

# Group Hug

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen  
based upon the picture book  
written by Jean Reidy and illustrated by Joey Chou

★ Including Storytime Activities! ★



Published by  
Henry Holt and Company  
Godwin Books

**Jean Reidy**  
**Author, *Group Hug***

Jean Reidy's bestselling and award-winning picture books have earned their spots as favorites among readers and listeners of all ages and from all over the world. She is honored to be a three-time winner of the Colorado Book Award, a Parent's Choice Gold Award Winner, a Charlotte Zolotow Honor winner and recognized on "Best of" lists by School Library Journal, the New York Times, NPR and Amazon. Jean writes from her home in Colorado where she lives just a short walk from her neighborhood library ... which she visits nearly every day.



**Joey Chou**

**Illustrator, *Group Hug***

Joey Chou was born in Taiwan and moved to sunny California in his early teens. There he received his BFA from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Joey works by day as a visual development artist on feature animated films, and by night as a picture book illustrator. He has illustrated such books as *Group Hug*, *When the Snow Is Deeper Than My Boots Are Tall*, *Ruby's Chinese New Year*, *Monster & Son*, and *Disney Parks Presents: It's A Small World*.



**Marcie Colleen**  
**Curriculum Writer**

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides, Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at [www.thisismarciecolleen.com](http://www.thisismarciecolleen.com).

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## How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *Group Hug* is designed for students in kindergarten through second grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Group Hug* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as teaching tools throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

## Book Information



**Group Hug**

**Age Range: 4 – 8 years**

**Grade Level: Preschool – 2**

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*There once was a slug, / needing someone to hug.*

When Slug happens upon a lonely beetle, he knows just what to do. He gives him a big hug—and then the two friends decide to pass it along. They meet Mouse, who's down in the dumps, Skunk, who's a bit smelly, and more and more animals, until their group hug stretches wide and tall. But when Bear comes along, will there be enough hug to share? This delightful picture book encourages kindness and goes to show "that a hugger finds happiness 'longside the hugged!"

"[A] sweetly endearing charmer, highlighting kindness . . . Readers will embrace this captivating winner." —*Kirkus Review*, **starred review**

"Together, text and art radiate a sense of unalloyed communal joy." —*Publishers Weekly*

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★ Perfect for Storytime

# **English Language Arts**

## **Reading Comprehension**

Before reading *Group Hug*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: front cover, back cover, title page, etc.

- Look at the cover illustration. Describe what you see.
- How many different animals do you see? Can you name them all?
- How would you describe what the animals are doing?
- Choose one of the animals and mimic what they are doing. How does it make you feel?
- Can you guess what the story might be about?

Now read or listen to the book. Help students summarize in their own words what the book.

- How is Slug feeling at the beginning of the book?
- Why might Slug need someone to hug?
- Slug's hug turns into a group hug as he meets many others in need of a hug. Create a chart, such as the one below, including whom Slug meets and the emotion behind why they need a hug.

<b>Who</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Explain how they might be feeling in your own words</b>
Beetle	"a lonely ol' bug"	All alone and wishes for a friend
Mouse	"A case of the grumps" "hit a few bumps and was down in the dumps"	Feeling cranky, upset that whatever she wanted to happen isn't happening, frustrated
Skunk	"lost control of his smell"	Scared, was frightened by something Squirrel did, embarrassed
Squirrel	"Squirrel had been sprayed"	Grossed out, upset, maybe angry at the smell and Skunk, disgusted
Beaver		
Porcupine		
Groundhog		

- Just when it seems like there are hugs for everyone, who comes along?
- How is Bear feeling?
- Why do some of the other animals run away?
- When you look at the picture of everyone running away from Bear, how do you feel?
- How does Slug react?
- Optional: Pair up with another person and pretend to be Slug and Bear. How does it make you feel when they hug? (If not comfortable hugging, children can high-five or pat each other on the back.)
- Why do you think others join in hugging Bear?

