



RedRover Readers Program

**Discussion and Activity
Guide for**

Hens for Friends

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Concepts

- Could a person and a hen be friends? What would a friendship with a hen look like?
- Can a hen feel “happy?” What would happiness look like in a hen?
- What do hens like? What do they dislike?
- Why do animals and people have emotions like fear?

Before Reading

Write this question on the board, “What would a friendship with a hen look like?”

Ask students if they have ever *seen* a live hen or a chicken before. (Remind students that a hen is a female chicken.) Share stories.

Clarify Vocabulary

- What does the word “precaution” mean? (A measure taken in advance to prevent something dangerous, unpleasant, or inconvenient from happening.)

Ask students to think about the question you wrote on the board as they listen to the story.

During Reading

Read the story aloud and make sure all the children can see the illustrations by walking around the room.

On the first page, that begins, “My family got Henny...” clarify with students that the illustrator chose to make the chickens appear to be smiling, but they do not do this in real life.

Ask: “How do you think the hens feel in this picture?” “How can you tell?” (Pretend they are not smiling) (Possible responses: they look interested, excited; they are flapping wings, running towards the boy).

Ask: “How do you think the boy feels?” “How can you tell?” “Why do you think he feels this way?” “How do you feel when an animal pays attention to you?”

On the page with the boy holding Margaret on his lap, after reading, ask: “Why do you think the hen jumps into the boy’s lap?”

On the page where the boy is collecting eggs, ask: “What precautions did the boy and his family take to keep their hens safe?” (Possible answers: put a roof over the top of their chicken coop so a hawk can’t fly over and get them, provided a fenced area for them to live in.)

Ask: “How do you think the two closest chickens in this picture feel?” (They may need a prompt, so you can ask “What are they doing?” (They are both looking at the boy) “Why?” (curious, interested).

On the page where it says, “After dinner, I help Dad put Margaret and the others to roost for the night,” ask: “What does it mean to *roost* for the night?” (Roost can be a place where winged birds rest or it can mean to rest.) “How do you think the roosting hens feel in this picture?” (peaceful, content, calm, happy)

After reading the text, “My little brother, Eduardo, is too young to help. He chases the hens and scares them. But not me. I know just how to act around them – calm and quiet,” ask students: “How do you think Aaron learned that the hens liked it when he was calm and quiet?”

Tell students the book does not show what the hens look like when they are scared by Aaron’s little brother, and then ask: “Have you ever seen a bird that was scared before?” “What did the bird look like/what did the bird do?” (flew away, flapped wings, made a loud call/vocalization) “Why do you think animals experience the emotion of fear? (Do you think it is a good or bad emotion and why?) “When do you feel scared?”

- “Have you ever known someone to scare an animal either on accident or purposely?” (Allow students to share their stories.)
- If they share stories about scaring animals purposefully, ask: “Why do you think they did that?” “What do you think about that?”
- “What would you do if you were around a person or an animal you think is feeling scared?”

On the page where Aaron is feeding Margaret a strawberry, after reading, “Mom’s right: our hens are lucky to have us. But I feel lucky to have them too, especially Margaret,” ask:

- “How do you think Margaret is feeling?” “How can you tell?”
- “Why do you think Aaron feels lucky to have a hen like Margaret?”
- If you haven’t already, you could also discuss this question to extend the discussion further: “How do you feel when an animal pays attention to you?” “How about when other people pay attention to you?” (If there are any differences here, this may be a good place to keep asking questions).

After Reading

Ask the students the question written on the board: “What does a friendship with a hen look like?”

Go back to the page with the hens rolling on the ground “dust bathing.”

- Ask, “What is a dust bath?” (The act of bathing in the dirt, dust or sand for grooming purposes. Other animals who take dust baths include bison, chinchilla, the domestic cat, elephant, horse, kangaroo rat, pig, prairie dog, California quail.) “Why do you think they do this?”
- Optional: click on link to view example of chickens taking a dust bath:
<http://www.RedRover.org/ChickensBathing>

- Ask, “What did the hens like pecking at in the story? Why do you think hens peck?”
- Tell the students that some well-cared for hens can live to be over 10 years old. Most chickens lay eggs for the first 4-5 years of their lives. After that there might be the occasional egg but nothing consistent. In the story, Aaron says he will take care of his hens even after they stop laying eggs. Ask, “What do you think about Aaron saying that?”

