

Gray Elephants in Denmark

The teacher tells the class that many people in a large group can be often persuaded to think about the same thing when presented with several statements. For instance if I said think about something that is cold, good to eat, white and made with milk most people will think about vanilla ice cream. What if I started by allowing each of you a free choice to think about anything. Could we find a way that even then many people in the group can be persuaded to think about the same thing.

Each student in the class is asked to think about a small number and is then instructed to perform the following operations **silently**.

1. Pick a small number
2. Double the number.
3. Add 8 to the result.
4. Divide the result by 2.
5. Subtract the original number.
6. Convert this into a letter of the alphabet.
A = 1 , B = 2 , C = 3 , D = 4 , E = 5 , F = 6 , G = 7 , H = 8 , I = 9 , J = 10
K = 11 , L = 12 , M = 13 , N = 14 , O = 15 , P = 16 , Q = 17 , R = 18 , S = 19
T = 20 , U = 21 , V = 22 , W = 23 , X = 24 , Y = 25 , Z = 26
7. Think of the name of a country which starts with this letter.
8. Think of an animal whose name starts with the country's second letter.
9. Think of the color of that animal.

The teacher then says "I wonder how many of you are thinking about gray elephants in Denmark." Most of the class will respond that is exactly what they were thinking

Example

Pick a number $n_1 = 12$

Multiply by 2 $n_2 = 24$

Add 8 $n_3 = 24 + 8 = 32$

Divide by 2 $n_4 = 32 / 2 = 16$

Subtract the first number $n_5 = 16 - 12 = 4$

Convert the number into a letter in the alphabet

A = 1 , B = 2 , C = 3 , D = 4 , E = 5 , F = 6 , G = 7 , H = 8 , I = 9 , J = 10

K = 11 , L = 12 , M = 13 , N = 14 , O = 15 , P = 16 , Q = 17 , R = 18 , S = 19

T = 20 , U = 21 , V = 22 , W = 23 , X = 24 , Y = 25 , Z = 26

Your number is 4 you have the letter D. There are few countries that start with the letter D
Many people will choose Denmark.

The second letter of Denmark is E. There are many animals whose first letter is E
but many people will choose Elephant.

The color of an Elephant is Grey.

Is it possible that you are thinking of a Grey Elephant in Denmark ?????

There are elephants in Denmark: Three gray elephants, Kungrao (M), Surin (F) and
Tonsak (F) reside in the Copenhagen Zoo.

Not everyone will get the same outcome but far more than half will. Remember that way
the problem was set up claimed that **many** people in a large group can be driven to think
about the same thing.

The trick works in most parts of the world. It works best with people who have a strong
knowledge of geography. Students in junior high may be at that level. High school and
college students are even more likely to have it work for them. Students in Europe would
almost all get the desired ending. Students from the Caribbean may think of an "ostrich in
Dominica" instead.

Why the trick works

Pick a number $n_1 = n$

Multiply by 2 $n_2 = 2n$

Add 8 $n_3 = 2n + 8$

Divide by 2 $n_4 = n + 4$

Subtract the first number $n_5 = 4$

You always get 4

Convert the number into a letter in the alphabet

A = 1 , B = 2 , C = 3 , D = 4 , E = 5 , F = 6

You always get the letter D.

There are few countries that start with the letter D. Many people will choose Denmark.

The second letter of Denmark is E. There are many animals whose first letter is E but many people will choose Elephant.