BONUS: Create an original story about the animals in *Group Hug*. Students can work individually or as a class.

- Art center ~ Provide a variety of art materials including crayons, pencils, markers, paint, scissors, colored paper, old magazines, and glue for students to illustrate the scenes for their stories.
- Drama center ~ Provide puppets, costumes, and props so students can recreate *Group Hug* or their new stories.

Now look at the two names on the cover.

- Who is the author? What does an author do?
- Who is the illustrator? What does an illustrator do?

## Critical Thinking

In fiction stories, a character usually changes in some way. Do you think any of the animals changed in the story? How? (*analyzing, inferring, giving support to an idea*)

How would the story be different if Slug only wanted to hug some of the animals and left others out? (*predicting, cause and effect*)

What do you think is the message of this story? (*empathy, kindness, friendship, compassion, inclusion* )

## Writing Activities

### "You Need a Hug?" ~ Point of View

Either as a class or individually, explore each scene in *Group Hug* from the point of view of the animal that is new to the hug.

- What are they are thinking and doing?

- How do they feel?
- What would they say to Slug and the others?
- How do you think the others make this animal feel?
- If this animal was to write a letter to Slug, what would they say?

Advanced classes will be able to write *Group Hug* from another's point of view. However, classes can also create captions and thought bubbles for the illustrations.

## **Write the Scene**

*Group Hug* is written in very sparse language. Meaning there are few words. Choose one of the moments in *Group Hug* and create a larger scene. For example, what is lonely Beetle doing when he bumps into Slug? How do they feel? What else do they say? Be sure to include a beginning, middle, and end.

## **Mixed-Up Feelings Jars** ★

Using clear wide-mouth plastic jars, create some mixed-up feelings jars.

Provide students with slips of paper, each including the name of a feeling on it.

Students should color each feeling in whatever color they think fits. On the back of each slip of paper, students should write why they might feel this way. Then put the papers into the jar.

- Explain to students that sometimes we feel several different feelings all at once. (Pull a few feelings out of the jar and hold in your hand.)
- Then with the lid on the jar, shake the jar. Explain to students that sometimes, especially at times of big changes and loss, we may have mixed-up feelings. Having mixed-up feelings can be confusing so it is helpful to talk about our feelings.
- Shake the jar again. Ask the students to predict what three feelings you will pull out of the jar with your eyes closed.
- Pull three feeling papers out of the jar. Were the predictions correct? Explain that especially in a time of grief or big change or stress, feelings can be unpredictable.

## Language Activities

### It's Rhyme Time

*Group Hug* is written in rhyme. Here are some activities to help introduce rhyming to your class.

#### Engine and Caboose

Introduce the concept of producing rhyming words with train engines and caboose pictures or objects. Explain that when you make rhyming words, the caboose will always stay the same but the engines will be different. Pick a sound for the caboose (e.g., "at") and place many different engines in front to make rhyming words (e.g., h-, m-, c-).

#### "I Spy"

Start the activity by sitting with the children in a large circle. Provide the children with a sentence containing two rhyming words, e.g. "I spy a chair and a bear." The first object name is something in the room and the second object name doesn't have to be visible in the room. Have the child on your right create her own "I Spy" sentence. You may want to place objects around the room that are easy to rhyme so you can point them out to the children if they need suggestions.

#### Fill in the Blank

Re-read *Group Hug* aloud. When you get to the end of a rhyming sentence, pause and have the children raise their hands and give the correct rhyming word to complete the sentence.

For example:

*"There once was a slug,  
needing someone to hug.*

*Shrug.*

*Along came a beetle,  
a lonely ol' \_\_\_\_\_."*

Offer opportunities for the children to make up silly sentences using other words that rhyme but don't make sense. Continue with the rest of the book until all the children have had opportunities to rhyme.



This can be done with other rhyming books, as well.

