It had felt strange not to have Dilly with them, like a stool with just two legs.” (p. 16-7)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. “They had just finished eating when they heard the *ding-ding-ding* of a railway crossing and the hiss of train breaks.” (p. 191)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. “The words came into Lucy’s brain in a rush... ‘I speak for myself,’ stayed stuck behind the cage of her teeth.” (p. 25)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. “Bernadette pulled a loaf of bread out of a basket and began sawing.” (p. 28)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. “Lucy’s arms dropped to her sides, stiff as broom handles.” (p. 158)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. “*Thrunk*, the stairs came down.” (p. 72)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. “He kicked over on his back, groaning happily, his gigantic rib cage in the air, his pie-size paws flapping, his big sloppy pink-and-black-speckled jowls hanging upside down.” (p. 5)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. "Lucy moved around the elephant until she could see her tail...At the bottom of the skinny gray stick of a tail was a brush of wiry hair." (p. 88)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. "Lucy went to work slathering greasy pomade on her head, but it was tough to tame the thick corkscrew strands." (p. 122)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "Grace's words filled Lucy's belly like hot chocolate on a cold day." (p. 183)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. "'But they are there waiting for the cloak of night.'" (p. 134)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. "She could hear the sharp bleep of a car horn, the tweeting of birds, the river burbling over the stones in the distance. And then a minute later *shugety-shug, shugety-shug*, the truck moved forward. She heard the whoosh of passing cars." (p. 247)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. "She moved closer and patted the elephants wrinkled chest. It felt like living leather." (p. 88)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. "'Laughter is popcorn for the soul.'" (p. 59)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. "When they were inside, the roustabouts stowed the ramp and shut the train car door *shunk-a-shunk-shunk*, leaving enough room for a human to slip in and out." (p. 187)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. "But inside the cottage was warm and cozy, with crocheted blankets on the chairs, pictures on the walls, and a teakettle whistling on the stove." (p. 223)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. "The motor turned over. *Urr, urr, urr, urr. Urr, urr, urr, urr.*" (p. 235)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. "She climbed onto her squeaky old cot and pulled up the blanket that smelled of other people's misery." (p. 233)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. "The brass section boomed in Lucy's ears. The spec was just beginning. White horses galloped with riders standing on their backs. Then came camels pulling a carriage, a man with snakes wrapped around his head, and ladies riding zebras. Somehow the staging area sorted itself into a spectacular parade of performers in the ring." (p. 166)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. "The question hung in the air like a bad smell." (p. 22)

Now, as you read, record at least one additional example of a simile, a metaphor, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and sensory language. Be sure to use quotation marks and include the page numbers that your examples are found on.

## **ORPHAN ELEVEN**

### **VOCABULARY ACTIVITY**

The main character in *Orphan Eleven*, Lucy, loves words, “Even when she understood the words, she liked to look them up. The definitions carved a clearer meaning in her head.” (p. 72) Lucy actually has a vocabulary list that she carries around with her.

As you read *Orphan Eleven*, you may find a word(s) that are unfamiliar to you. Here are some strategies for figuring out what a word means(s):

1. **PREPARE** – Before you read a book, it might help to find out where and when the story takes place, what the book is about, etc. Ask yourself what you already know about this time, this place, and these topics. Then do some research to find out more about the setting and topics. For instance, by examining the cover of *Orphan Eleven*, you might figure out that the book takes place in 1939 in Iowa, that the circus is an important part of the book, and that the main character lives in an orphanage. You could do some research on these topics before you begin reading. This information may help you figure out the meaning of the words that are unfamiliar to you.
2. **CONTEXT** – Look for clues in the words and sentences surrounding the word that you are unfamiliar with that might help you figure out what the word means. Check out these excellent YouTube videos on how to figure out the meaning of a word from its context:
  - a. [How to Use Context to Determine the Meaning of Words](#)
  - b. [Figuring out What a Word Means](#)
3. **WORD PARTS** – Divide the word into its parts, and then look for clues within these parts to help you figure out what the word might mean.
4. **MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF A WORD** – Ask yourself if the word has more than one meaning. If so, which meaning makes the most sense in this sentence?
5. **CLUES SURROUNDING THE WORD** – Are there other clues that might help you figure out what the word means, such as pictures or illustrations, charts and graphs, and/or titles of the chapters or sections of the book?
6. **DICTIONARY** – Look up the word in a dictionary. Here is [a terrific video](#) that gives you detailed instructions for using a dictionary and explains all of the wonderful things that can be found in a dictionary.

