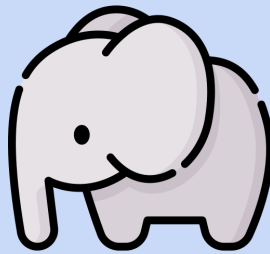


The Blind Men and the Elephant

John Godfrey Saxe



Task 1: Read all eight stanzas of the poem with your partners. Difficult words are defined in the comment section on the right. After reading, copy/paste the missing lines into the yellow spaces to complete each stanza. When you finish, discuss the questions on the next page.

(I) It was six men of Indostan To learning much inclined, Who went to see the Elephant (Though all of them were blind), That each by observation...	(V) The <i>Forth</i> reached out his eager hand, And felt about the knee. “What most this wondrous beast is like Is mighty plain,” quoth he; “T’is clear enough the Elephant...
• ...Might satisfy his mind.	• ...Is very like a tree!”
(II) The <i>First</i> approached the Elephant, And happening to fall Against his broad and sturdy side, At once began to bawl: “God bless me! - but the Elephant...	(VI) The <i>Fifth</i> , who chanced to touch the ear, Said, “E’en the blindest man Can tell what this resembles most; Deny the fact who can, This marvel of an Elephant...
• ...Is very like a wall!	• ...Is very like a fan!”
(III) The <i>Second</i> , feeling of the tusk, Cried: “Ho! - what have we here So very round and smooth and sharp? To me ‘t is mighty clear This wonder of an Elephant...	(VII) The <i>Sixth</i> no sooner had begun About the beast to grope, Than, seizing on the swinging tail That fell within his scope, “I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant...
• ...Is very like a spear!”	• ...Is very like a rope!”
(IV) The <i>Third</i> approached the animal, And happening to take The squirming trunk within his hands, Thus boldly up and spake: “I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant...	(VIII) And so these men of Indostan Disputed loud and long, Each in his own opinion Exceeding stiff and strong, Though each was partly in the right...
• ...Is very like a snake!”	• ...And all were in the wrong!

Missing Lines

• Is very like a tree!” • Is very like a wall!” • And all were in the wrong!	• Is very like a fan!” • Is very like a spear!” • Is very like a snake!”
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- Is very like a rope!”

- Might satisfy his mind.

Task 2: Discuss the questions below. You do NOT have to write.

1. What do you think about the poem?
2. How does this story serve as a metaphor for situations in life?
3. How does it serve as a metaphor for culture, learning culture, and teaching culture?
4. What is the significance of the fact that the six men were blind?
5. In what ways are we blind to the culture of others or blind to our own culture and biases?
6. What does this make you think about the way that separate cultures make sense of the world?
7. In the first stanza, the author says the blind men were, “*to learning much inclined*”. This means they were intelligent and well educated people. How does that detail add to the message of the poem?