Optional Extension Discussion Question: “Why do you think the illustrator chose to make the hens appear to be smiling in some drawings when they do not do this in real life?”

Activity: Class book “How to be Friends with Hens”

Ask students: “What do hens like? or “What do they need to be happy, healthy and safe?”
(Possible answers: food/clean water, dust baths, strawberries, flying onto people’s heads/flying up onto things, roosting up off the ground, seeing what other chickens or people are doing, pecking at shoe laces, calm humans, exploring, finding things to eat, feeling safe)

Review with students what hens dislike? (Possible answers: being chased, being scared, predators like hawks, not having a way to dust bathe or explore or peck around for things to eat.)

Invite students to create a class book for younger children called, “How to be Friends with Hens” where they teach the younger children what hens like and how to behave around them.

Additional Activity Idea (works well with for older students): Design a Preference Test

For older students, provide them this article (http://redrover.org/sites/default/files/Readers/Discussion_Guides/Preference%20Test%20Activity.pdf) about how scientists have studied what hens like by using “Preference Testing.” After reading the nonfiction text, have students develop their own “Preference Test” for one of animals they’ve learned about so far in the RedRover Readers program. For example, how could you set up an experiment to test whether a dog preferred sleeping on the floor versus sleeping on a dog bed?

Extension Activities: Choose one or more depending on time and interest.

A. Friendship

Ask students to share stories of animals they have been friends with. These stories may be real or imaginary. As you listen, focus on the qualities of the friendship. Invite students to illustrate a friendship between themselves and a hen, a dog or another animal. Take time to listen to the students describe their pictures. Ask students why an animal might be a good friend.

Give each student an 8-1/2 x 11 piece of paper. Ask students to draw one thing that they think a hen enjoys doing based on the story and their own imagination. Ask students to explain their illustrations to you either as a class or individually. Bind all of the pages together and create a title page for this class book.

B. Imagine a conversation between the Aaron and Margaret the hen.

Show the back cover of the book with the picture of the boy holding Margaret. Ask students to imagine a conversation between Margaret and the boy. What would Margaret say to the boy (if hens could talk in words?) What would the boy say? This conversation can take several forms:

- Ask two students to volunteer to role play each character in front of the class. After the role play (two minutes) ask the class what they would add to the conversation.
- Ask students to form pairs and role play.
- Ask students to write down a conversation working individually or in pairs.
- Write the conversation as a class with you or another adult writing on the white board or chart paper.
- Have students pretend to be the boy's voice and you pretend to be Margaret the hen as you respond to their statements and questions.

C. Activity: Comparing and Contrasting the Lives of Backyard Hens versus Hens Raised for Eggs Sold in Grocery Stores.

The book shows a picture of how hens are commonly housed in intensive agricultural systems in order to collect eggs to sell in stores. The book calls this intensive agricultural system a “factory farm” because millions of eggs are collected from thousands of hens in huge buildings very systematically in ways similar to how a large factory would operate.

Take a close look at the picture from the book, and create a table to compare characteristics of housing for backyard hens versus commercial housing. Review the list of the things hens like or need to be happy, healthy and safe and write these along the left side of the table (see below for an example of what the table might look like. Ask: “Which system do you think hens like better?”

Chart: Comparison for Housing Backyard Hens versus Commercial Hens

	Hens Raised in Backyards	Hens Raised Commercially
Dust Bathe	X	
Clean Food & Water	X	X
Explore	X	
Roost to sleep	X	
Protection from predators	X (depending on set up)	X

Note: The picture in the book shows how most hens raised commercially for their eggs are housed in the United States. Some European countries and some egg producers in the United States provide “furnished” cages, with dust baths and bars to roost on, or hens are housed “cage free” in one big barn, sometimes with access to the outside. In virtually all commercial production, hens are “culled” (which means they are killed) when they are no longer producing very many eggs.

