

Creative Activities for *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate (Grade 5)

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Summary:

The One and Only Ivan is a heartwarming story about Ivan, a silverback gorilla who has lived in a cage at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade for 27 years. His life takes a turn when he befriends a baby elephant named Ruby, and he begins to reconsider his existence and the life of captivity he leads. This poignant tale explores themes of friendship, art, and the deep desire for freedom.

Key Themes:

1. **Friendship and Solidarity** - Ivan's relationships with Stella the elephant and Bob the dog highlight the importance of companionship.
2. **Freedom and Captivity** - The story explores Ivan's growth as he questions the ethics of life in captivity.
3. **Art and Expression** - Ivan's paintings become a symbol of hope and a call for change.

Main Characters:

- **Ivan** - A thoughtful and introspective silverback gorilla.
- **Stella** - An older, wise elephant who inspires change.
- **Bob** - A witty and loyal stray dog who is Ivan's closest friend.
- **Ruby** - A young elephant whose arrival prompts Ivan to act.
- **Mack** - The owner of the Big Top Mall who struggles to keep the circus afloat.

Setting:

The story is set primarily in a circus-themed shopping mall, the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade.

Main Problems:

Ivan struggles with the morality of his life in captivity. Ruby's presence forces Ivan to confront his past and the reality of their situation.

Resolution:

Ivan channels his artistic talent to communicate a message that leads to both his and Ruby's eventual freedom and relocation to a zoo where they can live more naturally.

Instructional Sections:

Comprehension Questions:

- What kind of animal is Ivan and where does he live?
- Who are Ivan's closest friends at the Big Top Mall?
- What does Ivan use to create his art, and why is it important to him?
- Why does Ivan decide to help Ruby, and what does this reveal about his character?
- List the main events that lead to Ivan and Ruby's relocation. Put them in order.
- "Ivan enjoys living at the Big Top Mall." True or False? Explain your answer.
- What causes Ivan to start painting pictures that send a message, and what impact does it have?
- In your own words, describe how Ivan feels about the arrival of Ruby using the context clues from the book.

Discussion Prompts:

- How do Ivan's friendships influence his decisions throughout the story?
- Imagine if Ivan's story had taken place in the wild. How might his life and friendships be different?
- What can we learn about compassion and empathy from Ivan's journey? How can we apply these lessons in our own lives?

Creative Activity Ideas:

- **Drawing Dreamscapes:** Have students draw what they imagine Ivan's ideal home would look like. Encourage them to include elements that symbolize freedom and happiness.
- **Role Play Reenactment:** In small groups, students can act out scenes where Ivan communicates through his art, exploring how creative expression leads to change.
- **Think, Pair, Share:** Students write a short piece about a time they stood up for a friend or a cause they believe in, then pair up to share their stories.
- **Story Expansion:** Invite students to write an alternative ending to the book where Ivan and Ruby remain at the mall but transform it with their art.

- **Empathy Workshop:** Using digital media, students create a short photo journal from Ivan's perspective, capturing his day-to-day life and emotions.

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