

# My Name is Hugo Bear

## Teaching Notes

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Illustrator: Chiara Franceschetti



### Synopsis:

Hugo Bear is trying hard to rekindle the connection with his person and get her to notice him. Just as he's about to give up and leave home forever, he realises he still has a very important role with a new baby on the way.

## What inspired this book?

*My Name is Hugo Bear* was inspired by my daughter's teddy bear. One day, I picked it up off the floor, looked into its eyes, and imagined it was real—with thoughts, feelings, and a story of its own. I said aloud, "What will happen to you when she becomes too big for you?" That moment planted the tiny seed of a story, which eventually grew into a book.

## Themes:

- **Resilience:** Overcoming challenges and finding strength in difficult moments
- **Family Dynamics:** Exploring the evolving relationships within a family
- **Belonging:** Finding your place and feeling valued
- **Hope:** Discovering optimism and new possibilities in changing circumstances
- **Embracing Change:** Navigating life's challenges with courage and understanding
- **Growth:** Embracing personal development and finding new roles within a family
- **Imagination:** Viewing the world creatively through a toy's perspective
- **Love and Connection:** Highlighting the enduring bonds between loved ones

These themes are gently explored through Hugo Bear's heartfelt journey, making them relatable and accessible for young readers.

## Classroom Discussion Ideas and Questions for Students:

### Before Reading:

- Look at the front cover of the book. What do you think it might be about?
- The title is *My Name is Hugo Bear*. How do you think this could relate to the story?
- Ask students if they have a special toy or object that they keep close and how it makes them feel.
- Discuss what it means to have a favourite toy or comfort item. What happens when we outgrow things?
- Introduce the concept of belonging—how do we feel when we're part of something or when we feel left out?

### During Reading:

- Who is Hugo Bear to Ruby?
- What feelings and emotions do you think Hugo Bear might be experiencing while trying to capture Ruby's attention? How many can your name?
- Why do you think Ruby doesn't notice Hugo Bear?
- How many times does Hugo Bear ask Ruby to play with him?
- How does Hugo Bear's physical appearance change throughout the story? Does it match his mood?
- Why does Hugo Bear feel inspired to have a bath?
- How does he feel when he finishes bathing?
- What does the arrival of a new baby mean to Hugo Bear?

### **After Reading:**

- What personal transformation did Hugo Bear go through in the story? How did he feel at the start of the story versus the end?
- Why do you think Hugo Bear felt he needed to leave at first?
- Did Hugo Bear’s relationship with Ruby change? How?
- What gave Hugo Bear the feeling of renewed purpose?
- How do you think Ruby feels about Hugo Bear by the end of the story?
- What role does Hugo Bear now have in the family?
- Can you think of a time when your family changed, and you found a new way to feel important?

### **Classroom activity ideas that encourage discussion, creativity, and emotional connection**

#### **Family Tree Activity**

**Objective:** Help children explore family relationships and understand how everyone has a special place in the family.

#### **Activity:**

- Provide a template of a tree or let children draw their own.
- Have them add family members names or draw their pictures on the branches.
- Discuss how families grow and change over time, just like Hugo Bear’s role in the story.
- Option: Let them add close friends or even beloved toys as part of their family.

#### **Teddy Bear Memories**

**Objective:** Encourage children to reflect on the special toys or comfort items in their lives.

#### **Activity:**

- Ask each child to bring a stuffed toy or draw one they love.
- Have them share a memory about it—when they got it, why it’s special or a time it brought them comfort.
- Older children can write a short story from the perspective of their own favourite toy, inspired by Hugo Bear.

#### **Then and Now: Growing Up**

**Objective:** To help children understand personal growth and change over time.

#### **Activity:**

- Discuss how Hugo Bear’s role changed when the baby arrived.
- Ask children to think of something they used to do when they were younger and what they do differently now.
- Create a then and now drawing—one side showing them as a toddler doing an activity, and the other side show them now.

### **Role Play: Acting out the story**

**Objective:** Encourage pretend play, storytelling, and empathy by stepping into the roles of Hugo Bear and his family.

### **Activity:**

- As the story is read aloud, children act out the roles of Hugo Bear, Ruby, Ruby's mum, and the baby, while others dress Hugo Bear in items from the story—hat, sunglasses, and coat.
- Encourage children to imagine and act out a new scene—what happens after the story ends?
- Let children create their own Hugo Bear stories with the help of puppets or teddy bears.
- If writing, children can create a new story for Hugo Bear.

Learning resources—free printables for activities are available to be downloaded via the authors website: [emmacounsell.com](http://emmacounsell.com)

### **About the Author:**

Emma Counsell is a graduate of The Australian Writers' Centre and is passionate about writing picture books that resonate with young readers. With a background in fine arts, her artistic vision enriches her storytelling. Based on the Gold Coast, Australia, she shares her home with her husband, two spirited children, and her father, all of whom provide her with endless inspiration (and occasional chaos) for her creative journey.

### **About the Illustrator:**

Chiara Franceschetti has always loved drawing. Originally a graduate of architecture, she began her creative career after having two children. Inspired by the mountainous surroundings of her childhood, fairy tales, and travel, Chiara works digitally, often combining watercolours to form detailed and joyfully coloured artwork. Chiara lives in South Tyrol, Italy, with her husband and two children.