### Rhyming Sounds Cube

For this activity, you'll need several cubes made from wood blocks or foam. Write a different consonant on each side of the cubes. On a piece of paper (or blackboard) write a two-letter combination beginning with a vowel and ending with a consonant, such as "it," "un" or "ed" six times. Have the student roll a cube to reveal a consonant. Have the student write the consonant from the cube in front of one of the two-letter combinations. For example, if the student rolls a "B," she can place it in front of "ed" to create "bed." Repeat the procedure until the student creates six rhyming words.

## **Speaking and Listening Activities**

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *Group Hug* to life in your classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills!

### **Being Brave Like Slug: A Discussion**

Slug is described as brave because he hugs Bear. Sometimes we don't want to try something new because we are scared.

- What do you think it means to be brave?

Being brave means a lot of different things, such as:

- Doing something that is hard to do like trying to learn to ride a bike
  - Getting a shot at the doctor's office even though it might hurt
  - Saying "No" to someone who is trying to get you to do something that you know is wrong
  - Reaching out to meet someone you don't know.
- Is it possible to be scared and brave at the same time?

It is okay to be scared sometimes, and brave people get scared too. Sometimes the bravest people are the ones who do something though they are scared. It's okay to be scared or have fears; being brave means that you try not to let those fears control how you live or act.

- What are the other animals scared of?
- Even though Slug may also be scared, he acts bravely. How?
- How can you act bravely like Slug when you are afraid of something?

**ACT IT OUT** ★ Have the students use lunch bags, crayons, yarn, and glue to make puppets of themselves. These will be their brave puppets to help them be brave or act

out being brave when they feel scared. Then, use role play of scary situations to help the children practice acting bravely using their puppets.

### **Talking About Feelings**

The animals experience many different feelings throughout the story. Look through the book, page by page, and ask how each character might be feeling at each moment. Keep track on a list of each emotion named.

Once the list is finished, have children choose one and make a sentence about that feeling.

Just like the animals in *Group Hug* we all feel various feelings at different times. It is ok to feel lonely or scared or sad.

Ask children to share a time when they felt the same emotions as the animals in *Group Hug*.

“Last week I felt lonely because I didn’t have anyone to play with.”

“Yesterday I felt scared because a large dog barked at me.”

“Today I was sad because it was raining and I couldn’t go outside to play.”

### **Listen and Share**

Sometimes understanding someone simply comes from listening to them and allowing them a chance to express themselves.

With students sitting in a circle, hand one student a small plush bear or another object. Explain that only the person who is holding the stuffed bear can talk. Everyone else’s job is to listen. When the stuffed animal is put down again, the teacher/classmates respond to that student, then the stuffed animal moves to the next person to talk (a volunteer or the former talker can pull a name from a basket).

Use the Listen and Share method for sharing sentences or personal stories about feelings.

### **Mime** ★

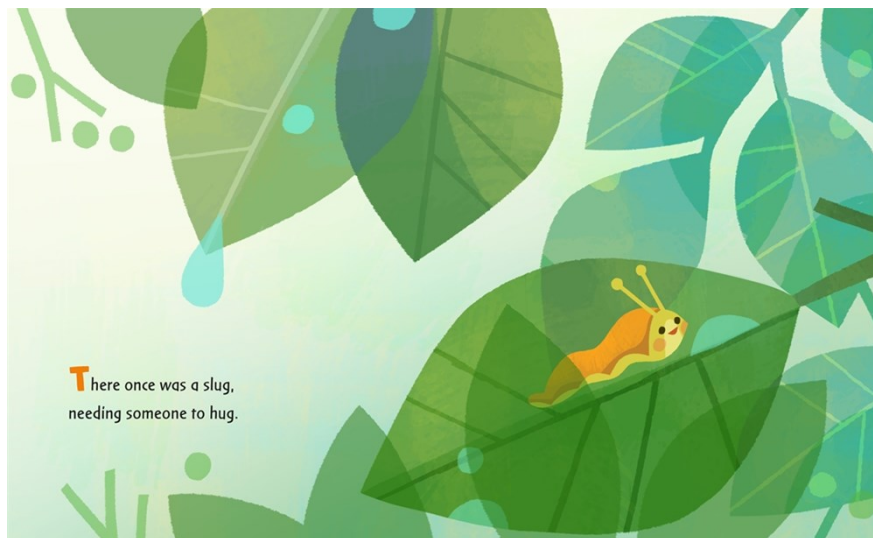
Mime a feeling with gestures and facial expressions. Then have others try to guess that feeling. For a variation, have children draw the feeling from a “hat”—a basket/box/bag.