For additional educational resources to help students understand how other animals raised for food are housed, visit <http://www.ciwf.com/farm-animals/>. For information about various kinds of humane food labelling programs, visit <http://www.redrover.org/decoding-humane-food-labels>

D. Activity: Compare and Contrast: Animal Behavior & Emotions: HAPPY

This activity works well to review animal behavior topics and compare and contrast how different animals express the emotion of “happy” (use *Max Talks to Me*, *The Forgotten Rabbit* and *Hens for Friends*.)

Draw a chart with 3-4 animals across the top and possible ways to categorize student observations along the side. Review animal behavior illustrations from the books and refer to supplemental illustrated resources from the Discussion and Activity guides if needed. Ask students to make observations based on the illustrations to help answer the question: “How can you tell when cats, dogs, birds or people are happy?” If you include people, ask the students to imagine they feel happy and to think about what they think their face would look like if they were happy. Alternatively: Have students work in pairs. Each partner takes turns acting “happy” while the other partner takes notes on what they observe.

	Dogs	Rabbits	Birds	People
Eyes				
Ears				
Mouth				
Body				
Other behaviors				

Extension: After this activity, discuss how students might feel and what students might do (what behaviors would they respond with) or how they would feel if they came across an animal or person displaying the behaviors in the chart.

At the End of the Lesson

Ask students to reflect on one of these questions: “What surprised you most about the book and discussion today?” or “After today’s book and discussion, what would you like to learn more about?” or “What did you like about the book and discussion today?” You can do this with the whole group, in a sharing circle or related class meeting format, by having students fill out index cards, or another format you choose. We recommend that you ask different questions and have a variety of formats for the different books. Consider adding additional activities or lessons based on what they say they’d like to learn more about. Please share student responses and stories about changes in attitude or behavior you observe with us by adding to your report about this reading or by emailing Readers@RedRover.org.

Note about Play-Based Aspects of RedRover Readers: Research in the field of developmental psychology indicates that children develop and learn primarily through play. Janet Moyles, a developmental psychologist, describes various forms of play under the three basic categories of physical, intellectual and social/emotional play. The RedRover Readers program provides linguistic intellectual play and linguistic and empathic social/emotional play in the form of having students listen to stories, share their own stories and imagine how others are feeling when communicating and interacting with others. In addition, various discussion and activity guides include play-based supplemental activities. Types of play in addition to linguistic intellectual play include psychomotor physical play through sensory exploration, creative intellectual play through use of imagination and innovation in drawing or designing and self-concept social/emotional play through role playing.

For more about the importance of learning through play, visit www.legofoundation.com.

Types of Play*	Types of Play in RedRover Book & Discussion		RedRover Activity	Books to Use
Physical	Psychomotor	Creative movement	Act out animal behaviors	<i>Max Talks to Me, So, What’s it Like to be a Cat?, Oh, Theodore!</i>
		Sensory exploration	Explore objects a dog would need	<i>Buddy Unchained, Max Talks to Me, Mrs. Crump’s Cat</i>
Intellectual	Linguistic	Communication/hearing and telling stories	Listening and sharing personal stories	All Books

	Scientific	Exploration/investigation	Make observations at a real animal shelter & then Design a Dream Animal Shelter	<i>Buddy Unchained, Max Talks to Me, Mrs. Crump's Cat, Home for Nathan, Lucky Boy, "Let's Get a Pup," said Kate</i>
	Creative	Problem solving	Design a Preference Test	<i>Hens for Friends</i>
		Imagination/innovation	Drawing, designing, creative writing	All Guides
Social/Emotional	Linguistic	Communication /interaction/cooperation	Sharing stories, emotions, thoughts & ideas	All Books
	Empathic	Perspective-taking	Stories, visuals & questions, listening to peers	All Books
	Self-concept	Roles/emulation/morality	Discussion Role-playing	All Books <i>Call the Horse Lucky, Hens for Friends, Lucky Boy, "Let's Get a Pup," said Kate, The Forgotten Rabbit</i>

*Categories from Janet Moyles' 1989 book, *Just Playing? The Role and Status of Playing in Early Childhood Education*.