

# The Elephant in the Room

Written by Holly Goldberg Sloan

Rocky Pond Books

978-0-7352-2995-2 | Trade Paperback  
272 pages | \$7.99 | Lexile: 790L



Penguin  
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## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Authors use many different craft moves to establish characterization and move the plot along. Holly Goldberg Sloan is excellent at using indirect/implicit character development by “showing” the reader rather than “telling” the reader directly. It is up to the reader to use the clues and actions to understand and develop the whole character.

## LEARNING TARGETS

1. Students will be able to identify indirect/implicit characterization within the text.
2. Students will be able to infer what the author is showing through indirect/implicit characterization.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

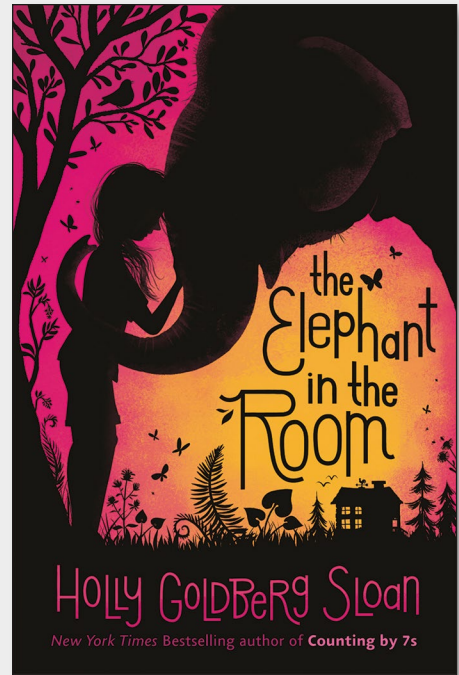
- *The Elephant in the Room* by Holly Goldberg Sloan (Chapter 27 pages 157-164)
- Show and Tell Analysis Chart

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- Step 1:** Reread chapter 27 aloud together.
- Step 2:** Introduce the Show and Tell Analysis Chart. Be sure students understand that the evidence they will be providing is inferred, or evidence the author is showing the reader without explicitly stating characteristics.

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## SUMMARY

Missing her mother who has returned to Turkey to resolve an immigration problem, sixth-grader Sila welcomes a very large distraction in her life when she helps a surprising new friend rescue a circus elephant.

**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION** (cont'd)

- Step 3:** Use the statement, *Mateo is very smart*, as an example. Talk through how the evidence connects directly to the character trait the author is showing.
- Step 4:** Have students work with a partner to complete *Sila is upset about her mother's absence*. Once students have completed that character trait, have them share their evidence with the group and compare thoughts.
- Step 5:** Have students complete the *Mrs. Lopez cares about Sila and her situation* character trait independently.

## Show and Tell Analysis

Part of an author's craft is to use indirect or implicit characterization. This allows the reader to take the clues from a character's behavior, appearance, dialogue or interaction with other characters to determine what the author is showing. Using evidence from chapter 27 of *The Elephant in the Room*, determine how the author is showing the reader different characteristics of characters.

Character Trait	Showing the reader: Indirect or implicit characterization evidence
Mateo is very smart.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "People think elephants drink that way, but they don't. Her trunk is really a nose and an upper lip. They can suck stuff into the trunk, but then they shoot it back out into their mouths. It's not a drinking straw." p 158</li> <li>• "Cultural heritage is the selected legacy of both physical and intangible attributes of a group passed from one generation to another." p 163</li> <li>• "Gio nodded. 'Mateo, you have an impressive mind.'" p 164</li> <li>• "Sila added, 'I don't even totally understand what you just said, but Mateo. I agree.'" p 164</li> </ul>
Sila is upset about her mother's absence.	
Mrs. Lopez cares about Sila and her situation.	