## Drama

Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *Group Hug*. Write a script! Act it out or use puppets! Record it! Get creative!

## Categories Game ★

Have students sit in a circle and take turns brainstorming items in the announced category. For example, "animals." Go around the circle and have each child name an animal. They cannot repeat a response that another child gave. Go around the circle more than once if kids seem to have more ideas in that category. Other potential categories include fruits, vegetables, colors, items of a specific color, creatures that swim, musical instruments and things with wheels.



## Math

### Word Problems

*For younger students, the use of pictures or props can be helpful in figuring out word problems. Note to teachers: Use the word problems below as inspiration to write your own, based on the illustrations in Group Hug or any other book of study.*

The "Along came a beetle..." illustration:

- 1) How many flowers do you see?

On a piece of paper, draw 3 flowers.

Draw 6 more flowers.

How many flowers are there now?

Write the equation: \_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

What if two flowers were picked? How many flowers would you see?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} - \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

The "Now Beaver was busy..." illustration:

2) How many fir trees do you see?

On a piece of paper, draw 8 fir trees.

Draw 2 more fir trees.

How many fir trees do you have?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

What if Beaver gnawed down 4 fir trees? How many fir trees would be left?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} - \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

## A Hug Scavenger Hunt

This scavenger hunt will help students sharpen observational and counting skills.

- Create several copies of the paper cut-outs of animals. These can be animals seen in *Group Hug* or different ones.
- Number each different animal from 1-5. You should have several of each number.
- Create one Slug, which represents a hug.
- Hide these cut-outs around the room.
- Ask students to find a set of animals numbered 1-5. If a student sees a number they already have they must leave it for another student to find.
- The first student to find a 1-5 animals sequence or the student who first finds Slug wins.
- Additional activity: This same game can be played with a set pattern of colors or pictures to teach sequencing.

## Under Where? Spatial Sense

Look at the “The hug stretched wide” illustration in *Group Hug*.

Describe where Slug is.

[examples: on top of Moose, in between Fox and Skunk, above Porcupine]

Describe where Moose is.

[examples: in the middle of the hug, underneath Fox, in front of Skunk.]

Describe where Beaver is.

[examples: behind Moose, in between Goose and Squirrel, next to Mouse.]

Have students choose another illustration in *Group Hug* and discuss where things are spatially within that illustration.

Now look around your classroom.

- Describe where your desk sits.
- Describe where your teacher is sitting or standing.
- Describe where the chalkboard/whiteboard is.
- Describe where the clock is.
- Describe where the door is.
- Can you describe where anything else is?



# **Science**

## **Slug and Friends Research Project**

How much do you know about slugs? It's time to research them.

Information to be gathered must include:

- What slugs eat.
- Where slugs live.
- Draw a picture of a slug.
- Write 3 words that describe a slug.
- Interesting fact #1
- Interesting fact #2
- Interesting fact #3

Students may use the internet or the library to complete their research. Once all the needed research is done, students must create a poster visual with all the necessary information and present their findings to the class.

BONUS: Some students can continue by researching the other animals in *Group Hug*.

## **Non-Verbal Communication** ★

Take a close look at all of the illustrations of animals throughout *Group Hug*.

Without words, how do they show how they are feeling? Hint, look closely at the verbs Jean Reidy uses to describe how each animal moves.

Ask students that have pets to describe how they know their pet is sad, scared, happy, having to go to the bathroom, etc.

