

Marcie Colleen's  
**Classroom Guide to**



A picture book by Michael Ian Black and Debbie Ridpath Ohi (Simon & Schuster Books BFYR)



**Michael Ian Black**  
**Author, *I'm Worried***

Michael Ian Black is the author of several books for children, including *I'm Bored, I'm Sad, Chicken Cheeks* and *A Pig Parade Is A Terrible Idea*. He is also a comedian, actor and screenwriter. He lives in the wilds of Connecticut with his wife and children.



**Debbie Ridpath Ohi**  
**Illustrator, *I'm Worried***

Debbie Ridpath Ohi is the author and illustrator of *Where Are My Books?* and *Sam & Eva* (Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers). Her illustrations also appear in books by Michael Ian Black, Judy Blume, Rob Sanders, Lauren McLaughlin, Aaron Reynolds and Colby Sharp. For more info about Debbie and upcoming projects, see [DebbieOhi.com](http://DebbieOhi.com). You can find Debbie on Twitter at @inkyelbows and on Instagram at @inkygirl.

**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 for children's books, Marcie can often be found writing picture 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

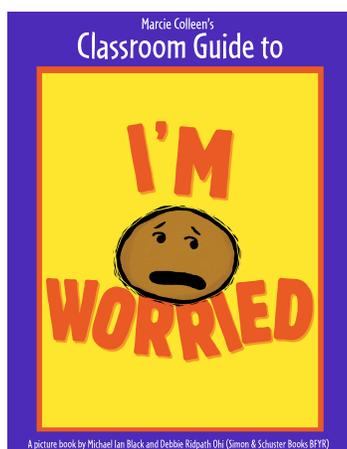
This classroom guide for *I'm Worried* is designed for students in preschool through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *I'm Worried* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

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

**Extra activity sheets and other bonus material can be found at [DebbieOhi.com/im-books](http://DebbieOhi.com/im-books).**

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**Title: I'm Worried**

**Author: Michael Ian Black**

**Illustrator: Debbie Ridpath Ohi**

**Ages: 4-8/Grades: P-3**

**Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers**

**ISBN: 978-1534415867**

A girl, a flamingo, and a worried potato star in the third book in *New York Times* bestselling author Michael Ian Black and illustrator Debbie Ridpath Ohi's series about feelings—and why they're good, even when they feel bad.

Potato is worried. About *everything*.

Because *anything* might happen.

When he tells his friends, he expects them to comfort him by saying that everything will be okay. Except they don't. Because it might not be, and that's okay too. Still, there's one thing they can promise for sure: no matter what happens...they will always be by his side.

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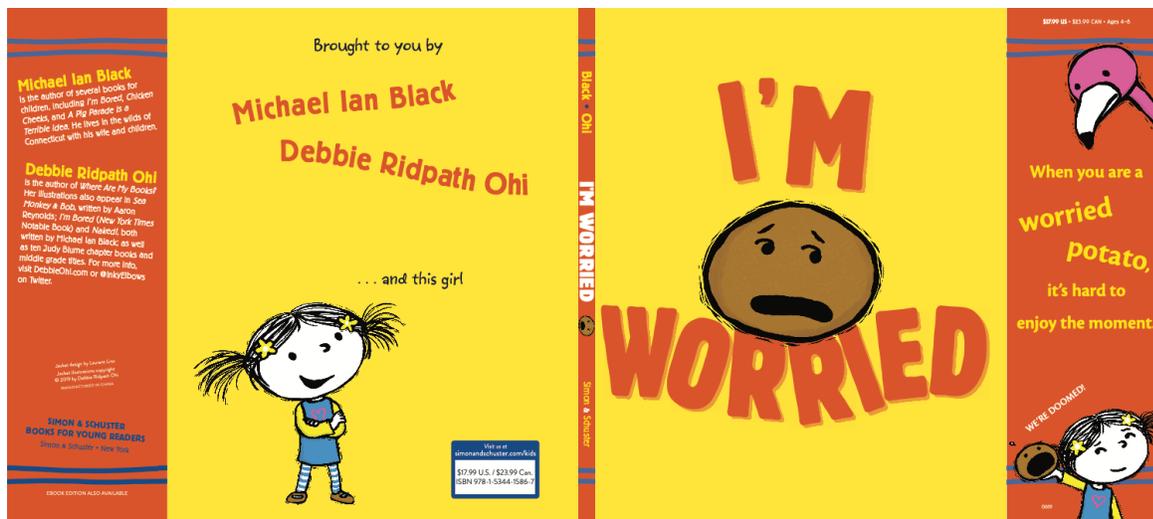
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# English Language Arts

## Reading Comprehension

Before reading *I'm Worried*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.



