

# **The Magician's Elephant Study Guide**

**The Magician's Elephant by Kate DiCamillo**

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## Plot Summary

The Magician's Elephant is a novel by author Kate DiCamillo. In this novel, Peter Augustus Duchene is a ten-year-old orphan living with a soldier that once fought beside Peter's father. When the old soldier, Vilna Lutz, sends Peter into town one day to buy food, Peter spends his coin on receiving an answer from a fortune teller instead.

The fortune teller tells Peter that his sister is still alive. She also tells Peter that the elephant that will lead Peter to his sister. Peter ponders whether or not the fortune teller is telling the truth. That is until an elephant suddenly appears during a magic show. When Peter learns of this, he realizes that his sister, Adele, truly is alive and that the elephant has been sent there to lead him to his sister.

Adele, in the meantime, has been living at the orphanage for the last six years, since she was brought there as a baby. She often dreams of an elephant coming to save her from the orphanage and to take her home. Finally, one night, Adele's dream comes true.

While leading the elephant to the magician to try to get him to reverse the spell, Peter and his sister reunite. The magician is able to return the elephant to her home. From this point on, the two children live together with their new parents, Leo Matienne and his wife Gloria, who are unable to have children of their own.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Peter Augustus Duchene goes to the market with one coin to buy fish and bread for his superior officer, Vilna Lutz. Peter is an orphan. Instead of using the coin for the purchases, Peter buys the answer to a question from a fortune teller. The fortune teller tells Peter that his sister is alive and that he can find her by following the elephant.

The response confuses Peter for two reasons. First, there are no elephants in Baltese. Second, if his sister is alive, then this means that Vilna Lutz lied to him. When Peter returns to the Apartments Polonaise, to the attic apartment where he lives with Vilna Lutz, he confesses that he spent the coin on a fortune teller instead of the fish and bread.

Vilna Lutz punishes Peter by sending him to bed without his dinner. Peter continues to ponder who is lying to him - the fortune teller or Vilna Lutz.

Nearby, in the Bliffendorf Opera House, a magician is performing a magic show. When he performs the trick, something goes terribly wrong. An elephant falls through the roof, lands on and crushes the legs of Madam Bettine LaVaughn. This lands Madam in a wheelchair, and the magician and the elephant in prison.

The next day, Vilna Lutz sends Peter to the market square again with strict instructions to buy the oldest and hardest loaf of bread and the smallest fish he can find. Peter overhears a conversation between a customer and the fishmonger, saying that a magician made an elephant fall through the roof and crush one of the noble women's legs.

For Peter, the arrival of the elephant is the confirmation he needs that his sister is alive. In a prison cell across town, the magician thinks that his bringing the elephant is true magic. Even though it isn't the magic trick he intended the magician is pleased that he is able to create it.

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The fortune teller telling Peter to follow an elephant that doesn't currently exist foreshadows an elephant appearing in Baltese. Additionally, there is some foreshadowing that Vilna Lutz has been lying to Peter about Peter's sister, Adele, being dead. According to the fortune teller, Adele is alive and well.

The fortune teller and the beggar on the street also talk about how change is ever evolving process. This is a lesson that everyone in life must learn. Change is something that is constantly taking place. Individuals have to learn how to deal with the change



and make changes in their own lives to go along with the change, or to stand their ground in resisting the change.

As the fortune teller predicted, the elephant arrives when it is beckoned by the magician. Even though it is not the magic trick he was trying to perform, the elephant is beckoned by the magicians because it is the elephant Peter must follow on his journey to find his sister.

It seems as if Vilna Lutz is trying to toughen Peter up. He is trying to prepare Peter for the tough times in life by exposing him to old bread and small fish as part of Peter's diet.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

The chief of police is pondering how to handle an elephant that appears out of nowhere. He cannot find a law that tells him how to deal with it, so he asks his subordinates what they think they should do. One of the officers, Leo Mattiene, points out that they shouldn't punish the elephant because it did not commit the crime, but was simply the object used to commit the crime of crippling Madam LaVaughn

As Leo Matienne walks home, he thinks that the chief is asking the wrong questions. Leo believes they should be asking where the elephant came from and what the appearance means. Peter hears Leo Matienne whistling before he sees the policeman that lives in Apartments Polonaise.

