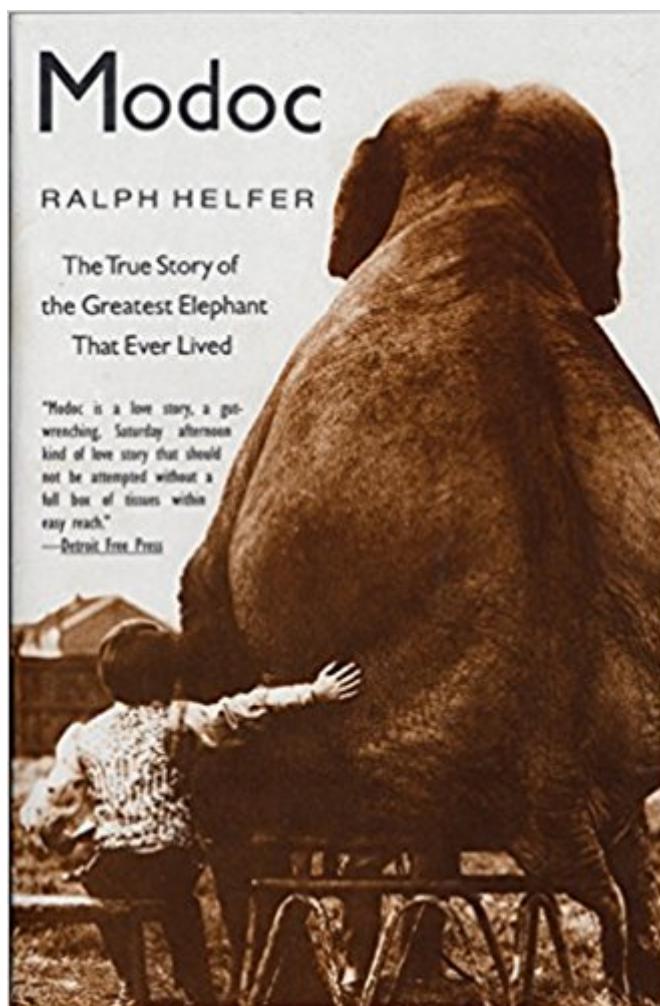


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# Modoc: The True Story Of The Greatest Elephant That Ever Lived



## 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

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Best Sellers Rank: #163,802 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Circus #116 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Elephants #127 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Mammals

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Modoc is the joint biography of a man and an elephant born in a small German circus town on the same day in 1896. Bram was the son of an elephant trainer, Modoc the daughter of his prize performer. The boy and animal grew up devoted to each other. When the Wunderzircus was sold to an American, with no provision to take along the human staff, Bram stowed away on the ship to prevent being separated from his beloved Modoc. A shipwreck off the Indian coast and a sojourn with a maharajah were only the beginning of the pair's incredible adventures. They battled bandits, armed revolutionaries, cruel animal trainers, and greedy circus owners in their quest to stay together. They triumphed against the odds and thrilled American circus audiences with Modoc's dazzling solo performances, only to be torn apart with brutal suddenness, seemingly never to meet

again. Hollywood animal trainer Ralph Helfer rescued Modoc from ill-treatment and learned her astonishing story when Bram rediscovered her at Helfer's company. His emotional retelling of this true-life adventure epic will make pulses race and bring tears to readers' eyes. --Wendy Smith

Grade 3-5â "From her early days in Germany to a starring role in Americas Ringling Brothers Circus by way of shipwreck and months of teak hauling in India, Modocs story matches her larger-than-life size. The elephants life is intertwined with that of a boy with whom she was raised from infancy and who became her longtime circus partner. According to the book jacket, the author owned Modoc for the last 20 years of her life. The story is adapted from his adult book, Modoc. The large picture-book format is the typical choice for Lewins fine watercolors, boldly portraying the dramatic episodes of the elephants life and the story of friendship, separation, and reunion. This bold and heartwarming adventure tale should have wide appeal.â "Margaret Bush, Simmons College, Boston Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is actually is a child's book, but I enjoyed it very much. I have used it in the summer reading program at our local library and was surprised at how many adults would stop and listen to it. It is easy for youngsters understand and they like the pictures. It works well in teaching children how important to be kind to animals, and shows the bond that can form between animals and people.

