

Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived Study Guide

Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived by Ralph Helfer

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Plot Summary

Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived is the tale of a boy and his elephant coming of age and experiencing more in their lifetimes than most people can only dream of. Though at time life is tragic, Bram Gunterstein and Modoc, his elephant triumph over every bit of adversity that comes their way, living happily into old age together.

Bram Gunterstein is born on a farm in Germany, the same day as an elephant calf, Modoc. The son of an elephant trainer, Bram grows up surrounded by the large animals, but shares a special bond with Modoc, one that his parents, Josef and Katrina encourage. An example of this is given when Bram falls seriously ill in the night and Modoc senses it, alerting Josef to the fact in time for Bram to be taken to the hospital and saved. Bram's youth is filled with loving moments and wonderful memories, growing up in the circus family. Sharing his life and Modoc's with the sideshow people, and encouraged by his parents, Bram flourishes, living a charmed life.

Bram meets his first love, Gertie, and the two share a special closeness, though Gertie knows that she will always have to share Bram's love with Modoc. The sale of the circus brings this home sooner than the young lovers can imagine, when Mo is sold to Mr. North and will be sent to America. Bram had promised his father on his death bed that he would always take care of Modoc, and he feels that he must go with the elephant.

Bram and Modoc's adventures begin at sea when a monsoon hits and the ship is destroyed. Lost at sea, Modoc still manages to find Bram and save him as well as many others. Rescue comes just in time and Bram and Modoc are taken to an Elephantarium run by the maharajah. There, Bram learns to lead an even more spiritual life, becoming one with nature and developing an even closer relationship with Modoc. The two live happily until word reaches Bram that Mr. North has discovered his whereabouts and is coming for them. Bram sadly leaves his friends and sets out across India to evade the circus owner.

More adventures follow, with Bram fending off thieves who wish to take Modoc and Mo killing the men that would have killed Bram. The two wind up in a remote village working in the teak forests and Bram meets the second love of his life, Sian. Though Sian's family is reluctant to have her marry Bram at first, they happily agree when they learn of his special relationship with the maharajah. Bram and Sian spend some happy years together until tragedy strikes once again.

Sian is killed when guerrillas invade the village and take the elephants in order to escape an approaching army. Bram is devastated at his loss and Modoc is injured in the process. Recovering in a nearby village, Bram is stunned when he discovers Mr. North is there waiting for him. North hates Bram, but knows that he will never get the great Modoc to perform without her friend. Bram and Modoc eventually wind up in America together after all, working for Mr. North.



In America, Bram and Modoc succeed in entertaining the people and make Mr. North very happy. Bram teaches Modoc the routine he has dreamed of and Modoc stuns the world by performing without a trainer. Bram and Gertie reunite and marry, working in the circus together, happy for many years. Life seems to have finally settled down for all, when on a fateful night, Modoc is attacked by a drunken man. The man blinds Modoc, who kills the man in self defense. Branded a killer and therefore useless to Mr. North, Modoc is sold by a deceitful Mr. North, separating the elephant and Bram for the first time.

Many years pass and Modoc is purchased by Ralph Helfer to perform in the movies. Ralph saves her from a horrible life, tied to a tree where stones are thrown at her by local children, a place where no one has touched her for years. Ralph takes Modoc back to his ranch and heals her with time and patience. Though Modoc has finally found a place to be safe, her life is still missing something. That something, Bram, arrives after years, having never given up his search for his best friend.

Bram and Modoc live the remainder of their lives working for Ralph, happy just to be together again. As they age, Bram tells Modoc that their time will come to cross over and be with their loved ones again. Bram tells Modoc not to go before him, as he does not want her to be alone on the other side. As always, Modoc listens, and passes away after Bram.

The two, together forever, unable to be kept apart no matter what life throws at them, prove that love is eternal and cannot be destroyed by others, no matter what the case.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary and Analysis

On a winter morning at the foot of Olymstroem Mountain, two babies are born. One is Bram Gunterstein, the only son of Josef and Katrina Gunterstein, and the other is Modoc, a baby elephant, born to Emma, the star elephant of the Wunderzircus, owned by Herr Gobel. The two have a special connection that will last a lifetime.

In chapter two, the life of the circus is revealed. Herr Gobel, the owner, greets Josef and congratulates him on the care of the new elephant and her mother. Josef does his best, teaching the other animal trainers to care for the animals almost as if they were people. This results in the animals and trainers having such a close bond that nothing seems able to sever it.

In chapter three, Curpo the dwarf cares for Emma, Modoc's mother. Katrina brings Bram down to see the elephants, introducing them early so the boy would not fear the massive beasts. Bram grows and spends many hours with Modoc and Emma, and the two babies grow together. Years pass and the two continue to bond.

In chapter four, Josef present Bram with a bull hook, one with the boy's initials carved in the handle, after all those in his family who have trained animals before him. Bram is pleased and listens carefully as his father reminds him that the bull hook is a guide, and never to be used as a weapon on an elephant. Bram then shares his thoughts and dreams with Modoc, the two communicating in the special way they share.

In chapter five, Bram meets Gertie, a young girl from a nearby farm. The two connect immediately as Bram introduces the two 'women' that will be such an important part of his life. Gertie seems to have an innate sense of the closeness that Bram and Modoc share and does not infringe upon it. The two make plans for a picnic, and as they say goodbye at the end of the day, Josef sees a look in Bram's eyes that tells him that Bram has found his first love.



Chapters 6-10

Chapters 6-10 Summary and Analysis

Bram and Gertie head out for a picnic with Modoc. The day is magical as Bram watches Gertie dance atop the great elephant's back. Bram thinks while Gertie sleeps close to him about his father's teachings and the wonders of nature. Bram believes that nature is a direct gift from God, one to be treasured always. Bram also realizes that he loves Gertie, she is his first love. Modoc shares in the joys of the day with the two young people, as much a piece of Bram as the heart that beats in his chest.

In chapter seven, the reader learns of Bram's extended family, the people of the sideshow. Curpo is the Littlest Man in Germany, but would much prefer to be known for his work with the elephants. Lilith is the Fat Lady, weighing over six hundred pounds. String is the Thin Man, and also the Tallest Man Alive, at almost eight feet tall. Schulz is the Seal Man, with hands growing out of his shoulders. Marigold, twenty-three inches long, has only a head and torso, with no limbs. Marigold is cared for by a woman named Moonspirit, carried around on a soft pillow with her hair spilling gently around her. Mesmera, a dancer with Slip, a python, rounded out the 'freaks' that traveled with the circus. Bram is thrilled when Marigold and Schultz decide to get married. Marigold tells Bram that she and Schultz have the same interests and ideas. The two will never find 'normal' people that want them but they are happy together.

The years pass and a harsh winter finds the circus performs struggling to care for the animals and each other at the farm. Bram's father is ill and doctors visit often. Bram receives a letter for his father and brings it to him. The worries that the circus family have been feeling are proved correct. The letter, from Herr Gobel, informs Josef that he is selling the circus. Josef, already ill, appears to wither into himself and Bram realizes that the death of dreams can be as horrible as death itself.