Peter asks Leo if it is true about the elephant. Leo confirms it is true but doesn't know where they are keeping the elephant. Vilna Lutz, who is sick in bed with a fever, tells Peter to close the window. When Peter tells Vilna Lutz it's true about the elephant, Vilna Lutz rambles on and on about putting on his wooden foot and teaching Peter how to be a soldier like Peter's father.

On a daily basis, Madam LaVaughn visits the magician in prison. They have the same conversation every day, where Madam says she is crippled and the magician assures her he was trying to conjure lilies. This continues until Madam's manservant, Hans Ickman, puts a stop to the visits and the conversation.

Peter is looking out the window, where he can see the prison. He keeps thinking how the elephant is somewhere that he cannot find her. Vilna Lutz urges Peter to close the window and starts talking about how a war is waging somewhere nearby.

## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

It seems as if the people of Baltese don't know how to deal with change, or something that doesn't fit into their rules. This is why the police chief is having a hard time figuring out what to do with the elephant. Leo Matienne, however, is a man before his time. He ponders the true meaning of the appearance of the elephant, believing that there is significance to the elephant.

Vilna Lutz implies that Peter's family died in some kind of war. This is why he talks about Peter's father being a brave soldier. Peter remembers his mother being pregnant and Vilna Lutz mentions Peter's sister never taking a breath, which implies his sister either died during birth, or that she died when Peter's mother was killed with the baby still in her womb.



Madam and the magician continuing their daily ritual illustrates that the people of Baltese are not well equipped to deal with change. Vilna Lutz's fever is making him delirious, which is why he thinks there is still a war going on. However, what Vilna is saying is symbolic of what is happening. The elephant is waging a war to gain freedom. Peter is waging a war to find the elephant, which he believes can lead him to his sister.



# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

The people of Baltese become obsessed with the elephant. It's all that they ever talk about. They always manage to find a way to bring the elephant into their lives and their conversations. One vendor creates a pastry they name an elephant ear. Another vendor sells plaster from the caved in roof of the opera house. The fortune tellers are all busy predicting that the appearance of the elephant is a sign that the universe is changing.

Count and Countess Quintet are talking about how the appearance of the elephant is ruining the social season. The count says if his wife feels this is so that she should possess what everyone wants, which is the elephant. The countess buys the elephant from the opera house owner and the chief of police ushers the elephant through a specially built door the countess has had built in her home. Standing in the ballroom, the elephant literally becomes the center of attention for the social season.

Peter has a dream where he runs through a wheat field and goes through the open door of the home that he once shared with his parents. He hears a crying baby and picks her up in his arms. When Peter wakes up, he realizes his sister did breathe because he remembers her crying and he remembers holding her.

Also in a nearby orphanage, a young girl, Adele, dreams about the elephant. The elephant knocks on the orphanage door asking for Adele, but the nun cannot understand what the elephant is saying. Adele tries to get the elephant's attention as it walks away but the elephant turns into a mouse and scurries away.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Peter plans to meet with the elephant. He is plotting to use his relationship with Leo Mattiene to access the countess's ballroom where the elephant is. Once Peter is able to talk with the elephant, he is likely to find a way to steal the elephant, so that the elephant can lead Peter to where his sister is.

Adele thinks she is all alone in the world. She doesn't know that her brother, Peter, is alive and well. Dreams are speaking to the siblings, telling the siblings the truth. The moral of the story is that sometimes you have to follow your dreams to find the truth and to find true happiness.





# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

It's an extremely cold and snowy winter in Baltese. Countess Quintet decides to open the ballroom on the first Saturday of the month for the commoners to come to see the elephant. Leo Mattiene goes home to tell the news to Peter.

Leo and his wife talk about how lonely Peter is and how Vilna Lutz treats the boy as if he is a soldier. Leo also mentions how lonely they are, but his wife quiets him before he can suggest trying to have children of their own again.

Adele dreams about the elephant again. When she gets out of bed, she goes downstairs to find Sister Marie sleeping near the door. They talk about the night Adele arrived at the orphanage, just hours after being born. Sister Marie says the midwife said her mother wanted her to be named Adele before she died.

