

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## The White Elephant

by Garf Collins

“Your subject for next week’s story is ‘The White Elephant’,” Mr Smith said, as he looked at his depleted English class, “there’s only eleven of you owing to the COVID restrictions, but in one way that’s not a bad thing because the best ten are to be published in the school magazine. Parents and others are being invited to bid a sum of money for the story of their choice. All proceeds will go towards school funds. Unfortunately, this means that one of your stories will have to be left out. I hope this will be an incentive for you to do your absolute best.”

James Murray raised his hand, and when invited to speak by Smudger, as the boys called Mr Smith, he asked, “What is a white elephant?”

“It is a term colloquially used to denote an item which is no longer wanted, but is hard to find a place for without actually throwing it away.”

That evening, James sat at home sucking his pencil, and wondering what sort of story he could write about a white elephant. English was not his best subject, and he still struggled with it in year 9. Eventually, he began,

‘Once upon a time,’ and then quickly crossed it out and replaced it with, ‘Back in the day in a small village in Africa, the inhabitants were worried by a family of elephants which kept barging onto their fields and eating their crops. They knew these animals had protected status, and so all they could do it was to keep frightening them off. One of the young elephants was almost pure white. He was an albino which meant that something was wrong with his genes and there was no colouring in his body at all.

The other elephants seem to want to have nothing to do with him, and they did their best to avoid him. The village elders came up with a plan to deter the elephants by using this albino. They captured him and managed to tie him to a large stake at the edge of the village. Because they regularly fed Blanco as they began to call him, he accepted his lot as a village pet. Now, because the other elephants want to avoid being near Blanco, the villagers no longer had their crops eaten before they could harvest them.

After reading over his story, James was quite pleased with it, and he happily gave it to Smudger the next day.

At the end of the week, Mr Smith sat at his desk, reading over the stories submitted by his class. After careful deliberation, he chose the ten to be published, leaving one of them aside.

It was entitled 'The White Elephant' by James Murray.