In chapter eight, Bram speaks to his father about his pending separation from Modoc, and Josef reminds him that he is one with the elephant, the two can never be truly apart because of the deep love they have for each other. Jack North, a rich American, arrives and quickly makes a deal with Herr Gobel to purchase all of the animals and circus equipment. Bram is dumbstruck, unable to believe that the life he has always known is over, and sends Curpo to the farm to break the news to his parents.

Josef has always internalized his problems, telling his problems to the elephants he cares for so much. Now that the elephants are gone, Josef seems to be slowly giving up on life. Josef, who earlier told Bram that he and Modoc would never be separated, now asks Bram to promise that he will take care of the elephant. Bram promises, though it seems to be something he has been feeling himself all along.

In chapter nine, Bram arrives at the circus grounds to find everything packed up and being readied for transport. Curpo arrives at the grounds and tells Bram that Josef has



taken a turn for the worse. Bram rushes to his father's side, but Josef dies. The funeral of Josef is attended by all of his friends and circus family. Bram and Gertie arrive on Modoc, dressed in black, with Modoc wearing a flower wreath. The calliope from the circus has been brought to the cemetery and the melancholy music plays as Bram bids farewell to his father alongside the elephant that has been with him from the day he was born.

In chapter ten, Bram asks Mr. North if he can go to America and work with Modoc. North tells Bram no, simply stating that Bram is 'not one of them.' Bram is confused by his answer until a man named Kelly Hanson informs him that North is prejudiced. This is a new concept to Bram, having been raised with people of all kinds.

Bram feels that being with Modoc is where he belongs, almost on a spiritual level. Animals do not have the problems that people do when it comes to making decisions because they rely on their instincts. Bram feels that if he operates on this level, things will work out in the end. Bram leaves a note for Katrina and leaves the farm where he was born and stops to see Gertie before he leaves. Gertie is devastated to learn that Bram is leaving so soon, but knew that the day would probably come. Gertie knows that she cannot come between Bram and Modoc and that their love will have to be enough while they are apart. Gertie declares her love for Bram, and tells him she will wait for him. At the circus grounds, Bram bids Curpo and String farewell, then rushes to the truck that Kelly has told him to hide in. The truck is pitch black as Bram settles in, leaving his former life behind.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary and Analysis

Bram arrives at the dock and is amazed by the activity taking place around him. Kelly warns Bram that if he is found stowing away he will have to deal with the captain, then takes him to the animal hold where Modoc is waiting. A large cannon is chained to the wall of the hold, and this cannon will play an important part in the fate of Bram and Modoc in the days to come.

Bram thanks Kelly and reunites with Modoc, relief filling his heart. Modoc introduces to Kelly and the transportation chief can tell how close Bram and Mo are. Bram sleeps with Mo, who treats him as her son, hugging him close with her trunk and standing over him while he sleeps in the hay. Bram decides after a week in the elephant hold that it is time to show himself to the captain. He packs his things and gets ready to go, only to be grabbed from behind.

In chapter twelve, Bram is taken before the irate Captain Patel by a man with enormous hands. The captain angrily tells Bram that he will work in the kitchen for his room and board until he can be put ashore at the next port. The large man, called Hands, deposits Bram with the cook, where he spends the next few weeks working twelve hours a day. Though the work is hard, Bram finds himself becoming part of the crew. When the captain inspects the ship, Bram is given a uniform which he wears proudly. The captain, pleased that the ship is in such excellent shape and that Bram has followed orders, informs the young man that he can see his elephant in the evenings after his work is done. Bram rushes to the animal hold, calling Modoc's name, and then spends the night sleeping with Modoc in the hay, once again where he belongs.

In chapter thirteen, a storm hits, tossing The Ghanjee in the waves like a toy ship. Bram is worried as water seeps into the hold where the elephants are. The elephants begin to panic, all except Modoc, who has complete faith in Bram. Calling for help, Bram points out to Kelly that the large cannon in the hold is breaking free of its restraints and will hurt the panicked animals. The two try and fix the situation as the water level rises. Bram is unable to unchain Modoc as the cannon breaks free and slides toward her, but he screams for her to 'move up' and she does, breaking the chains that bind her. Bram frees the other elephants, who panic and stumble around avoiding the cannon.

Kelly tells Bram that they have to go onto the deck if there is a chance for survival. Bram is in tears, unable to think of leaving his elephants below. Kelly explains that there is nothing more to be done, and if the elephants are to have any hope of survival then the humans have to survive first. As Kelly heads up to the deck, Bram tells him that he will be a moment. Kelly realizes the type of character that Bram has.

In chapter fourteen, Bram waits in the hold, having no intention of joining Kelly. In a circle of elephants, Bram waits. The ship lurches and the cannon smashes through the



wall of the hull, plunging into the sea. The water surges into the hold and Bram is wrenched free from Modoc and thrown into the water. Debris from the ship is all around him in the ocean and Bram wonders what has happened to the crew, and most of all, to Modoc. As Bram floats in the sea, crying over the loss of his most special friend, Bram prays that Mo breaths the water in the hold and dies without pain.

In chapter fifteen, Bram hears voices in the dark and struggles to connect with the other survivors. Bram is thrilled that Hands is one of the men floating on the debris. As time passes, more survivors gather, and they manage to comfort each other for many hours. Bram falls into a restless sleep but is awakened roughly by Hands, who tells him to listen. Bram does and can barely believe that Modoc is bellowing, swimming through the Indian Ocean toward him. The bulk of the beast will keep them from sinking into the ocean.

Time passes, then excitement takes hold as rescue arrives and the men are taken aboard the rescue vessel. Hands realizes that there is no room for Modoc on the small boat and begins to panic, deciding that they should tow Modoc behind the boat. Bram is resigned to staying with Modoc, the elephant who had saved the lives of so many. Hands refuses to leave the boy and his elephant, finally being struck by one of the crew members so that they can leave. The boat leaves and those saved call out thanks to Bram and Mo, apologizing for the way things have turned out.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary and Analysis

Bram and Modoc spend hours in the water and gradually lose their strength. Bram decides that it is time to give up the fight and tells Modoc to take his arm in her mouth so that when she sinks into the water he will sink with her. Bram silently says goodbye to all of those who love him and apologizes to his father for not being able to take care of Modoc as he promised. The two start to sink and Bram hears a rumble in the distance. A large splash startles Modoc and the two break through the water to find a large ship. Bram is helped aboard and Modoc is lifted onto the deck by a crane.

In chapter seventeen, Bram struggles awake to find Kelly standing over him. Kelly tells Bram that a few of the men had managed to survive the shipwreck. Bram asks about Modoc and Kelly tells him she is in a special hospital for elephants outside town. Bram wants to go to her immediately, but Kelly tells him that he has been unconscious for a week and needs some tests first. After the tests Kelly, will take Bram to Modoc.

Bram wakes in the night and cannot wait to see Mo any longer. Struggling out of bed, Bram dresses and sneaks from the hospital. Outside, Bram sees a sign for the Kismet Royal Elephantarium. Heading down the road, Bram is stopped by a man on a bicycle who gestures to Bram to ride on the handlebars. Several miles down the road, Bram leaves his ride and finds a white palace of such beauty he cannot believe it.