The beggar, Tomas, thinks about his name. The beggars' dog, once a messenger for the Queen's arm, is Iddo. He too thinks about the life and purpose he had prior to being blinded during wartime. The elephant is also thinking about her name. While it's not a name humans would understand, it's what her family calls her.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Peter is finally going to get the chance to talk with the elephant. Additionally, Peter being lonely and the Mattiennes wanting children of their own foreshadows them adopting Peter and Adele, once the siblings are reunited.

Adele, Peter and the elephant live parallel lives. Each of them is a prisoner in the home in which they live. Each of them has a burning desire to get out of their prison and to find something better out in the world.

Every person and animal in life has a name. Each of the characters, including the beggar's dog and the elephant, find their own identity in their name. It is the name their family members know them by and call them. It is the name that identifies their purpose in life.



# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Vilna Lutz's fever subsides, so he starts teaching Peter strategy again. When the subject of Adele comes up, Peter insists she's alive and Vilna Lutz insists she is dead. Vilna Lutz finally admits that the midwife took Peter's sister away because she too small for Vilna Lutz to care for. Peter vows to find his sister and never speak to Vilna Lutz again because he thinks he is a liar.

As Adele works with another orphan Lisette, Adele keeps thinking of the elephant's words from her dream—that he she's there to take the one they call Adele. When Adele tells Lisette she thinks the elephant is going to take her home, Lisette laughs at Adele. The beggar and the dog show up at the door but Lisette says they have nothing to give them.

## Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Peter knows the truth now. It proves that what the fortune teller said was true, that the truth is always changing. This is also a sign that Peter has to change was the truth comes out. Adele obsessing about the elephant's words is her need to belong. She wants to belong to a family and be loved.



# Chapters 11 and 12

## Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

The line to get to see the elephant stretches for miles. While standing in line, Peter hears the beggar mention the name Adele in one of the beggar's songs. Peter remembers promising his mother that he would take care of her. As all of the people view and touch the elephant, the elephant just wishes to die.

The countess hires a man to stand behind the elephant to collect her poop. The man used to be a stonecutter but was fired when he fell off the roof of the chapel, broke his back, and from that point on found everything to be funny.

It is Peter's turn to see the elephant. He asks about Adele, but can see in the elephant's eyes that she is heartbroken. Peter promises to get the elephant home. The elephant, for the first time, feels hope when she looks at Peter as if he knows her and understands her. Peter thinks he needs the magician's help to fulfill his promise so he runs off to find Leo Matienne.

## Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

The elephant has given up hope. Peter, however, has renewed hope. He now knows that his sister is alive. His hope is that the elephant can finally lead him to Adele. Ironically, Peter will be freeing the elephant from her own prison when he enlists the elephant to help him free Adele from her prison.



# Chapters 13 and 14

## Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Peter goes to ask Leo Matienne to take him to see the magician, when Leo's wife, Gloria, sees how thin Peter is, she makes him come in for dinner. After Peter eats, Peter tells the Matiennes the story of his father dying on the battlefield and Vilna Lutz bringing the news to them.

Peters says when his mother hears that her husband is dead, she goes into labor with his sister. he tells them about the midwife taking his sister away, about Vilna Lutz lying about his sister being dead, and about what the fortune teller said about the elephant. Peter says he has to see the magician because he needs the magician to take the elephant home or the elephant is going to die.

The elephant dreams of the boy leading her through a sunny field. The magician dreams of the elephant crashing through the ceiling and onto Madam LaVaughn. This is when Peter and Leo show up in front of the magician's cell. they tell the magician what they want. The magician finally agrees, but says he needs the elephant and Madam LaVaughn in front of him to perform the magic.

## Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Gloria Matienne sees Peter for who he truly is - a loving and caring boy that wants to change the world. Peter can see that the magician has lost hope too. When Peter sees the condition the magician is in, Peter loses faith that the magician can return the elephant home. The moral of the story seems to be to keep dreaming and to never give up hope, no matter how impossible the dream seems to be.



# Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 18

## Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 18 Summary

Madam LaVaughn stays up at night with shooting pains in her legs. When this happens, she makes the servants assemble around her while she retells the story of the night at the opera house when she was crippled. This night, Leo Matienne and Peter come knocking and request to speak with her.

At the same time, the snow begins to fall and the man responsible for holding the bucket behind the elephant, Bartok Whynn dreams about carving humans in the shape of a boy, a man with a mustache, a woman sitting. Sister Marie, at the same time, is dreaming that she is flying.

Madam LaVaughn, pushed by Hans Ickman, along with Peter and Leo Matienne are walking through the snow to the countess's home to retrieve the elephant. Bartok Whynn laughs more than normal when they say they need to take the elephant to the magician to send the elephant back to where she belongs. He stops laughing when he recognizes the people that stand before him now are the same ones he saw in his dream.

Iddo starts to bark because he feels the presence of the elephant. This awakens Adele in her bed in the orphanage. Adele leaves the orphanage, standing in the snow with bare feet and wearing her nightgown. When Sister Marie calls her name, Peter and the others are passing. Peter hears his sister's name and then picks the little girl up. He tells her that he's brother. Sister Marie says it's always good when dreams come true.

They arrive outside of the prison. Now, Iddo and Tomas are with the rest of the group that they've picked up along the way. Leo Matienne goes inside and brings out the magician. Everyone is looking at a star, which is really the planet Venus, except Peter. The magician casts his spell and the elephant disappears. Madam LaVaughn agrees to drop the charges against the magician and he is set free.

## Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 18 Analysis

The people that Bartok Whynn dreams of carving are Peter, Leo Matienne and Sister Marie. The dreams seem to be premonitions about what is going to happen, more than simply dreams. There is some truth the dreams each character is having. For Bartok Whynn, he dreams of the smiling facing of three people, which are the three people now standing before him.

Peter is slowly but surely fulfilling several people's hopes and dreams. In the process, he is also keeping his promise to his own mother. He is attempting to keep his promise to the elephant as well.



# Chapters 19 and 20

## Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Tomas and Iddo are the Matienne home, along with Peter and Adele. Occasionally, Vilna Lutz bangs on the floor and it is usually Adele that goes upstairs to check on him. The magician becomes a goatherder and marries. He never does a magic trick again. The elephant lives a long time and doesn't remember anything that happened. Eventually, the people of Baltese forget about the appearance and then the disappearance of the elephant.

The only evidence that remains is a stone carving of the group that night. It now sits on top of one of the cathedrals in Baltese.

## Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

The inference is that Adele and Peter are now living with the Matiennes. Ironically, even though they say elephants have great memories, the elephant doesn't remember any of what happened to her.



# Characters

## Peter Augustus Duchene

Peter Augustus Duchene is a ten year-old orphan. His father was a soldier killed during a battle. His mother died after giving birth to Peter's baby sister. Peter lives with one of the soldiers, Vilna Lutz, that fought with Peter's father.

Peter starts to remember things about his childhood throughout the novel. His memories, along with the fortune teller confirming that his sister Adele is alive, sends Peter on a journey to find his long lost sister. In the process of finding the elephant the fortune teller says will lead him to his sister, however, Peter realizes that the elephant needs to be returned to the home form which she came.

Peter is a very precocious child. He's wise beyond his years. He's loving and caring. This is why he helps to care for Vilna Lutz, as the man is aging and has bouts of illness that include high fevers. Peter also longs to belong, just as the elephant longs to return to where she belongs. This sentiment is what compels Peter to orchestrate the magic trick that returns the elephant to her home, while helping the other characters in the novel to return to their proper places as well.

## Vilna Lutz

Vilna Lutz is a former soldier. He fought alongside Peter Augustus Duchene's father in battle. When Peter's father is killed in battle, Vilna Lutz is the one that goes to the Duchene house to tell Peter's mother that her husband is dead. This news causes Mrs. Duchene to go into labor.

When the baby girl, Adele, is born, and Mrs. Duchene dies, Vilna Lutz agrees to take Peter to raise him. He says he cannot take the baby because she is too small. Vilna Lutz tells Peter, however, that his sister was stillborn, so that she was born dead. Vilna Lutz, however, knows the truth, that the midwife took the baby away and that the baby was alive.