I was significantly disappointed to learn a book promoted as true was far from factual. As I was reading it I thought "this is to good to be true" and, alas, it apparently was. It is a great story but I can't help but feel that had the author might better have promoted it as a work of fiction based on some degree of truth. Had he done so, he would have left fewer readers disappointed and would have earned, perhaps, more respect for his significant ability to tell a compelling story. Bram buries his wife only to find the evil Mr. North standing over him in a remote village in the middle of nowhere? Please.

I think anyone who reads this book will both fall in love (with the story and elephants in general) and feel disappointed after when they find out that it's probably not even loosely tied in to a real tale. Like so many other people I started googling the unfindable "facts" in the story -- and also dug a little deeper into elephant-based stories as well. I have always felt sorry for the captured elephants

who eventually go beserk in some circus ring or village square, while assuming their breakdown has come from human cruelty around them. Naturalists remind us of the reality of wild elephants, pointing out how warm and fuzzy their community life is with one another and toward their young -- but making it clear that if the gaping tourists in the Land Rover get too close the dinosaur-sized creature will knock over a vehicle with ease and step on some human body parts as well. Without hesitation. I imagine with the elephants intelligence and family loyalty there are as many personalities and attitudes as there are situations elephants have found themselves in, whether it be a zoo, a circus, a form of daily transportation or a sanctuary. In the end I think the truth of this book is that a Modoc is possible. Haven't we all heard of or read touching stories about close unique relationships between an elephant and a person? Coming to that conclusion made me feel better about the question of whether or not this story of a boy named Bram and his soulmate Modoc really existed. While I read the book they felt real and, fictional or no, they awakened me to a deeper appreciation of elephants.

I just finished this book, and throughout, was struck by the unbelievability of the close calls that Modoc saved them from, the 2 perfect little Harelequin-style romances, the fictionally-bad bad guys, the errors in basic Indian geography and Indian culture, the repeated references to sweating elephants (they don't sweat). There were many holes in the storytelling that tell of thinly crafted social situations and heavy melodrama. It was strange that the author discounted the bond that Modoc would have had with his mother. That was never mentioned, it would have been an important factor, but the author wanted to present that Bram was the only being that Modoc could love (this is a bit codependent). There is no way an English speaking white boy traveling on an elephant was going to find his way to Burma by wandering east and asking directions! And why would Bram write Gertie a letter saying goodbye after not writing her once before, and after knowing Sian for just a few days? I did love the relationship between Bram and Modoc, but beings do have to part sometimes, and this author was not going to allow these two to part. I definitely cried several times... I loved the spiritual sections of connecting us to nature and God through animal relationships... though, again, he didn't represent Hindu philosophy really. I appreciated the rich story telling of adventures at sea and in the jungles of India, it is great fun like Treasure Island is fun. I went to the internet to learn more about Bram Gunterstein and his elephant. I was so disappointed to realize that this man never existed. There were no other accounts of his life or any photos... just this book and some helpful reviews. I rated this 3 stars because I adored reading about the behavior of the elephant, her way of comforting, greeting, knowing, communicating... being

joyful, mischievous and playful. It felt like the author wanted to justify circus-performing animals using Modoc to prove that elephants love performing and if they retire, that is like death, they will feel useless. That, I do not believe at all! That is anthropomorphising and projecting codependent tendencies of man onto animals that are very happy just being and living in a natural state. This was an enticing read that I didn't want to put down, and I always love reading things that show how special elephants really are, but felt frustrated by the holes, the immature simple dialogue, and the obvious fictional aspect of the stories that had me rushing through the book to get it done.

I loved this book! It made me laugh and cry with such a heartwarming story. If you love elephants I would definitely suggest this book, it perfectly depicts their compassionate, loving, loyal nature. I know some people are saying they do not like it because it is not true or Helper over exaggerates everything, but that is apart of storytelling. Helper discloses that this is the retelling of a story he heard from Bram, Modoc's owner. Whether you choose to believe it or not, it is a marvelous and captivating story.

Good story but far from true! Reading it to my seven-year-old daughter this summer and having to edit some parts. It's poorly written and totally fictitious (the subtitle is incredibly misleading) but it would be wonderful to imagine such a touching relationship between a boy and an elephant ever existed. In other places in the animal/elephant training world, I'm sure it has. Buy it anyway and read it if you haven't already. It's worth it if you love animals.

Billed as a true story of an amazing elephant and her equally amazing handler. I highly doubt it but it was captivating reading that kept me quite interested in each new page.

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