Bram enters the large room that houses the royal elephants and calls to Modoc. Listening, Bram hears a low groan. Struggling by candlelight, he makes his way to a prone Modoc. Thrilled to be together again, Bram and Modoc talk quietly in the special way they have until sleep takes them both.

In chapter eighteen, Bram is awakened by Sabu, the assistant to the veterinarian at the Elephantarium. Bram explains who he is and Sabu is impressed when Bram refuses to leave his elephant. Going to Mo, Bram speaks gently to her, convincing her to stand so that her blood will flow properly. Sabu offers Bram a comfortable room with the maharajah who would like to speak to Bram about the heroic acts he and Mo had performed. Bram graciously refuses, wishing to stay with his friend. The maharajah, upon hearing this, commissions a bed to be hand carved for Bram, a beautifully decorative piece full of color and pictures of elephants.

Kelly visits Bram and Modoc often, one day telling Bram that he will be returning to the United States to work with the circus. Bram, raised to be honest to a fault, uncomfortably asks Kelly not to mention Modoc's survival to Mr. North. Kelly understands and agrees to keep the good news to himself. Bram's biggest fear is being separated from his elephant after all that they have been through.



Bram finally accepts an invitation to the maharajah's palace for lunch. The maharajah quickly makes Bram at home and introduces him to a guest of the maharajah. The man is there to train elephants to work in the teak forests, something that Bram has never imagined. Bram is amazed with the new knowledge he has gathered in such a short time in Calcutta. The young man realizes that the life he leads, while full, is just a small part of the world around him.

In chapter nineteen, Bram learns about Atoul, the maharajah's favorite elephant, a great white animal. Atoul is said to be sacred, and is only seen if the maharajah invites someone to see him. It is Bram's fondest wish to earn the honor of meeting Atoul. One morning Bram lies in bed, studying the intricate carvings on the headboard of his bed. Bram realizes that the center elephant is Atoul. It seems to him that the elephant is staring at him. Bram feels a sense of wonder, as if he is leaving his body and the spiritual feeling he experiences leaves him breathless.

Months pass and Bram has still not contacted his family, worried that if word got out, Mr. North would come for Modoc. Bram would rather feel safe and work with Modoc than have to worry about losing her again. Modoc continues to get better, but refuses to enter the water, traumatized by the shipwreck. Bram understands and is patient with his best friend.

Sabu finds Bram one day and excitedly tells him that he has been invited to meet Atoul. Bram is thrilled, barely able to contain his excitement. That evening, Bram meets Jagrat, Atoul's keeper. Jagrat takes Bram to the enclosure and leads him to Atoul. Bram approaches the white elephant and stands close, overwhelmed. Bram recalls the spiritual experience he had while staring at the carving of the elephant on his bed and it is nothing to compare to the feelings of this night. Bram is amazed by his feelings, and hears a music playing softly. The feelings of spirituality grow as Bram realizes the music is in his mind.

In chapter twenty, Bram awakens with Jagrat at his side in the temple. Jagrat questions Bram about his meeting with Atoul and his experiences. Jagrat explains to Bram that he has heard the song of nature. By communicating with Modoc the way he does, Bram is one with nature and by being one with nature he is one with God. Atoul has given Bram the ability to hear the song of nature and Jagrat encourages Bram to continue to listen to the song and move forward in life, communicating in this way.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary and Analysis

A message arrives from the maharajah and Bram goes to meet him. The maharajah tells Bram that he has received a letter from Mr. North after the man heard the stories about the elephant that had saved so many from death at sea. Mr. North wants his elephant, and also wrote that Bram is a liar and a thief. The maharajah tells Bram that Modoc is now under his protection and to allow her to be taken would be a question of his honor. Bram is stunned, but the maharajah tells Bram that if someone were to sneak the elephant out at night there would be nothing he could do. Bram understands, and makes plans to leave. Sabu brings Bram the things he will need while traveling in India and a message arrives from Jagrat to meet that evening. Bram knows he must go. Arranging to see the maharajah one more time, Bram tells the man how inspired he was meeting Atoul the night before. Before he leaves, the maharajah gives Bram a medallion with his family crest and tells Bram that he is a chosen son to him. The medallion will prove important in Bram's future. The two men part, and Bram knows he will never see such a wonderful place.

In chapter twenty-two, Bram meets Jagrat with Modoc. Jagrat tells Bram to take Modoc to the edge of the lake. Bram watches in amazement as Modoc hesitantly walks into the water toward something in the darkness. Bram realizes Atoul is in the water. Jagrat tells Bram that Mo will be fine and the two part ways. Bram and Modoc head away from their home of the past several months into the county of India, ready for whatever life will bring them.

In chapter twenty-three, Bram and Modoc spend several weeks in the forest, finding work in towns along the way. Bram is cautious in the forest at night, careful of the tigers that they might encounter. After several weeks, the two come to a large plain and start across, with Modoc following a stream and keeping the two cool by spraying water on them. Bram wakes when Mo stops unexpectedly and hears voices. Mo is surrounded by several men who demand that Bram get down. When he refuses, they cut the supports of his platform and he falls to the ground where they go through his belongings. The men tell Bram that they are taking Modoc and if he tries to stop them they will kill her, then Bram after he watches her die. Bram tells Mo to go with them, afraid that they will hurt her, but with the intention of saving her. Mo goes with the men, but is confused when Bram does not follow. After a few minutes, Bram sees movement and thinks that Mo had gotten free and is returning. Instead, one of the thieves is returning, intent on killing Bram. Bram screams for Modoc, who responds quickly, killing the men that surround her and being wounded in the process as she rushes to her friend's aid.

Bram battles the remaining man until Mo arrives, trampling the last thief as he watches her come in disbelief. Bram is stunned by the power and fury that his friend has shown, as he pulls the knife one of the men has stabbed her with from her chest. Bram is



amazed and filled with grief, as Modoc has now been forced to kill to protect him. Bram feels responsible for Mo having to deal with such a thing.

In chapter twenty-four, Bram and Mo find a village where the locals provide the medical supplies that Bram needs to help Modoc. The two spend time there as Mo heals, and the villagers come to think of Mo as their own, a gift. The two spend the winter in the village as the monsoon season arrives but they are happy, and Bram knows that they are lucky to have found such a place. When the monsoon season ends, the young man and his elephant move on, saying goodbye to the friends they have made.

In chapter twenty-five, Bram and Mo find a stream where Bram bathes. A young woman named Sian introduces herself and her elephant. Bram tells Sian that he is looking for work in the teak industry. Sian takes Bram to meet her father, Ja, and tells him of Bram's wishes. Ja greets Bram and tells him he will speak to the head man, and has Sian show him a place to sleep. As Bram readies for bed, he decides not to allow anyone to see the medallion from the maharajah, wanting to be accepted for who he is, not for who he knows.