Vilna Lutz lives with Peter in an attic apartment. Vilna Lutz is elderly and he is often sick. When he is sick, he experiences very high fevers. Additionally, Vilna Lutz has a wooden foot, which indicates that his foot was somehow lost—likely in a battle.

## Adele

Adele is six years old. She is just about to turn seven. Adele is Peter's biological sister. when she was a baby, the midwife brought Adele to the orphanage where she has been living ever since. Adele often dreams of an elephant coming to save her and to take her



home. In Adele's case, the dream comes true and she is able to reunite with Peter and be adopted by a new family.

## Magician

The magician is old and decrepit. He is also failing as a magician. He is trying to conjure up a bouquet of lilies for Madam LaVaughn when the magician conjures up an elephant instead. When the elephant lands on and crushes Madam LaVaughn's legs, the magician is imprisoned. When the magician is able to return the elephant to her home at the end of the novel, Madam LaVaughn drops the charges against him and the magician is set free. The magician becomes a goatherder and marries a woman that doesn't have any teeth.

## Madam Bettine LaVaughn

Madam Bettine LaVaughn is a noblewoman in Baltese. She is in the audience of the magic show when the elephant falls on her legs, crushes them and paralyzes her. For the rest of the novel, she is pushed around in a wheelchair by her manservant. She forgives the magician at the end of the novel and drops the charges against him.

## Chief of Police

The chief of police doesn't know what to do with the magician or the elephant when the accident occurs. He asks his subordinates what to do after not being able to find any laws that dictate the answer. The chief of police also makes fun of Leo Matienne for his suggestion on what to do with the elephant. When the countess buys the elephant, the chief of police delivers the elephant to the countess's home.

## Leo Matienne

Leo Matienne is one of the police officers in Baltese. He is always whistling so Peter often hears Leo coming home before he sees him. Leo Matienne lives in the apartment below Peter and Vilna Lutz in the Apartments Polonaise. Leo helps Peter throughout the novel and by the end of the novel, Leo and Gloria adopt Adele and Peter.

## Hans Ickman

Hans Ickman is the manservant to Madam Bettine LaVaughn. He often thinks of his childhood. He and his brothers had a small white dog, Rose, that could jump over the river. Hans Ickman pushes Madam LaVaughn around in her wheelchair and is present with the rest of the group when the magician casts the spell that returns the elephant home.





## Countess Quintet

Countess Quintet is the woman that buys the elephant. She thinks that everyone talking about the elephant is harming the social scene in the town. By buying the elephant, she is able to have the elephant in her ballroom and present at all of the big social events for the season.

## Sister Marie

Sister Marie runs the orphanage. She has been doing so for the last fifty years. Sister Marie is the one that answers the door when the midwife drops off Adele as a baby that is only a few hours old.

## Iddo

Iddo is the beggar's dog. Idda is black. He was once a messenger dog in the Queen's army.

## Tomas

Tomas is a beggar that lives in Baltese. Tomas turns everything into a song. His pet is a black dog, Iddo.



# Objects/Places

## Baltese

Baltese is a small town in Europe. It is also the primary setting in the novel. It is where Peter and the other characters are living when the elephant appears and disappears.

## Apartments Polonaise

Apartments Polonaise is the apartment complex where Peter lives in the attic apartment with Vilna Lutz. Leo Matienne and his wife Gloria live in the apartment below Vilna Lutz and Peter. Peter often leans out the attic window apartment to get news from Leo Matienne when Leo comes home from work.

## Bliffendorf Opera House

The Bliffendorf Opera House is where the magician was performing his magic trick. It is also where Madam Bettine LaVaughn was sitting as an audience member when the elephant came crashing through the roof.

## Elephant Ear

The elephant ear is a pastry created after the elephant incident. It is fried dough covered with sugar and cinnamon.

## Ballroom

Countess Quintet has a ballroom in her home. This is where she hosts parties at her house. When she buys the elephant, the ballroom is also where the countess keeps the elephant so it can be the central point of the room during parties.

