



“Nature Connects Us All”
A Guided Discussion of *Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs*
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Grade Level: Pre-K – 2nd Grade (can be modified for all ages)

OBJECTIVES: Using the concepts and images in the picture book *Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs* or *Besos de sol, abrazos de luna*, children will learn to identify and express their feelings about separation anxiety/grief/loss and develop positive coping strategies to maintain their sense of connection and well-being even when loved ones are not physically present.

BACKGROUND: Young children today may face an array of situations that can arouse separation anxiety or grief and rock their sense of stability. Experiences such as starting a new school, divorce, loss of a loved one, separation from parents due to deployment or business travel, long-term hospital stays, et cetera, can create stress and a feeling of being powerless, which can lead a child to act out or withdraw. Helping children learn to identify their feelings, practice self-soothing techniques and develop emotional resilience increases their ability to handle challenges and learn and thrive. This lesson provides the reassuring message that we are all united through our deep connection to the natural world.

“Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.”
-- Rachel Carson, Conservationist and Author of *Silent Spring*

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- The book *Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs* or *Besos de sol, abrazos de luna*
- Journal or drawing paper
- Other art materials depending upon extension activity chosen



Step 1: Discussion (5-10 minutes)

Explain to children that they are about to hear a story called *Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs*. It’s a story about love and how love is all around us – and that even when someone you love goes away, you can still feel connected to them. The leader can share a personal anecdote about a person you miss but still love even when they’re not there (a grandparent, etc). Then ask open-ended discussion questions such as:

- Can you think of times when someone you love can’t be with you (responses you might prompt: grandparents live far away, parents divorced and live in separate houses, parents can’t be with them at school or leave them with a babysitter, someone they loved has died or is in the hospital, older sibling at college, pets, etc)



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- When somebody you love goes away, how does it make you feel?
- Think of someone you miss sometimes. How do you feel about them being gone?
- If you could see them right now, what would you say to them? Are there special things you would like to do with them?
- Do you have something at home that reminds you of them? (A book, a photo, etc.)
- Can you explain why it is special to you?
- When you miss someone, what are some things you can do, or say to yourself, to help give yourself comfort and feel better?

BRING DISCUSSION TO A CLOSE BY SAYING:

“Now I am going to read the book to you. It’s written in the first-person, which means it uses the word “I” a lot. When you are listening to the story, I want you to pretend that you are listening to the voice of someone you love and miss. So close your eyes for just a moment and think silently to yourself about whom that person might be (pause for a few moments). Okay, now open your eyes and your ears and I will read you the story.”

Step 2: Read the Story and Share Illustrations

Note to Teacher/Activity Leader: Children can seek and find “love” in the illustrations – there is at least one hidden heart, “x” or “o” on every page of the book! You might want to read the story aloud once to maintain the flow, and then go back in for a second reading or exploration of the book in order to give children an opportunity to discover some of these hidden images

Step 3: Follow-Up Discussion Questions

- How did this book make you feel? Why?
- What do Xs and Os represent? Did you have fun searching for them?
- What are some of the ways the children in the story help themselves feel happy even when they miss someone? Do you like to do any of these things?
- What’s your favorite scene?
- How can nature help us feel connected to the people we love and sometimes miss?



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Step 4: Enrich the Experience with a Creative Activity

Children can simply draw or journal about their experiences, or you can choose to do one of the healing art activities available at www.InnerFlowerChildBooks.com, including:

- Love Made Visible watercolor resist art activity
- Finding Love in Nature scavenger hunt
- The “Tree of Love” project
- Creative Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs snack

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs (by Susan Schaefer Bernardo, illustrated by Courtenay Fletcher) is a beautiful book with a simple but powerful message: love lasts forever. Lyrical writing and delightful illustrations provide perfect bedtime reading for any child.

The book is also ideal for supporting children through grief, separation anxiety, divorce, illness or other traumatic situations, by wrapping them in a warm and comforting emotional security blanket and opening a dialogue on the nature of love. Even when loved ones cannot be with us, we can feel their presence through our deep connections to the natural world.

Sun Kisses, Moon Hugs has received glowing testimonials from parents, librarians, social workers, teachers, hospice caregivers...and most importantly, kids. A bilingual version, *Besos de sol, abrazos de luna*, is also available.