Discuss the ways that animals communicate how they are feeling non-verbally.

Some examples of how animals communicate:

- Giraffes press their necks together when they are attracted to each other.
- Elephants show affection by entwining their trunks.
- Gorillas stick out their tongues to show anger.
- Kangaroos thump their hind legs to warn of danger.
- White-tailed Deer alert others to danger by flicking their tail.
- Dogs wag their tails when they are happy.

How do you show how you are feeling without saying anything?

# **Social Studies**

## **In Someone Else's Shoes: A Discussion**

- Have you ever felt like you needed a hug?
- When does a hug make you feel better? When does it not?
- Why did the characters not want to hug Bear?
- Would you hug Bear? Why?
- How is Bear different from the others?
- What makes you different from your friends or classmates?
- What makes you the same as your friends or classmates?
- Do you ever treat people differently because they look or act differently than you? Why?
- Have you been treated differently because you look different than other people? Was this treatment positive or negative?
- How do you want to be treated by your classmates, friends and family?
- How should we act towards others?
- In what situations is it necessary to treat others differently than the way you want to be treated? (*others sometimes have different preferences than you*)
- Do you think all the animals are friends now?
- What makes you a good friend?
- What do you look for in a friend?
- What kinds of things do you do for your friends?
- Are you only kind to your friends?
- Do you help others even when they are not your friends?
- Provide an example of when you helped someone you didn't know. Did this make you feel good?
- How do you expect others to respond when you complete an act of kindness for them?
- What obligation do you have to help others?

## **What Makes a Good Friend?**

Discuss what makes a good friend. Draw upon examples from their own friendships and create a list describing what makes a good friend.

Example: Good friends...

- Are reliable.
- Do kind things for one another and use kind language.
- Help out when a friend is sad or has a problem.

- Like to spend time together.
- Have fun with one another.

Look closely at *Group Hug*. Do the other animals act like friends or not? Friends don't have to hug if they don't want to – is there another way they could have cheered the animals up? Explain using your own words.

As a class, create an action plan on how to be a good friend.

### **Finding Commonalities/Uniqueness**

Bear is different from the other animals. They think he might want to eat them.

Finding what you have in common with other people is a good way to start a meaningful relationship. Here is a way to learn what you have in common with your classmates, while also celebrating what makes each of you unique.

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- This activity can be done as a whole class or in pairs.
- On one sheet of paper, you will have ten minutes to come up with a list of things in common. Completely obvious answers such as “we both have hair” or “we are both in \_\_\_\_\_ class” are not allowed!
- After ten minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have ten minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to only one person.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

### **Good Feelings Journal**

Ask the students to think of different kinds of “good” feelings (ex: happy, silly, calm, safe, relaxed, thankful, proud, or excited).

Create a journal to identify what makes you feel good.

You will need:

- Cardstock or other decorative paper for the cover
  - White printer paper for internal pages
  - Pencils, crayons, markers
  - Stapler
  - Duct tape or washi tape
1. Create your cover using the cardstock or other decorative paper. Feel free to decorate it in whatever way you want with stickers, glitter glue, photos, or images cut from magazines.



2. Cut your pages and cover to the desired size (square is fun!).
3. Staples the edge of your cover to your pages to create a book.
4. Cover the staples with a piece of duct tape or washi tape cut to size.

Come up with a list of things that make you feel good. Then make a Good Feelings Journal. On each page of the journal, draw a picture of something that makes you feel good, and then write a sentence at the bottom of the page describing the picture.



## Sad Feelings Discussion

Describe a time when you felt sad or lonely. It could be when you moved, or a pet died, or because you were sick.

What did you do to try to feel better?

Can you think of someone who might feel the same way you did? (Ex: new kid, lost pet, fell on playground.) What is something you could do to make them feel better?

## Acts of Kindness

What do other people do that make you feel happy? What are some kind things we can do to make others feel happy? Here are some suggestions; can you come up with more?