- Describe what you see.
- Who are the characters?
- How would you describe the girl? How do you think she feels? Mimic what she is doing. How does it make you feel?
- How would you describe the potato? How do you think he feels? Mimic what he is doing. How does it make you feel?
- How would you describe the flamingo? How do you think he feels? Mimic what he is doing. How does it make you feel?
- What does "worried" means? Which of the three characters do you think is worried? What details indicate that character might be worried?
- Can you guess what the story might be about? What are some clues you can find?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about and define the events in terms of a plot arc by using the following chart.



Let's talk about the people who made *I'm Worried*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Look at the following spread:



- Describe what you see.
- Why do you think some of the illustrations are in light green and others are in black line/color?
- Ohi blends the imaginative with the real-life nicely in this spread. What are some real-life elements in these illustrations? What are the imaginative elements?
- What would you add to illustrate what could go wrong?

## **Writing Activities**

### **Write the Worst-Case Scenario**

Choose one of the bad things that can happen suggested in *I'm Worried* and create the scene.

For example, what led to Potato rolling off the table? How did he feel? What did he say? What did he do? What silver lining comes from it? Be sure to include a beginning, middle, and end to the story.

## Find Your Silver Lining

Think back to something bad that happened to you recently. Describe the bad situation. What happened? How did it happen? How did it make you feel?

But then, find the silver lining. Did someone help you? Did you discover something new? What good came from the bad situation?

Create a bulletin board of Silver Linings to display in the classroom to remind everyone that bad situations sometimes turn out okay.

## Language Activities

### New Vocabulary: Worry

Potato in *I'm Worried* is experiencing lots of worry about the future and what might happen. Lead students in a class discussion on *worry*.

1. What is *worry*?

- To think about problems or fears; to feel or show fear and concern because you think that something bad has happened or could happen.

2. What are some things that you worry about?

- Finish this statement: "I feel like Potato when I worry about..."

3. What might make you feel better when you are worried?

- Finish this statement: "My Emergency Anti-Worry Kit would include..."

4. How can we be good friends to someone who is worried?

5. Design a poster about ways to stop worrying. Hang the poster in your classroom, or get permission to hang it in the school library, the office, main hall, etc.

### 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. (See attached handout on page 14)



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. We might not even know why we feel the way we do, like Potato in *I'm Worried*.

### **Speaking and Listening Activities**

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *I'm Worried* to life in your classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills.

#### **Talking About Feelings**

We all feel various feelings. No feeling is right or wrong.

Post the names of feelings in different colors for everyone to see. Have children choose a feeling to make a sentence about that feeling.

"Today I feel excited because we have pizza for lunch."

"Last week I felt lonely because my brother went away."

"Yesterday I felt worried because I lost my jacket."

#### **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.

## Mirroring

Have students stand in pairs. One person will be the actor. The other will be the mirror. The actor will make different movements slowly; the mirror must try to do the exact same movements at the same time as the actor—just like a mirror.

Start with physical movements and gestures, then add facial expressions and emotions.

Then switch places. Discuss the experience. Then change partners.

Was the experience the same? Different? How?

Which was easier: mimicking the physical or emotional? Why do you think?

Why do you think it is important to be able to express our emotions to others?

## Math

### Coping Through Counting (The 54321 Technique)

This technique uses counting and the five senses to ground you and help get you through tough or stressful situations.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

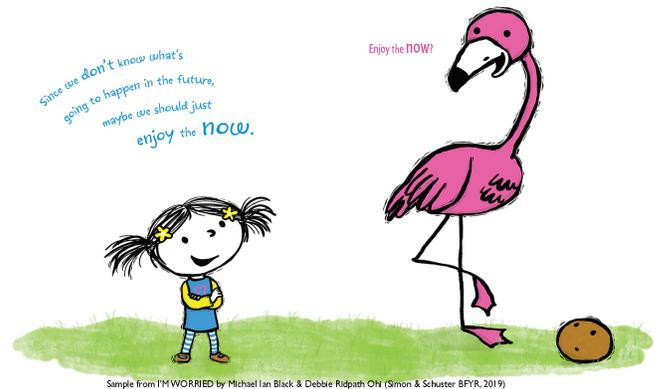
**5 - LOOK:** Look around for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

**4 - FEEL:** Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on.

**3 - LISTEN:** Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling. Say the three things out loud.

**2 - SMELL:** Say two things you can smell. If you're allowed to, it's okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything now or you can't move, then name your 2 favorite smells.