## Orphanage of the Sisters of Perpetual Light

The Orphanage of the Sisters of Perpetual light is the orphanage in Baltese. It is also where Adele has lived her whole life. Sister Marie has been running the orphanage for the last fifty years.



## Stew

When Peter comes to the Matienne apartment, Gloria forces him to eat stew. Gloria made stew for dinner. When she sees how thin Peter is she insists that he eat some before telling Leo what he needs.

## Prison

The magician is taken to prison when the accident occurs. At first, Madam LaVaughn visits the magician in prison every day. The elephant is also put in a secret prison somewhere. Leo Matienne allows the magician out of the prison so he can cast the spell to reverse the original spell.

## Coin

At the beginning of the novel, Vilna Lutz gives Peter a coin to buy food. Peter spends the coin on the fortune teller instead.

## Stone Carving

Bartok Whynn creates a stone carving of all the people present when the magician reverses the spell to send the elephant home. Bartok Whynn installs the stone carving on top of the cathedral in Baltese.



# Themes

## Coming of Age

One of the other primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age. Peter struggles with the fact that he is an orphan, but believes that his baby sister is still alive out in the world. While Peter is only ten years old, he is really wise beyond his years. Even at a young age, he has had to deal with the loss of both of his parents and his sister. Peter deals with the consequences in life that comes with uncover the truth from the lies Vilna Lutz has been telling him his whole life.

Peter also faces having to do the right thing in life. He recognizes that the elephant doesn't belong in Baltese. This is why Peter works so hard and effortlessly to do his part to get the elephant back to where she belongs. Peter also takes on the adult responsibility of caring for his guardian, Vilna Lutz, even though Vilna Lutz is the one that is supposed to be taking care of Peter.

## Truths and Secrets

Another plot throughout the entire novel is that of the truth versus secrets. Peter continuously struggles with the fact that he thinks his sister is alive, even though Vilna Lutz is telling Peter that Adele is dead. Peter never enjoys a normal childhood because his parents are dead and he is being raised by a former soldier that is obsessed with turning Peter into a soldier as well. Additionally, Peter's guardian is so selfish that he keeps Peter from enjoying normal items in life, such as eating a balanced diet.

Vilna Lutz chooses to lie in order to protect himself. He also seems to tell lies to protect the feelings of others. For example, he lies by telling Peter his sister is dead. Vilna Lutz does this because he doesn't want to admit that he separated Peter and Adele because Vilna Lutz was afraid to take care of a baby. Additionally, Vilna Lutz assumes it will be easier for Peter to get through life thinking his sister is dead.

## Family

Family is another central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of this particular family—the Duchenes. While every family has their trials and tribulations, Peter's family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other.

In Peter's case, he struggles with wanting to have a normal childhood. He wants to find his sister and live in a home where they have a caring mother and father. This is what propels Peter to find Adele and for them to be adopted by Leo and Gloria Matienne.

Peter continues, however, to take care of Vilna Lutz, even after he and Adele become members of the Matienne family.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in the third-person point of view. The narrator of the novel is also the author of the novel, Kate DiCamillo. The narrator is telling the story as it unfolds, but does provide flashbacks of the past to help fill in the details of the plot.

The point of view of this novel is an intimate point of view that allows a reader to connect closely with the main character, Peter Augustus Duchene. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place with each of the characters in the novel without having to move out of character or interrupt the flow of the narration. Hence, the point of view works well with this novel and the author's writing style.

## Setting

The primary setting of the novel is Baltese, which is a small town somewhere in Europe. The author never states the specific time period in which the novel unfolds. The setting of this novel is important because it is about what happens to the townspeople of Baltese when an elephant suddenly appears in town during a magic show.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware of Peter's background and how he came to live with Vilna Lutz. However, as events unfold, Peter's life and his purpose in life is revealed.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel seems to stem from the 18th or 19th century. The language of the novel is not formal, however, and is easy to understand. The language is educated, strong and descriptive enough that it creates a flow that leaves the reader impressed with the words as much as the plot when the novel ends.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate to the characters in the novel and the education level of the writer. The novel is not in love with its own words, but it is descriptive enough that the reader finds enjoyment in the words as well as the plot. The language is not difficult to understand, however, and everything is clear in its context. Hence, the language of the novel fits well with the plot of the novel.

