

Hug

by Jez Alborough

Suggested grade and level: Pre-K and lower elementary

Topic: relationships, hugs, animals, dependency

Skill builders: empathy, final consonants, reduplicating syllables (in Bobo), feelings, separation anxiety, mother-child relationships, vocabulary.

This is a book with a very limited amount of text, leaving you free to use whatever language appropriate to your child. It is almost wordless.

Synopsis: A small chimpanzee baby is having a leisurely stroll through the jungle when he sees a mother elephant and her baby having a hug. Saying, "Hug!", he is at first delighted then realizes he wants a hug and his mother is nowhere to be seen. The mother elephant carries the baby chimp through the jungle, looking for the missing mother. They see all sorts of other animal mothers and babies having hugs, when it finally gets to the baby chimp and he sits on a rock crying for his mother. All the concerned animals look on with empathy for the crying chimp. When mother chimp shows up with open arms for her "Bobo," she gives him a big hug and all the animals celebrate the reunion with a mixed species hug.

Method: capture the children's interest with *Sounds of the Safari*, a book spotlighting several of the animals of the jungle with pictures and text about each, followed up with the sounds the animals make with a sound chip activated by a button. Then read "Hug."

Extended activities: animal toys representative of the animals of the book can be manipulated to hug each other, modeling sentences about hugging. "The snake hugs the giraffe," etc. The children can hug the animal toys, with everyone or individuals explaining the actions, "Johnnie is hugging the snake," or "The snake is hugging Johnnie."

With a stuffed snake in your arms, ask each child if they would like to hug the snake. (This is to make sure a fearful child has the chance to pass if it is too much to touch even a fake snake.) If they say yes, then allow the child to hug the snake, with you modeling a sentence about the interaction. Example: "James is hugging the snake." The fun thing about the snake is that it can hug back by wrapping around the child's neck like a scarf. Of course, then the sentence would be, "The snake is hugging Anna."

Tip: many stuffed toys such as these can be found cheaply for purchase at rummage sales and liquidation stores. Oddly, I find many of my best items, such as the stuffed snakes at a local grocery warehouse where I shop weekly. I also get some of my stuffed toys online when I cannot find something specific. So just keep your eyes open, you never know where you are going to see your next best teaching aid.

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