Bram wakes and watches the bustle of activity around Teak, Inc. the business that employs the mahouts, or elephant handlers and their families. Bram is allowed to have lunch with Singh, the foreman who informs him that he can work in the kitchen and train in his off time. Modoc can work with another mahout. Bram asks for two weeks to train and then be judged by the head mahout, Kalli Gooma. If the old man finds Bram worthy then he will have the job; if not, he will work in the kitchen. Singh agrees. Bram rushes to tell Sian the news and the two embrace. Bram again wonders at his feelings for a girl, this time a young woman, so different from Gertie.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary and Analysis

Bram realizes that he needs to be fair to the loved ones he left behind and tell them that he is safe. Bram also knows that he has to tell Gertie about Sian. Bram also realizes that he has given his life to Modoc and wonders if it was because of the promise to his father or because it was what he was meant to do. Bram writes letters to his mother and then to Gertie, telling them he is fine and releasing Gertie from any tie to him.

Ja tells Bram that there is no future for him and Gertie and Bram is heartbroken, wondering how to get through to Ja. Wondering how to convince Ja that he is good enough for Sian despite their differences, Bram hears a voice and knows it belongs to Kalli Gooma. The voice tells him to move beyond pride. Bram realizes that the mahout is reminding Bram of his relationship with the maharajah, and his medallion. The word spreads in the village that Bram is the chosen son of the maharajah. Surely he is worthy of Sian if the maharajah has chosen him.

The day of the test arrives and Bram puts Modoc through her paces, moving the heavy teak. Despite some unforeseen problems, Bram and Mo do well. Bram knows that he has done his best and now all he can do is wait.

In chapter twenty-seven, Bram passes the test and celebrates with Sian. Bram is falling more in love with Sian each day and longs to be with her. Kalli Gooma meets Bram and they discuss the Elephatarium and Atoul. Bram impresses the old mahout with his understanding of the ways of nature. Kalli Gooma takes Bram to a new part of the forest to the breeding elephant, who is very mean. Young boys are recruited from the streets of Calcutta to work with him because their small bodies are harder for the elephant to catch. Even though the boys are careful, there is cemetery behind the hut where those that were not careful are buried. Bram watches in amazement while the elephant is bred. Kalli Gooma remarks as the two part that Bram will be a good mahout when the time comes.

In chapter twenty-eight, Bram learns of another area of the village, the Cross-Over. Kalli Gooma takes Bram to the site when a man is found guilty of killing his wife in a nearby village. The execution takes place at the Cross-Over, a tree stump with a cut out the size of an elephant's foot. Bram wonders why until the man is lead up and a leather bag is fitted over his head. The man lies down and an elephant, wearing bangles on one leg and a stiff bracelet on the other, places its foot in the cut out, raising the other and then crushing the man's head. Kalli Gooma declares it a good day, and Bram realizes that he is now truly a part of the village.

In chapter twenty-nine, Bram and Sian are married. To Bram, his life has now begun as he and his wife exit the ceremony through a line of elephants. The years pass and the village prospers while outside there are rumors of a guerrilla war. The elders take



precautions, but the village seems so far from the worries. A telephone communication system is set up down the mountain to relay news to the villagers as a precaution, but has never been needed.

Captain Rajah Mohinder arrives one day and tells the villagers that the system is no longer needed, as the guerrillas have moved on. The men are happy and quickly return to the village and their families. Mohinder and his men ask to stay the night and are given food and lodging. Bram wakes to strange noises and discovers that Mohinder and his men are really guerrillas intent on taking over the village. The captain enters Bram and Sian's home, casting lascivious looks at the naked Sian, declaring he will have her for his own. The captain then tells Bram that he will hold the guerrillas with the elephants as they escape the approaching army through the Dullirah Mountain Pass.

Bram helps the guerrillas while Sian stays in her father's house away from the evil captain. The villagers work tirelessly in order to keep their lives and prepare the elephants for the perilous journey. The following day, Bram tells Sian to take her elephant and hide at the lake so the captain cannot find her before they leave. The two part sadly, but Bram makes Sian promise to stay hidden.

In chapter thirty, thirty-four elephants are loaded and ready for the trip. Captain Mohinder takes Bram to find Sian, but she is gone. The angry captain has soldiers look for the woman, but after time passes they are forced to leave the village and head for the mountain pass. The trail is steep and the elephants grow weary quickly. Bram tries to get them water more often, but Mohinder refuses to listen until one of the elephants goes down on the fourth day. The captain is angry but reluctantly listens to Bram.

The day the men and elephants prepare to enter the trail, elephants approach from the village. A soldier had been left behind to wait, and he races to catch up after having caught Sian. Bram is able to spend a few minutes with his wife, but she is then forced to ride with the captain as they ride into the Dullirah Pass. The pass is dangerous and the fog is thick as the elephants move forward. One elephant falls, and Bram uses Modoc to help the beast back up. Bram knows that the elephants are losing their hearts and is proven right when one simply steps off the mountain and plunges to her death. A few more elephants choose the same fate within hours. Bram knows that the beasts are giving up, unwilling to go any further toward a death they have not chosen.

Captain Mohinder angrily makes the remaining elephants move forward until he sees two planes flying low. The captain orders his men to shoot at the planes, which fire back. Knowing that they will be killed if they are trapped in the pass, Bram yells for Modoc to move up, and he and Sian race through the pass. Modoc is hit and Bram and Sian are tossed into the woods. Bram rushes to Modoc and checks her, but the wounds are not life threatening. Rushing to Sian, Bram discovers to his horror that his wife is dead. Bram cries, begging for God's help but Sian is gone.

More elephants arrive, including the large beast Captain Mohinder had been riding. The captain is dead, having been trampled when he partially fell from the animal's back. Bram and the mahouts and remaining soldiers continued forward to a small village,

where Bram buries Sian under a beautiful tree, then cries as he sat with Modoc until the sun went down. As Bram weeps, a hand touches his shoulder and he turns to discovers to his shock that Mr. North is standing there.



Chapters 31-35

Chapters 31-35 Summary and Analysis

Bram wakes in a hospital, surrounded by other wounded men. Bram makes his way to Modoc and takes over her care, making sure she is alright. Mr. North approaches and speaks to Bram, declaring his hatred for the young man who has cost him money and time by stealing his elephant. Bram is shocked as North declares the tales Bram has told lies, but plans on using the tale of Modoc saving those from the shipwreck for marketing. North tells him that he will be going to America with them and working for him with Modoc. The man tells Bram that if he does not do what is asked of him, he will never see Mo again.

In chapter thirty-two, Bram says his goodbyes to the mahouts, as he knows that his life is moving forward and he will probably never return to India. Bram and Modoc board the ship that will take them to America. Arriving in New York, Bram is overwhelmed by all the sights and sounds, as well as the size of the circus grounds. Bram is delighted when Kelly yells a greeting, as Bram thought he would never see the man again. Kelly still works for Mr. North's circus and heads off to unload the ship, and the animals in the circus greet Modoc in their own special way.

In chapter thirty-three, Bram spends the first season in the circus, learning the ropes and caring for Modoc. Bram writes to his mother and Curpo, and then to Gertie, who finally responds, asking Bram to be patient with her. Things change when Gertie writes with the news that his beloved mother has died. Gertie realizes that life is too short and that she and Bram belong together. Gertie and Curpo will be coming to America.

