



# Babar the King

*Jean de Brunhoff*

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**Babar the King** Jean de Brunhoff

Babar establishes Celesteville, the beautiful and happy city over which he and his queen reign.

## Babar the King Details

Date : Published 2002 by Methuen Children's (first published 1933)

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Author : Jean de Brunhoff

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# From Reader Review Babar the King for online ebook

## Rebecca says

What a great classic

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## Hilary says

Celestville has just been built and every elephant has a home of their own. The young elephants start school with the Old Lady and her lessons are never dull. The elephants too old for school choose a profession. In Celestville Elephants work all morning and do what they want in the afternoon, sounds like a good arrangement. As always there are lots of wonderful detailed illustrations and action packed pages, a house catches fire, a monkey mistakes a venomous snake for a stick, and a dream sequence where Hieronymus Bosch style creatures represent qualities such as anger, ignorance or sloth, highly imaginative and fun.

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## Kate says

I loved this book series and it's anthropomorphic characters and sweet illustrations as a child.

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## Brent says

Y'all still read Babar? I haven't since I read Ariel Dorfman's critique in *The Emperor's Old Clothes* in mid-1980s. Does it still appeal? It worked for me at age 4 through 6.

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## Maria says

Mais um livro que o meu filho mais novo trouxe da biblioteca da escola e que lhe li. Achei uma história longa demais para uma criança de 5 anos e ele perdeu um bocadinho o interesse

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## Abigail says

Originally published in 1933, this third Babar book picks up just where its predecessor, *The Travels of Babar*, left off, as Babar, Celeste and the Old Lady adjust to being back in the land of the elephants. When all of the many goods he purchased on his recent travels arrive by special dromedary delivery, Babar puts his grand plan into motion, proposing that the elephants build their own city, to be named Celestville after their queen. All goes according to plan, and soon the pachyderm metropolis is a reality. But just when all seems well, and the elephants are celebrating their achievement, a double tragedy strikes, in the form of a snakebite that leaves the Old Lady gravely ill, and a house fire which injures wise old Cornelius. As Babar slips into a

troubled dream that night, the question hangs in the air: which will triumph, Misfortune or Happiness...?

Although I do recall reading them as a young girl, I can't say that the Babar books have ever been amongst my particular favorites - they're interesting, the artwork is lovely, but the stories never really appealed to me, and I did not read them again and again, as I did some other titles. I would imagine that those readers who perceive in these books an apologia for colonialism (see [Should We Burn Babar?: Essays on Children's Literature and the Power of Stories](#)) will be incensed at the story here, in which Babar, with the Old Lady by his side, brings "civilization" to the elephants, in the form of urban development. For my part, I continue to waffle, as it concerns the question of Jean de Brunhoff's worldview and storytelling intent. Did he mean these books to be a glorification of France's colonization of Africa, or as a gentle parody (as Adam Gopnick has argued) of it? If the latter, does that mean that they are less problematic? I have no answers, but the parallel between France and Africa in the early twentieth century, and the humans and elephants in these stories, seems fairly clear. There were no "fierce cannibals" here, as there were in [The Travels of Babar](#) - something for which I am grateful, given the offensive way in which they were portrayed - but I can't honestly say I enjoyed the story that much. Leaving aside all political and/or ethical issues, it just felt a little disjointed to me.

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### **Patricia says**

In this Babar adventure, Babar decides to create a city for the elephants. He names it Celesteville after his wife and the Queen. This story book covers the every day life that leads to a big celebration where the Old Lady is bitten by a snake and then nearly dies. Arthur quickly kills the snake. To top it off, Cornelius is hurt in a fire that destroys his house and injures him. He accidentally started the fire with a match. Babar is distraught over all the misfortune and has a bad dream. In the dream, he sees elephant birds flying in a flock. The birds bring him positive messages of patience, courage, perseverance, learning, work, joy, happiness, health, hope, intelligence, goodness and love. These messages drive away the discouragement, cowardice, laziness, ignorance, indolence, fear, despair, misfortune, stupidity, and anger monsters. The story ends with Babar and his elephants once again happy in Celesteville. The illustrations are nice. This story does meander a lot just like life. It doesn't twirl like a merry-go-round in smooth fashion like many stories. In fact, in this Babar book, the writer even got the merry-go-round pictured wrong. It is in fact really a carousel and the elephants who built it should have known that ;)

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### **P.S. Winn says**

This is a great kids book and takes children into Celesteville, a kingdom ruled by Babar. This is just one of the many adventures the author has created.

