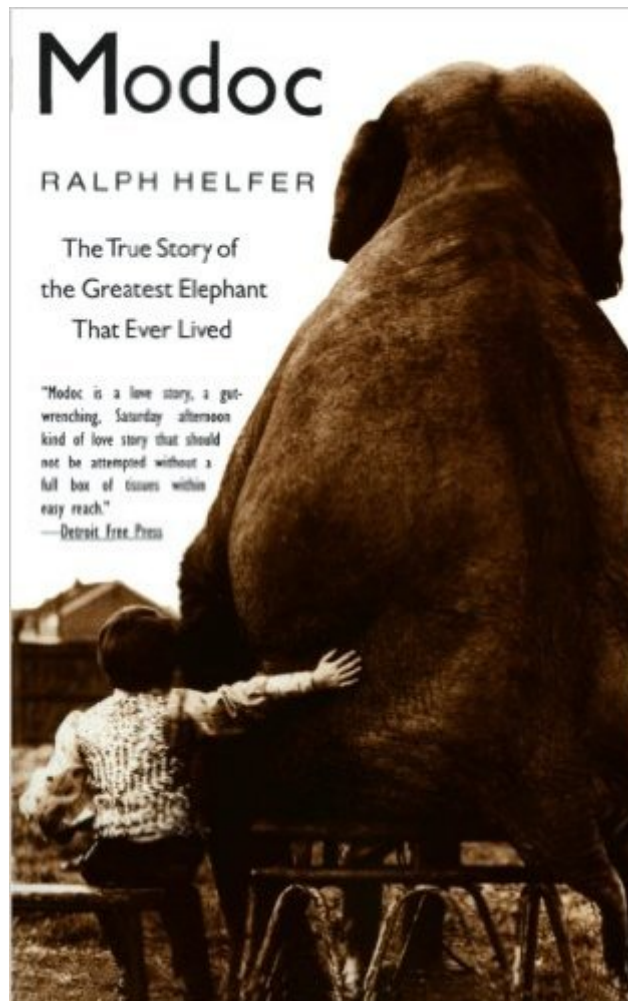


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Modoc: The True Story Of The Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived



Synopsis

Spanning several decades and three continents, *Modoc* is one of the most amazing true animal stories ever told. Raised together in a small German circus town, a boy and an elephant formed a bond that would last their entire lives, and would be tested time and again; through a near-fatal shipwreck in the Indian Ocean, an apprenticeship with the legendary Mahout elephant trainers in the Indian teak forests, and their eventual rise to circus stardom in 1940s New York City. *Modoc* is a captivating true story of loyalty, friendship, and high adventure, to be treasured by animal lovers everywhere.

Book Information

Paperback: 325 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; 7/27/98 edition (August 26, 1998)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-0060929510

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (568 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #64,252 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#1 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Circus](#) [#53 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Mammals](#) [#69 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Elephants](#)

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Let me start off by saying that I do love this book. It's a beautiful story that is well written and filled with emotion. Admittedly, this book had me in tears a few times. It is definitely aimed at tugging the heart strings. What disappoints me about this book is that it claims to be a true story, when it is indeed mostly fiction. There are only tiny bits of fact in there, and those facts are mostly exaggerated. Things that started tipping me off:

1. The author describes most of the Indian elephants (aka Asian elephants) as having tusks. In reality, tusks on Asian elephants are pretty uncommon.
2. The author describes Modoc as having tusks, even to the end of the book soon before she died. Yet in the pictures in the book, the elephant shown has no tusks at all.
3. A circus owner on the hunt for *years* in a foreign country all for one elephant? I doubt that seriously.
4. No dates are given, and for

being a work of "fact", I found it odd that no sources are ever listed except for very vague comments (i.e. saying that newspapers wrote articles, but never naming any specific paper)⁵. Most information cannot be found except in reference to this particular book.⁶ There is an act of a bull's mating with a cow (bull=male elephant, cow=female elephant) that seems way over the top and incredibly ferocious, quite unlike actual mating "rituals" among elephants. After some extensive research, including research with the Circus Historical Society, I discovered that many elephants were named Modoc, the most famous being "Big Modoc" owned by the Ringling Bros Circus.

This is a really incredible and moving story about how Bram Gunterstein and his elephant Modoc grew up together and shared all of their lives together except for the years when they were separated after the circus they were in sold all of the animals. I love animals, and it's nice to see a story about the bond between a human and an elephant; most human-animal stories feature dogs, cats, horses, ponies, and sometimes birds and small mammals like guinea pigs. It's also told in a very lively and page-turning way, which makes it a quick read. Some reviewers have suggested that there's no way Bram and Modoc could have had all of those adventures, like being shipwrecked, the mystical psychic encounter with the Raja's white elephant in the middle of the night, the war in Burma around the time of WWI, and all of their circus adventures, but many times truth is stranger than fiction, even if Mr. Helfer might have taken artistic license with some of the things he obviously wasn't there for. My main problem with the story is that dates are only given maybe two or three times. We're not even told what year it is when the story begins. That makes it really hard to keep track of how old the two main characters are over the years and through their many adventures. And where are all of the important world events going on during this time, particularly WWI (which we only see a little of towards the end of their stay in Burma, when the liberation army comes to their village and terrorises everyone) and WWII? Don't they have any impact on the lives of these characters and the events they're taking part in? Also, a lot is made of Mr. North's "racial attitudes," but the only thing Jewish about Bram that I saw in the book is his last name.

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