In chapter thirty-four, Bram and Modoc perform, and Mo amazes all present by doing her routine alone. The crowd cheers and Bram is thrilled to see Gertie and Curpo in the stands. The three reunite with an excited Modoc and retire to Bram's trailer. Mr. North arrives and congratulates Bram, rewarding him the following day with a raise and a larger trailer.

Gertie begins working with the horses in the circus and it is no surprise to anyone when she and Bram announce that they will be married. Curpo begins working with Bram and Modoc, as Mr. North can see the money can be made with the little man and the giant animal. Gertie and Bram marry in the center ring, and begin their life together.

In chapter thirty-five, Mo and some of the other elephants seem out of sorts. Before long they are very ill. A vet is called and he tells Bram that the elephants have been poisoned. Bram worries over Mo, who falls on the fifth day of illness and cannot get up. The vet tries everything, but eleven of the elephants are very ill.

The perpetrator is caught, a former employee who had been fired for drinking on the job and beating the elephants. The antidote for the poison is rushed to the circus, but the



vet tells Bram that it is probably too late for Mo. Despite the odds, Bram stays with Modoc, who fights for her life. Two months after being poisoned and almost dying, Modoc takes her place with Bram, performing at the circus once again. Both Bram and Modoc's love for each other has once again seen them through.



Chapters 36-41, Epilogue

Chapters 36-41, Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Bram is preparing to perform when a fire breaks out at the circus. Bram and Curpo are separated as they work to save the lives of those in attendance. Bram and Mo find Curpo, but despite their best efforts, Curpo cannot be saved. Bram is devastated, as he feels he has lost one of his family.

In chapter thirty-seven, Bram and Mo's life changes forever when a drunk gets into the elephant tent and attacks Modoc. Mo is driven to self defense when the man attacks her with a pitchfork. The man jabs the bull hook in Modoc's eye, blinding her. Modoc steps on the man's head, beheading him. Bram rushes to the scene, too late to save the man, or Modoc's eye.

Modoc recovers slowly, nursed by Bram. The newspapers brand Modoc a killer; the famous heroine of the sea is now a monster in the eyes of the public. Bram is devastated, not only for the injuries that Mo has received, but that he had not been able to protect her.

In chapter thirty-eight, Bram is horrified to learn that Mr. North is going to sell Modoc. Mr. North tells Bram that if he can beat the best offer he can buy Modoc. Bram calls everyone he knows and begs for loans. Not many are interested in buying Mo, some because of her history, and some because they know of the special relationship between the elephant and Bram. North tells Bram that he can have Modoc for \$5,500. Bram agrees and awaits the end of the trip in Florida where the exchange will be made.

The morning the train arrives Bram and Gertie head out to meet Mo, but the elephant is gone. North received a better offer on the way and had taken it, selling Mo and separating her from her beloved Bram.

In chapter thirty-nine, Ralph at Gentle Giant Exotic Animal Rental receives a call from a movie studio looking for an elephant. Unwilling to lose the contract, Ralph tells the man he has one, then immediately begins looking for one. Ralph is about to give up when he sees an ad an elephant for sale. Making the call, Ralph discovers that the man is selling the elephant for \$1,000, a price he can afford. The man tells Ralph the elephant is named Modoc, but most in the town call her one-eyed Mo.

Ralph and his assistant Frank head out to collect Modoc. Ralph is horrified when he discovers that the man he has spoken with on the phone allows children from the town to throw rocks at Modoc for a small fee. Ralph knows that even if Mo cannot perform in the movies, he cannot leave her with this man. The two approach Mo, who stretches her trunk to Ralph and as she touches him she trumpets in joy. The two men take the elephant and load her in the truck, heading home.



Ralph and Frank arrive at the ranch and Mo is greeted by the other animals present. A vet arrives to check Mo and delicately removes the chain that has grown into the skin of her ankle after years of being chained. Through it all, Ralph and the others care for the old elephant, finally giving her the love she has longed for.

As Modoc recovers, Ralph and the others build a small ring where they can get to work training her for the studio. The first day, as Ralph prepares to work with Mo, he and the others are stunned. Modoc does not wait for a cue, she simply performs the routine she had done so many years ago. Ralph knows that Modoc is one great lady, and must have been a star before winding up chained and forgotten.

In chapter forty, Bram and Gertie travel and look for work with the animal rental companies in California. The two arrive in Aqua Dulce, at Gentle Jungle. Bram can smell the elephants in the air and gets excited. A man greets them and tells them the owner is away, but before he can continue Bram excitedly tells Gertie that Mo is there. The special connection between the two has never been broken.

Bram calls for Modoc and the ground seems to explode as she trumpets her answer, pulling free from the chain on her ankle and crashing through a fence to find the man that loves her and she loves in return. Bram and Gertie are held tightly in Mo's trunk as she greets them, in front of the awestruck man. Ralph returns, at first upset about strangers near Mo, but after he hears the story of Bram and Modoc's life together, he immediately offers the couple a place with him, unable to consider separating them from Modoc again.

In chapter forty-one, years again have passed, and Mo is beginning to lose the sight in her good eye. Modoc begins to wind her career down, taking small jobs in order to give her life purpose, for Bram knows that if Mo were to stop working she would feel as if she was dying. At one such job, a man approaches Modoc and kneels at her side, crying. Bram is stunned to realize that the man is Hands, and the two men greet each other. Hands tells Bram that he is heading back to India, feeling that even after so many years the shipwreck has not left him. Bram understands completely.

Ralph decides that it is time for Modoc to retire, but he cannot let Bram or Modoc realize that this is the case, as he does not want to hurt them. Ralph is unaware that Bram is nearing the end of his life as well, and has asked Mo to wait for him to die, as he does not her to cross over and be alone; he wants to be there waiting for her.

A party is planned and Bram and Mo once again perform for a crowd, a special group of invitation-only friends. Modoc has even received a gift from Kalli Gooma, the gold tips she had worn on her tusk in the circus. As the music plays, Modoc begins her dance, and though she moves slower than she did in her youth, the happiness is there, as well as the sense of a life well-lived.

Epilogue

Shortly after the performance and party, Bram passed away. Mo died shortly after. It seems that even in death, Bram and Mo still have that connection they have shared all their lives.



Characters

Bram Gunterstein

Bram Gunterstein, one of the two main characters in the novel, was born to a circus family on the same day as a young elephant. Born in Germany, Bram is the only child of Josef and Katrina Gunterstein. The family lives on a small farm outside of a town called Hasengrossck. Bram is raised by his parents to work in the circus, specifically as an elephant trainer, another generation in the family. Bram, named after his grandfather, Josef's father, exhibits a natural affinity for the largest mammals, especially Modoc, the baby born to Emma, one of the stars of the circus.

Bram's life is one of unexpected joy and sorrow as he leaves the life he has known in Germany in order to stow away on a ship bound for America after Modoc is sold with the rest of the circus animals to Jack North. A violent storm destroys the ship at sea, but Bram and Modoc manage to survive, and live in peace for several months in Calcutta, India under the care of the maharajah. When North discovers Bram and Modoc have survived, the two friends take to the road, evading North and discovery in a small village where Bram finds love. Bram marries Sian, accepted by her family and villagers because he carries a token from the maharajah.