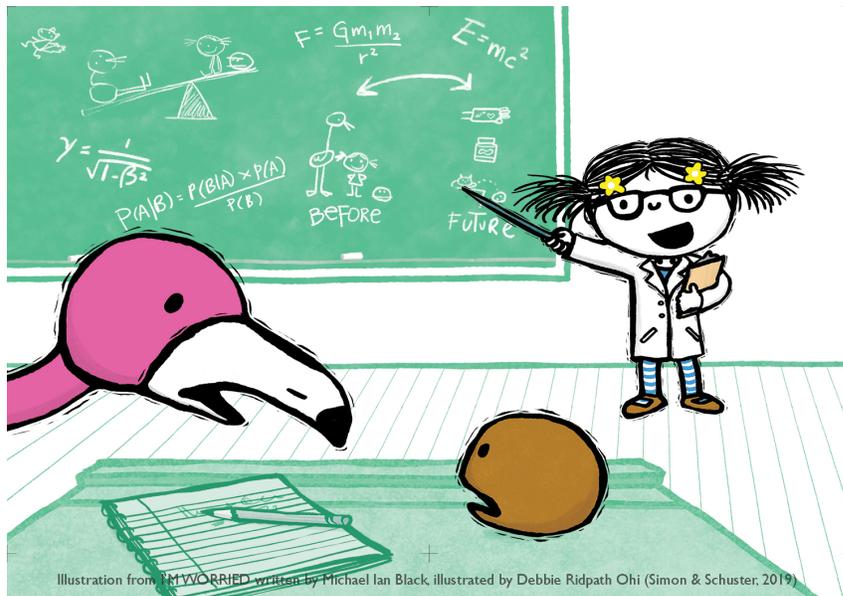
**1 - TASTE:** Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.



## Silver Lining Scavenger Hunt

Use this scavenger hunt to sharpen counting skills.

- Create several aluminum foil cut-outs of clouds, representing silver linings. Number them from 1-5, so there are different sets of each number.
- Hide these cut-outs around the room.
- Ask students to find #1 silver lining, #2 silver lining, etc. until they have a set of 5. If a student sees a number they already have collected, he/she must leave it for another student to find.
- The first student to find a 1-5 sequence, wins.
- Additional activity: This same game can be played with a set pattern of colors or pictures to teach sequencing.



## Science

### The Stressed-Out Soda Can Experiment

What happens when you shake up a can of soda? Do you think there's a safe way to open the can after it's been shaken up?

Watch the following video on YouTube or simply do an internet search for "how to keep

a soda can from exploding.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQYO3Dp8ICA>

This method of dealing with the pressure by tapping on the side of the can works perfectly. Use the internet to research the science behind why this works.

EXTENSION: Just like the can under pressure, our lives can reflect something that’s about to blow, but there are methods to take the pressure away. Using the soda can and tapping method as a metaphor, explain how to deal with inner pressure and worry when something goes wrong.

- Describe a time when you felt like a can of soda being shaken up.
- How do you usually deal with stress?
- Is your usual method helpful? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is possible to live life without stress and pressure? Why or why not?
- How would your life be different if you dealt with stress and pressure effectively?
- Brainstorm a list of methods you can use to stop exploding.

### **Build a Worry Robot**

Each student should bring from home items found in the recycling bin (plastic bottles, tin cans, milk cartons, newspaper, etc).

Using the items and some additional art supplies, students can create a sculpture of a Worry Robot. Personalities (likes and dislikes) should be assigned to the robots, including the clever way the robot can squash worries. Perhaps the robot has a special compartment that acts as a trash can for worries. Or maybe the robot can crush worries with a hammer-like arm.

Students can introduce their Worry Robot to the class and demonstrate the clever way the robot combats worry.

Finished robots can be displayed around the classroom with explanations on how they deal with worry.

## Social Studies

### **My Emergency Coping List**

As a class, brainstorm ways to combat worry.

Here are some coping mechanisms for kids to get started:

- Do some deep breathing using bubbles.
- Remember the words to a song you love.
- Play with a pet.
- Create a music playlist.
- Write what is bothering you and throw it away.
- Make a comic strip of what happened and what you can do next time.
- Jump rope.
- Yoga or stretching.
- Talk to someone you trust.
- Use positive self-talk.
- Take a shower or a bath.
- Bake or cook.
- Laugh [watch YouTube videos or movies that encourage laughter].

Talk to your students about what activities they would find most useful when they are trying to calm down. Pick a handful of ideas to create their Emergency Coping List.



When I am upset, I can...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

When I am upset, you can help me by...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### **Create a Stress Relief Box**

Take a box, a pencil box works well, and decorate it with all the things that bring you happiness. Then, every day for a week, write ideas of things to do or think about that bring happiness on slips of paper and put them into the box. By the end of the week, you will have a box full of strategies you can use when you are feeling anxious and overwhelmed.

MIXED UP FEELING JARS: Add the name of a feeling to each slip of paper; cut along dotted lines. For instructions on how to use these, see the I'M WORRIED Classroom Guide. Idea courtesy Marcie Colleen.


For more bonus material re: I'M...Books, see [DebbieOh.com/im-books](http://DebbieOh.com/im-books)