## Structure

The novel consists of 20 chapters. Each chapter ranges from one to eight pages long. The chapters tell the story both in exposition and dialogue. The author is the narrator and main character of the book, so it seems as if she is injecting her own voice throughout the novel. This allows the author to provide her own opinions of the events surrounding the setting of the novel, as well as the actions taking place within the plot.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows coming of age. The subplots involve truths and secrets and the trials and tribulations of the family.



## Quotes

"It is cold and dark, and things are not what they seem, and the truth is forever changing" (Chapter 1, p. 10).

"And strong teeth make for a strong heart and therefore a brave soldier" (Chapter 2, p. 13).

"She never drew breath. She did not breathe" (Chapter 3, p. 21).

"That is enough. I cannot bear to it anymore. I truly cannot" (Chapter 4, p. 25).

"If everyone speaks of nothing but the elephant and you desire to be the center of attention, the heart, of the social season, then you must be the one thing that everyone speaks of" (Chapter 5, p. 29).

"Madam Elephant! Here I am. Here! I am Adele. I am the one you are looking for" (Chapter 6, p. 34).

"A boy who wants very much to the elephant and he will be glad" (Chapter 7, p. 36).

"All of God's creatures have names, every last one of them" (Chapter 8, p. 41).

"I know it is true" (Chapter 9, p. 44).

"It is the one you call Adele that I am coming for to keep" (Chapter 10, p. 47).

"Look, Adele, here is your elephant" (Chapter 11, p. 49).

"I will make sure that you get home" (Chapter 12, p. 54).

"There, you foolish, beautiful boy who wants to change the world" (Chapter 13 p. 95).

"You must bring the elephant and the noblewoman here to me" (Chapter 14, p. 63).





"I have come, instead, with a most unusual personal request for Madam LaVaughn" (Chapter 15, p. 66).

"I said, what if you, like the elephant, were gone to the place you were meant, after all, to be" (Chapter 16, p. 70).

"I am your brother" (Chapter 17, p. 72).

"Let him go. Let him go" (Chapter 18, p. 78).

"I cannot take her. Truly, I cannot. She is too small" (Chapter 19, p. 78).

"But it did happen" (Chapter 20, p. 81).

## Topics for Discussion

Who is Peter Augustus Duchene? Why does he feel like there is an unanswered question in his life? What does Peter start to recall about his childhood? What is Peter's biggest demon that haunts him throughout his life? Why is this important? How does it change his life?

Discuss the relationship between Vilna Lutz and Peter Augustus Duchene. Are they like father and son, or is something else? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? Why do you think Vilna Lutz ends up taking care of Peter after his parents die? How does Vilna Lutz feel about Peter? How does Peter feel about Vilna Lutz? Why does Peter move in with the Matiennes? What does Vilna Lutz do about it?

Discuss the relationship between Leo Matienne and Peter. Why do you think Leo and his wife Gloria end up taking Peter into their home? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? How does Leo Matienne feel about Peter? How does Peter feel about Leo Matienne? Why does Leo help Peter throughout the novel? What do you think happens to Peter and Adele with the Matiennes?

Who is Vilna Lutz? What do you think causes him to have bouts of illness where he has high fevers? Why does he seem to care so much about teaching Peter how to be a soldier? Why do think the Matiennes don't intervene sooner to take Peter away from Vilna Lutz? What do you think happens to Vilna Lutz now that Peter lives with the Matiennes?

Who is Tomas? Why do you think he gets involved with townspeople? Do you think the townspeople treat him and Iddo differently now?

Who is Adele? Why do you think she dreams about the elephant coming to get her from the orphanage? Why do think she is so accepting that Peter is her brother? Do you think Adele knew all along that she had family out in the world? Do you think Sister Marie knew Peter was her brother, or anything about Adele's background that the sister didn't tell Adele?

Discuss the magic trick that brought the elephant to Baltese. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them or hold them back? Why is it an issue to the characters? Does it have anything to do with way that relationships develop and evolve? What impact does it have on the overall outcome in the novel?