Bram lives happily with Sian until guerrilla fighters capture the people of the village and take their elephants in order to escape the approaching army. In the melee that follows, Sian is killed and Modoc is injured. Bram manages to make it to the next village where he encounters Mr. North. North is angry at Bram, but knows that he cannot separate the young man and Modoc, so he takes them both to America to the circus. In the United States, Bram and Modoc perform to sell out crowds and Bram trains Modoc to perform on her own, something never seen before. Bram finally writes to Gertie, and the two reunite when Gertie travels to the United States. Before long the two are married and live and work happily for the circus that had originally torn them apart.

Tragedy enters Bram's life once again when Modoc kills a man that is trying to hurt her. Branded a killer, Modoc has no value to Mr. North, who sells her despite promising Bram that he could buy her. Years pass, but the amazing connection between Bram and Modoc never fades, and when Bram and Gertie finally find Modoc the love they share is evident to all around them. Bram lives out the final days of his life on a ranch in California with Modoc and Gertie, happy that he has finally found the elephant that he has always had a spiritual connection with.

Modoc

Though Modoc is an elephant, she is one of the most important 'people' in the novel. Born the same day as Bram Gunterstein, Modoc grows up with him, loving him and sharing a special bond. When Modoc is sold to a circus in America, Bram stows away



on the ship so that he can be with his elephant. When the ship is torn apart during a violent monsoon, Modoc manages to escape the hold and swim to Bram, finding her person amid the torrential rain and waves. The amazing elephant manages to keep Bram and many others alive through the night, and though she and Bram almost perish, they manage to survive until help comes.

Modoc begins the second phase of her life working in the teak forests in India while Bram makes a life with his new wife, Sian. Modoc's intelligence and loving heart are known to all and her amazing relationship with Bram allows them to make a life in the forest for years. Despite many good times, adversity comes once again when guerrilla fighters enter Bram and Modoc's life, but the two manage once again to survive the horrors that take Sian's life.

Modoc recovers and she and Bram head to America to work with Mr. North in the circus. Though North hates Bram, the man knows that Modoc is the animal she is because of the relationship she has with Bram. This is proven when Bram manages the impossible and trains Modoc to perform without a trainer. The two live and work happily for the circus, along with Gertie and Curpo for many years.

Modoc's life changes again when she is attacked by a drunk man one night and kills him in self defense. Though Modoc is not to blame, the world turns against her. Once known as a heroine, Modoc is now known as a killer. North sells Modoc, breaking his word to Bram and separating the man and the elephant for the first time in their lives.

The elephant winds up living for many years, in a remote area, chained and untouched by human hands, with local children paying to throw stones at her. Saved by the author, Ralph Helfer, Modoc once again gets a chance at life, living on a ranch in California where Ralph owns a company renting animals to movie studios. Despite the years of cruelty, Modoc never becomes 'bad', she simply returns to her life, performing the circus routine she had learned many years ago at Bram's side.

The life of Modoc comes full circle when Bram and Gertie find her. Bram never gave up on finding Modoc and the two happily reunite. Modoc and Bram grow old together, once again sharing the connection that has bound them through their lives.

Gertie

Bram's first love, Gertie lived on a nearby farm in Germany. Meeting Bram one day while he is out with Modoc, the two develop a deep connection, experiencing the joys of first love. Spending any time together that they can, Gertie and Bram also share this time with Modoc. Gertie's understanding that Modoc is such an important part of Bram's life only makes her more special to him, and this allows the two to grow as close as they do.

Gertie is devastated when Bram informs her that he has to sail for America in order to take care of Modoc after the sale of the circus. Though Gertie obviously does not want



to lose her love, she is able to understand the importance of the situation, and the deep sense of responsibility that Bram has for Modoc.

Gertie is devastated when Bram tells her that he is in love with another but is never able to get over him. When Bram writes after many years from America, Gertie realizes that life is too short to stay away from those you love and she joins him.

Gertie understands Bram's connection with Modoc and the two live happily for many years in the circus. When tragedy strikes and they are separated from Modoc, Gertie understands that Bram must find his elephant, and does not fault him for the many years of wandering and searching. When the three are finally reunited Gertie is as happy to see Modoc as Bram, but happier because her husband is once again complete.

Sian

A young Indian woman, Sian is the daughter of a teak worker in the forests of India. Sian and Bram fall in love and are permitted to marry because Bram is the chosen son of the maharajah. Sian is a sweet young woman, innocent in some ways, but she deeply loves and trusts Bram. The two live happily for years until guerrillas invade and take over the village. In the aftermath, Sian is killed. Bram, devastated, finds a beautiful spot to bury his wife

Though Sian's story takes up very little time in the novel itself, it is clear that she is a very important person to Bram and plays a large part in the man he becomes.

Mr. North

The owner of a large circus in America, North travels to Germany and buys most of the circus owned by Herr Gobel. North has no use for the people that have worked at the circus for years and plans on leaving them all behind. Bram stows away on the ship that carries the circus animals to America. When the ship sinks, he manages to survive with Modoc in India. News of their survival and Modoc's heroics reach North, who makes it his mission to retrieve his 'stolen' elephant from Bram.

North does find Bram and Modoc in the mountains of India after many years of searching and takes them to America to perform in his circus. When tragedy strikes and Modoc is branded a killer, North quickly forgets the money that Modoc has brought him over the years and sells her, purposely doing so without telling Bram where she is going. Though the years have passed, North is a bitter man, and he apparently wishes to punish Bram and Modoc for the years he spent searching for them.



Katrina Gunterstein

Bram's mother, Katrina lives and dies in Germany, never seeing her son again after he leaves for America with Modoc. After many years Bram feels safe enough to contact his mother and friends again, only to learn that his mother passed away before they can be reunited.

Josef Gunterstein

Bram's father, Josef is a quiet man with a deep emotional connection the animals of the circus, especially the elephants. Josef teaches Bram all that he knows about elephants, and the importance of training animals with love and respect. Josef's understanding of the connection that can be shared with a person and an animal creates the basis for Bram and Modoc to grow and share the amazing life they do.

Curpo

A dwarf with the circus, Curpo works with the elephants in Germany, helping Josef and Bram care for them. Curpo helps Bram make his escape to America to care for Modoc, and returns later in Bram's life when he eventually winds up working with Modoc in Mr. North's circus. Curpo also works in the circus, once again assisting Bram with the care of Modoc.

Curpo dies after a circus fire in the big tent, trying to save as many others as possible. Bram never gets over the loss of one of his oldest friends.

Herr Gobel

The owner of the Wunderzircus, Herr Gobel is not necessarily a bad man, but is portrayed as such because of the way he treats those that work for him and the animals in his circus.

Himmel Theiss

Bear trainer of Karno, a six hundred pound Russian brown bear.

Appelle the Clown

Appelle works with the monkeys in Herr Gobel's circus.



Mesmera

The woman who charms snakes at the circus of Herr Gobel.

Marigold

The smallest woman, born only with a head and torso, who works for Herr Gobel. Marigold marries Schultz the seal man.

Lillith

The fat lady at the circus owned by Herr Gobel.

