

## ***Water for Elephants* in ANY Class**

The SJSU Campus Reading Program's main goal is to improve the reading habits of our students so they can reach high levels and motivation for lifelong learning. There are many ways to help promote reading. For example:

- Carry around a book you are currently reading.
- Let your students know what you're reading and ask them what they are reading.
- Use references to books in your classes as appropriate.
- Use the campus reading book to stimulate inquiry and curiosity in your class. Listed below is a sampling of questions for a variety of disciplines. If you have more to add, please send them to Annette Nellen at [anellen@sjsu.edu](mailto:anellen@sjsu.edu).

### Accounting/Finance

- What unique accounting issues might exist for a circus? Are animals depreciable? What items would you expect to see on the balance sheet?
- How do you secure financing for a traveling circus – what is available, how is it managed, etc?

### History

- The story of *Water for Elephants* is certainly shaped by it taking place during the Great Depression. Workers, desperate for jobs, accept poor working conditions that include not always getting paid and living in substandard quarters. What would have been different had it not been the Depression?
- Is the story a good depiction of the Depression? Why or why not?
- Was alcohol as easy to get and transport during Prohibition as depicted in the story?

### Organization & Management

- How to deal with organizational issues, such as control, motivation, management, supervision, strategy, etc., with such a non-traditional and loosely-organized entity.
- HR issues related to some of the above, as well as notions of compensation, recruitment, etc.
- Power issues – who holds the power in the organization, how do they get it and maintain it, what does it mean to have power, other related questions about distribution of authority, power and politics.
- Operations – certainly some discussions around how to manage and organize the logistics, supplies, optimization of resources, etc.
- Organization culture – what is it, how is it developed, how is it changed, how is it managed, why is it the way it is, etc.
- Impact of the external environment on the decisions made by “management” - the depression, etc.
- Resource allocation and securing of resources, in general.

### Marketing

- How did the circus market itself, how could it have done it differently?
- What are the differences in how things were marketed then and now?

### Science

- Can an elephant and a human communicate?
- How did the bad alcohol (“jake”) paralyze Camel?
- Was the old Jacob getting senile? What does that mean?

### Health Sciences/Psychology

- What can happen to an old person when they are moved from their home to a retirement home? Why?
- What could have been done to make the old Jacob feel better about himself at the retirement home?
- What has happened to Jacob such that when he is taking his finals, he can't see the words on the page?

### Engineering & Computer Science

- How did the big tent stay up?
- What technology is needed to move the circus from town to town and get it set up easily? What would you recommend to make the job even easier?
- How might a computer and software have helped the Benzini Brothers Circus?