# VOCABULARY

As you read *Orphan Eleven*, look for the following words. Do you know what each of these words mean? If not, use the strategies above to determine the meaning of the words that you don't know. Please note that many of these words are used several times throughout the book.

(\***Teachers** – this is by no means an exhaustive list. There are MANY additional potential vocabulary words found in the pages of *Orphan Eleven*. The words below were chosen to demonstrate the strategies for figuring out what a word means listed above. Choose these, and additional words, as is appropriate for the students you work with.)

## **Chapter 1**

1. humiliated/humiliating – p. 4
2. mocked – p. 4
3. hovered – p. 4
4. squelching – p. 6

## **Chapter 2**

5. scrutinizing – p. 9

## **Chapter 3**

6. lulled – p. 17
7. rife – p. 20
8. riveted, riveting – p. 21
9. parched – p. 21

## **Chapter 4**

10. lingering, lingered – p. 33

## **Chapter 5**

11. sauntering – p. 39

## **Chapter 8**

12. cranium – p. 57
13. receding/receded – p. 58
14. gullible – p. 58
15. credulous – p. 58
16. coveted – p. 58
17. formulating – p. 59
18. cuisine – p. 60
19. parlance – p. 60
20. quest – p. 60
21. suffice – p. 61
22. groused – p. 62
23. aspirational – p. 63
24. tangentially – p. 63
25. commodity – p. 64
26. steadfast – p. 65

27. concisely – p. 66
28. characterization – p. 66
29. irony – p. 67
30. infraction – p. 67
31. pursue – p. 67
32. perpetrator – p. 67

## **Chapter 9**

33. notorious – p. 69
34. necessitates – p. 73
35. clandestine – p. 73
36. procure – p. 74
37. humble – p. 74
38. optimism – p. 76
39. winced – p. 77

## **Chapter 10**

40. gastronomical – p. 79
41. tour de force – p. 79
42. heretofore – p. 79
43. compatriots – p. 80
44. optimal – p. 80
45. culinary – p. 80
46. queries – p. 80
47. candidly – p. 80
48. substantial – p. 81
49. daunting – p. 81
50. incorporate – p. 81
51. acquiring – p. 81
52. perilously – p. 82
53. proximity – p. 82
54. persistent – p. 92

## **Chapter 12**

55. gloated – p. 96

## **Chapter 13**

56. temperamental – p. 107

## **Chapter 14**

57. unnerving – p. 113
58. inhibits – p. 115

## **Chapter 15**

59. barked – p. 119
60. vulnerable – p. 120

## **Chapter 16**

61. refined – p. 133
62. averted/averting – p. 133
63. prerogative – p. 135
64. maestra – p. 136
65. proficiency – p. 136
66. excruciating – p. 137

## **Chapter 17**

67. extenuating – p. 147

## **Chapter 18**

68. primitive – p. 148
69. prudent – p. 148
70. wistfully – p. 149
71. lumbered /lumbering – p. 153

## **Chapter 19**

72. colossal – p. 156
73. tethered – p. 161
74. insistently – p. 161

## **Chapter 20**

75. transfixed – p. 166
76. perimeter – p. 170



**Chapter 21**

- 77. plunder – p. 172
- 78. beckoned – p. 173
- 79. gibberish – p. 173

**Chapter 22**

- 80. stowed – p. 180

**Chapter 23**

- 81. abandon – p. 185

**Chapter 24**

- 82. sentimental – p. 196
- 83. lunacy – p. 200

**Chapter 25**

- 84. shenanigans – p. 204
- 85. prevailed – p. 205
- 86. prying – p. 207

**Chapter 26**

- 87. incinerator – p. 217

**Chapter 27**

- 88. receded - p. 224
- 89. maneuvered – p. 228

**Chapter 28**

- 90. brooked – p. 231

**Chapter 29**

- 91. mulling – p. 237

**Chapter 30**

- 92. riveting – p. 244
- 93. muffled – p. 245

**Chapter 33**

- 94. tsuris – p. 262
- 95. meager – p. 262

**Chapter 36**

- 96. scrutinized – p. 278
- 97. inhibits – p. 280
- 98. surge – p. 280
- 99. solemnly – p. 282
- 100. smitten – p. 283