Kelly Hanson

The transportation chief for Mr. North, Kelly smuggles Bram aboard the Ghanjee so that he can accompany Modoc to the United States. Kelly survives the shipwreck and is reunited with Bram when he and Modoc arrive in America after many years to perform in the circus.

Captain Patel

The captain of the Ghanjee. Patel is angry when he discovers Bram is a stowaway, but grows to respect and like the young man.

Hands

The large man that catches Bram aboard the Ghanjee, Hands becomes his friend and almost gives his life trying to save Modoc and Bram after the ship sinks. Bram believes Hands to be dead until many years in the future when they are reunited.

The Maharajah

The owner of the Elephentarium, the maharajah takes Bram and Modoc into his care while they recover from the shipwreck. The maharajah considers Bram a son of his, and gives him a token so others in India will know his standing in the country. The maharajah allows Bram to 'escape' with Modoc when he is contacted by Mr. North about the elephant and the young man.



Kalli Gooma

The old mahout in the Indian village, Kalli Gooma accepts Bram as a mahout after he completes a test with Modoc. Kalli Gooma is a wise man, who understand the connection that Bram has with Modoc. The mahout shares many things with Bram, teaching him the ways of the natural world around them.

Jagrat

The wise mahout that cares for the white elephant of the maharajah, Atoul. Jagrat understands and appreciates Bram's connection with Modoc and teaches him about the ways nature and man are connected. When Bram and Modoc must leave the elephantarium, Jagrat has Atoul help Modoc overcome her fear of water.

Ja

Sian's father.

Captain Rajah Mohinder

The commander of the guerrilla fighters, Rajah terrorizes the villagers where Bram and Sian live. Rajah has no understanding of elephants and uses Bram in order to control them as they make their escape. Mohinder wants Sian for himself and has her brought to him on the trail. When planes fly overhead, shots are fired, and though Mohinder is killed in the attack, Sian is as well, since she had not been allowed to stay in the village.

Ralph Helfer

The author of the book and owner of Gentle Jungle Exotic Animal Rental, Ralph buys Modoc from the man that has had her chained up for many years. Ralph is amazed by Modoc and her gentle ways, despite the cruelty that she has suffered. A kind man, Ralph cares for Modoc and then when Bram and Gertie arrive, hires them so that the three will never be separated again.

Frank

Ralph's assistant at the ranch.

Atoul

The white elephant of the maharajah, Atoul teaches Modoc not to fear water, and provides Bram with a spiritual meeting which allows him to communicate with nature.

Sabu

Bram's friend at the elephantarium in India.



Objects/Places

Wunderzircus

The circus owned by Herr Gobel, where Josef Gunterstein is employed as the head trainer, and specifically the trainer of elephants. Bram grew up in the Wunderzircus in Germany.

Hasengrossck

The town in Germany where the Wunderzircus owned by Herr Gobel is based.

The Ghanjee

The ship that is hired to take the circus animals to America for Mr. North. The ship sinks after running into a huge storm.

The Kismet Royal Elephatarium

The building that houses the royal elephants in Calcutta, where Modoc is taken after the sea rescue.

Calcutta, India

The city in India where Bram and Modoc wind up after the shipwreck of the Ghanjee.

Teak Forest Venture, Ltd.

The company that Bram works for in the teak forests in India.

Dullirah Mountain Pass

The dangerous pass in the mountains of India where the guerrillas take the elephants of the village to escape the approaching army.

Madison Square Garden

The arena in New York where Modoc first performs by herself, amazing the crowds.

Gentle Jungle Exotic Animal Rental

The company owned by Ralph Helfer that rents animals to movie studios in California.

Aqua Dulce, California

The town where the animal rental company is located, and where Bram and Modoc are reunited.

Themes

Love

Love is prevalent theme throughout the novel Modoc. Love, referring to the deep feeling of caring for another person or thing, is most obvious between the two main characters of the novel, Bram Gunterstein and Modoc. The love these two characters feel for each other is clear, though a bit out of the ordinary, as Modoc is an elephant. Despite this, it is clear to the reader that from the very beginnings of the novel, Bram and Modoc share a love that transcends what most people yearn for throughout their lives.

The love that Bram and Modoc share is obviously not of a romantic nature, but a love of shared feelings between the two. Whether the closeness the man and elephant share is because they were raised together after being born within minutes of each other or something that was encouraged because they were raised on the same farm is irrelevant to the novel. The devotion that Modoc and Bram have for one another is the basis of the love that they share.

Bram also experiences love with two women in the novel, first Gertie, his first love, and Sian, a woman he meets during his many adventures. Bram and Gertie's love at first is that of two young children, that of first love. Bram and Gertie share the joys of first love as the two grow into young adults and their feelings for each other blossom into something deeper. The two are separated when Bram is forced to leave in order to remain with Modoc.

Bram's relationship with Sian is much different, that of a man and a woman. Though there are obstacles in this relationship, Bram is able to overcome them and the two share a deep respect and love for each other during their time together.

Though Bram eventually marries Gertie and the two grow old together, it is the love between Modoc and Bram that is the one constant in the novel. Though there are many obstacles and perils along the way, the love that is shared between a man and his elephant allows the reader to realize that love can overcome most any problem.

Peril

Peril is a theme in the novel Modoc for a large portion of the novel. Peril, defined as an exposure to risk or danger, is present from the outset, despite the fact that the early portions of the novel detail the lives of Bram and Modoc as they grow up on the family farm. Though the two share an ideal 'childhood', there is an underlying current of unrest regarding the fate of the circus that Bram's father works for each year. The threat of the circus being disbanded seems to grow each year, as does the ulcers that Bram's father suffers from.



More peril awaits Bram and his elephant Modoc throughout the novel. From the time Bram leaves home in order to accompany his elephant to America, Bram's life is a series of ups and downs. From a shipwreck that leaves Bram and Modoc in an elephantarium where they spend a wonderful time, to traveling alone in order to avoid Mr. North, the man that purchased Modoc from Herr Gobel, Bram and Modoc live lives that are filled with the unknown chance of discovery and exposure.

After battling guerrillas and surviving, Bram and Modoc wind up together in the United States, working in the great circus of Mr. North. Despite what should be a relatively easy life, the two still wind up in a series of dilemmas that bring hardship and sorrow. When the great Modoc is declared dangerous and sold out from under Bram, the two are separated permanently, it seems. Despite this, Bram manages to find his elephant, and all the risks that the two have faced over the years are resolved.

Perseverance

Perseverance is perhaps the most important theme in *Modoc*. Throughout the novel, many obstacles are presented to Bram and Modoc, and all are overcome. The definition of persevering, to undertake a task despite opposition or discouragement, is evident in every obstacle that the two meet.

The first time that Bram and Modoc persevere over a seemingly insurmountable obstacle is when Modoc is sold to Mr. North and shipped to America. Though most would simply give up and move on despite the sadness, Bram leaves his home and family to travel with his elephant, intent on staying with her and protecting her. Though this seems enough of an issue, the ensuing shipwreck and time at sea would seem more than enough for the two main characters to handle. As the novel progresses, through time in an elephantarium and guerrillas infiltrating the quiet village where Bram has made a life, it seems that no matter what, Bram is going to face adversity.