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### **Jake says**

Mom used to watch Babar cartoons on HBO as a child, but she is having a hard time getting into the spirit of the books. Last night while we were reading this, when it mentioned that someone played the violin and Barbar played the trumpet, she said "Yeah, 'cause elephants HAVE FINGERS."

They also don't talk or wear clothes, but let's try to use our imagination here.

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## **Elizabeth says**

When I was little, I taught my stuffed babar to read with flashcards. He was an excellent student.

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## **Luisa Knight says**

Ages: 5 - 9

Cleanliness: Babar has a bad dream and there are images of scary/funny looking monsters.

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## **Megan says**

Children far and wide have enjoyed the story of Babar the little elephant and Babar the King is no exception. Jean De Brunhoff's Babar the King depicts a main character as a likable, cultured ruler of Celesteville who also just happens to be an elephant. The author reveals Babar and his elephant friends as they create the wonderful city Babar rules. The illustrations are worth celebrating as much as the beautiful community Babar leads. Hats off to Jean De Brunhoff for authoring the book and illustrating this tale too. This book has its frightening twist as Babar's dear friend has a run in with a snake, but the story in all is a merry as the Merry-Go-Round and constant celebrations in the city. I personally love this adorable pachyderm that, who has for years, created fun for young readers and we older readers too.

I would recommend this book for grades 1st through 4th.

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## **Igolder says**

For Babar books there is the original Age of Innocence (1931-1983), the Colonial Hellscape era that Ariel Dorfman showed us they represented (1983-2010), and the Gopnik Rehabilitation era (2010-present). This book has been viewed as innocent, evil, and winking at its audience: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis! To read these books to a child circa the mid-2010s is to get past their eerie similarity with Leopoldville in the atrocity that was the Belgian Congo, to remember that Laurent de Brunhoff changed many of his drawings after realizing how insensitive they were, and to view them as also mocking of French sensibilities of the 1920s. That's a lot of weight to ask a children's book to carry! I am going to add ONE more item for this book to atone for: its sidelining of the city's namesake, Queen Celeste. As my child put it, "Celeste didn't get to decide about building the city, or where to build it, but she's okay with their choices." Read it, yes, but annotate the hell out of it.

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## Debbie says

Babar the King of the Elephants decides to create a city by a river. The city is built, the elephants are all given their jobs and after the jobs are done, they get to play different games. Everyone is happy till the Old Lady gets bit by a snake and Cornelius' house burns down. King Babar is worried till he dreams give his the answers. The moral of the story is that everyone has misfortunes from time to time, but if you are not discouraged, and work hard, you can be happy.

Great moral to get at, the fact that the elephants made a beautiful city is fun and showing all of them with jobs before play time is also good. The names of the elephants were a tongue twister and some times the wording was confusing even to me. The description of some of the activities were not easily understood by my children and so the story could not flow (because we had to stop to discuss it). My oldest did enjoy the list of names and their jobs, but that was because I had trouble saying all of the names without 'blah blah'.

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## Kelly says

I loved Babar as a child, but the books seem to mystify a lot of modern readers. I don't think they're for every child, as the stories don't have a lot of forward momentum and they're also laden with some difficult vocabulary. This one is sort of a meandering slice of life dealing with the building of the town of Celesteville, and then moving around to some of the sorts of events and daily doings that happen there.

The illustrations are the sort I most loved in my childhood, with lots of background detail in which to get lost: far-away hippos in various stages of submersion, tiny snails crawling on a tin can, packages from shopping labeled "hats" and "records." I adore the statues of elephants in Grecian costumes and the little gilded elephants adorning the proscenium. (Does this make it a proboscis proscenium?!)

Especially clever is the text and music for a song Cornelius teaches the children. A note underneath it says that it is in "Old Mammoth" language, and that even Cornelius does not understand it. It's the elephant equivalent of Latin, apparently. The first verse is: "Patali dirapata. Cromda cromda ripalo. Pata pata. Ko ko ko." (I loved memorizing this sort of nonsense as a child.)

I also enjoyed the parade, which organizes the marchers by trade. There's a group of pastry chefs, a group of actors and clowns, etc.

It's a bit odd, but nonetheless exciting when a few darker events occur in a row. Babar laments that they have tainted an otherwise wonderful day, but muses that that's how life is.

Recommended for children whose reading level and curiosity surpass their age. It's a storybook, yes, but an atypical one. (Also recommended for weirdo adults.)

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