- Open the door for someone

- Stack a chair for a classmate
- Pick up trash
- Give someone a compliment
- Smile/wave/hug someone
- Make a thank you card
- Play a game of their choice with a sibling
- Fold the laundry
- Set the table

Who is a person that you could do one kind thing for today? Can you think of someone who is in your class? Someone who is not in your class?

Pick one kind thing you'd like to do for someone and draw a picture of it.

### **Make A Hug Jar** ★

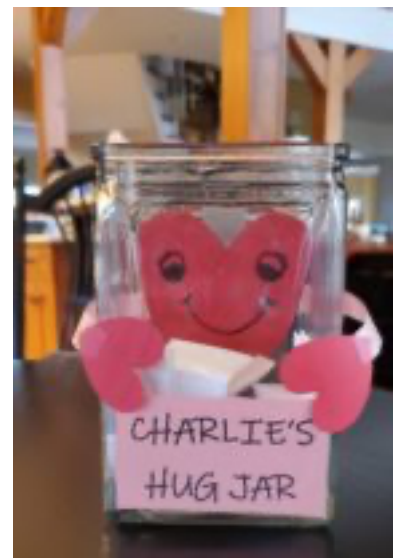
Here's what you'll need:

- a clear glass or plastic jar – a clean peanut butter jar is perfect – or an old vase
- scissors
- paper (any colors will do)
- tape
- crayons or markers
- a printed out template (page 20)

A step-by-step video of this activity can be found at: <https://jeanreidy.com/2022/01/group-hug-kindness-craft-make-a-hug-jar/>

And here's what you do:

- Cut out a heart.
- Draw a face on your heart. You can add hair and a smile ... even eyelashes if you want.
- Cut out the two smaller hearts for hands – two of them, smaller than the face. These can be a different color or the same.
- Next, cut out the hugging arms – two of them, however long you want them to be. You can make them a different color or the same as your heart face. Either is just fine.
- Tape the arms to the back of the heart face. And tape the heart hands to the back of the arms.
- Then with your heart face at the back peeking through your jar, wrap your arms around the jar and use a little bit of tape to hold it all in place.
- To finish it off, add a sign "Hugs for (Fill in the name of your someone special here!)"



Now comes the best part – filling the jar with “hugs.” Cut up pieces of paper. You can even use scrap paper or post-it notes. And on each piece, write a special note, a kindness, a compliment, or draw some art. And then fold it up and add it to the hug jar.

Hug messages might include something like:

- I love you.
- Love and kisses.
- You are my sunshine.
- You’re a wonderful reader.
- I love playing games with you.
- I love when you sing.
- I’ll pick up my toys.
- Thank you for being my grandma!
- A picture of a rainbow.
- A picture of a beautiful tree
- A picture of your dog
- A self-portrait

You can add as many “hugs” as you want. And your special person can pull out a hug once a day or whenever they need one. Because you can always fill up their jar again when they run out.

### **Asking for Permission and Consent**

Before touching or hugging a friend, ask permission. The friend can then say “no” to the request. “No” and “stop” are important words and should be honored.

Explain that just like we always stop doing something when someone says “no”, that our friends need to always stop when we say “no,” too. If a friend doesn’t stop when we say “no,” then we need to think about whether or not we feel good, and safe, playing with them. If not, it’s okay to go play with someone else.

Encourage students to watch facial expressions during play to be sure everyone is happy and on the same page.

### **More Than My Outside** ★

No one wants to be judged based on how they look on the outside. Just like Bear there are more things about us than just what we look like.

The Project:

- Have each student lay down on a large piece of paper while someone traces their body with a pencil.

- Once the student has the silhouette of their own body, they will write words that describe what they look like on the outside.
- On the inside of the outline, they can write what they are like on the inside; the things that make them special. Examples can be likes and dislikes, what they want to be when they grow up, what makes them feel happy, etc.
- Finished silhouettes can be displayed with the title "More Than My Outside."





"HUGS" FOR