Though Bram is constantly battling to survive and keep his elephant safe, there is never a time where he does not at least believe that he will persevere. The constant adversity in the novel never seems insurmountable to Bram, simply because he refuses to believe that things will not work out in the end. There is no larger piece of evidence provided for this than when Bram, as an older man, continues his search for Modoc when the two are separated. The odds seem astronomical, but Bram does indeed persevere, finding Modoc, and the two spend the final years of their lives together, reliving their youth and cherishing the special relationship that they have shared throughout their long lives.

Style

Perspective

The novel is written from the perspective of Ralph Helfer, a well known animal trainer. Helfer's belief is that animals should be trained with love and kindness, rather than fear and pain. As such, Helfer relates well to the story of Bram and Modoc, as the novel tells the story of the boy and his elephant, growing up together, sharing many adventures and hardships, but at last reuniting happily. Helfer's personal opinions regarding the treatment of animals as well as those who care for them are very clear throughout the novel. The reader gets a sense of Helfer's feelings while he describes Bram's horror at the thought of being separated from Modoc, as well as the young man's decision to leave the people he loves in order to protect his elephant.

Though the novel is a narration of the lives of Bram and Modoc until the point where Helfer finds himself the owner of Modoc, Helfer's feelings are clear when he writes about the adventures that the two main characters experience. The tale itself seems so unbelievable at times it reads more like a work of fiction than non-fiction. Helfer seems to appreciate this and writes of himself in the third person as well, rather than interrupt the flow of the novel by changing perspective for the reader.

Tone

The tone of the novel varies, but is mostly informal, allowing the reader to feel as if they are part of the story being related. Ralph Helfer appears very close to the characters he describes, and the reader is able to relate to this because of the tone used. A more formal tone would distance the reader from the tale, creating a psychological gap for the reader. There are times when the tone of the novel is very playful, specifically when Helfer relates the tales of Bram and Modoc's growing up together and the lighthearted, innocence of youth. There are also more serious uses of tone, such as the sinking of the ship carrying Bram and Modoc to the United States, the attack of guerrillas in the mountains and the maiming of Modoc. At times such as these, the serious tone gives the reader a sense of the horrors that the characters experience, and adds to the somber feeling of the occasions.

Though the tone in the novel shifts in accordance with the happenings within the novel, tone does play an important part for the reader. The feelings conveyed by the author within the tone used allows the reader to feel as if they are part of the events that take place, and give one a sense that they too are part of the story of Bram and Modoc. Tone allows the reader to feel an emotional connection to the characters, rather than feeling as if one is reading a textbook lesson.

Structure

Modoc: The True Story of the Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived is divided into forty-one numbered chapters followed by a short epilogue. The chapters vary in length from a few pages to more than ten. Each chapter details an important event or fact that affects the lives of Bram and Modoc, the two main characters in the novel. The writing style is a bit formal, though the language is modern. The formality of the writing allows the reader to get a sense of the serious events that take place in the novel.

The novel details the life and adventures of Bram and Modoc as they grow up, experience many wonderful and heartbreaking adventures, and grow old together. The reader gets a sense of the deep love that Bram has for Modoc, and for the love that Modoc has for Bram as well. The author clearly expresses the effect that the man and his elephant have on those they meet along the way, impressing those around them with a sense of goodness.



Quotes

"It must be one of those special happenings that has a mystical meaning, Curpo, to have my son born on the same day, let alone the same hour, as the baby elephant."

Chap. 1, p. 5

"Josef never forgot what his father had told him. He knew in his heart that his father had trained Modoc, and he felt his great sadness in the pain of remembering. Josef's father never told him what happened to Modoc, but he believed that Emma's baby was one of those special elephants. Down deep, Josef believed Modoc's spirit still lived and was waiting to be reborn-to live again through Emma's baby."

Chap. 2, p. 12

"This was an important moment, a beginning, for she knew the boy would spend his life with animals, especially elephants, and the meeting was of the utmost importance. Neither the elephant nor the baby said a word. All was quiet as they looked at each other. Mo's small trunk wormed its way up, reaching to the baby. As Bram leaned over, his little hand pulled loose from Katrina's grasp, found its way down toward the trunk. A finger extended to meet the tip of the trunk. Bram's expression was one of curiosity; he felt the wet tip, Modoc moved her 'finger' all around Bram's hand, sliding it across each finger and the palm. A big tickle grin spread across Bram's face, Modoc did her elephant 'chirp,' a tear glistened as it ran down Katrina's face. All was well. The future had been written."

Chap. 3, p. 16

"'You are special, Bram. You and Modoc. You were both born on the same day, at the same hour for a reason; you and she are connected fro that. You must take care of Mo, Bramie.' he whispered. 'Promise me, you will. She loves you and you her. Together you will find a way.'"

Chap. 8, p. 58

"'It's time, Mosie...now don't you be afraid. We'll be together, and as long as we are, nothing can hurt us.' He wiped his face of the flood of tears, they tasted so sweet; then put his cheek against hers. He smoothed the soft skin around her eye with his finger.

'Goodbye, Mosie. I'll see you on the other side.'"

Chap. 16, p. 110

"Your experience with Atoul was to see if you had the power to reach into him; as he and you together merged into one natural thought, Atoul created the passage to learning and you were able to go there, see, experience, and return. You have the power of communicating with animals. Use them as a conduit, listen to the voice of nature."

Chap. 20, p. 144

"Bram could not move; the glint of moisture filling his eyes was seen by the maharajah, who knew this man-child had suffered much since leaving his home and his loved ones.



Now, again, he must continue, all for the love of an elephant. The maharajah opened his arms. They moved together and embraced, as father and son. Both felt it was the last time they would see each other again."

Chap. 21, p. 151

"Thump...thump...thump. And from the innermost recess of her being came an ancient primitive sound, a whine of anguish seldom heard by any living thing...uttered only at the time before a kill."

Chap. 23, p. 165

"Bram stopped his burst of energy; he had felt her tremble. The look on his face caused her eyelids to drop. When she did look, his lips were on hers, warm and moist. Their arms encircled each other. Bodies perfectly fitted to each other. It was a time of Nirvana."

Chap. 25, p. 180

"Bram knew that when an elephant dies, the others announce the death with a great deal of commotion. This time none said a word. They knew..and so did Sian. Before the day was out two more had chosen the same fate. There was no need for Mohinder to kill. They were doing it themselves. By now the soldiers themselves would have turned back, but it was too late. They had to make it or die trying."

Chap. 30, p. 224

"Ralph knew then that this lady must have been a star—a great star—to be able to perform in the ring without a trainer. She must have been world-renowned."

Chap. 39, p. 308

"Her good eye opened wide to take in the man she loved, the man who all her life had been her friend, her father figure, her mentor. They had, at last, found each other."

Chap. 40, p. 311



Topics for Discussion

Does there seem to be a significance to the fact that Modoc and Bram were born on the same day during the same hour? Why?

Why did Josef name the the baby elephant Modoc?

How does Bram meet Gertie? Why are they separated? How do they reunite?

Why does Bram remain in India?

How does Bram wind up in America?

Why is Modoc dubbed a killer?

How do Bram and Modoc reunite?