

# Educator's Guide

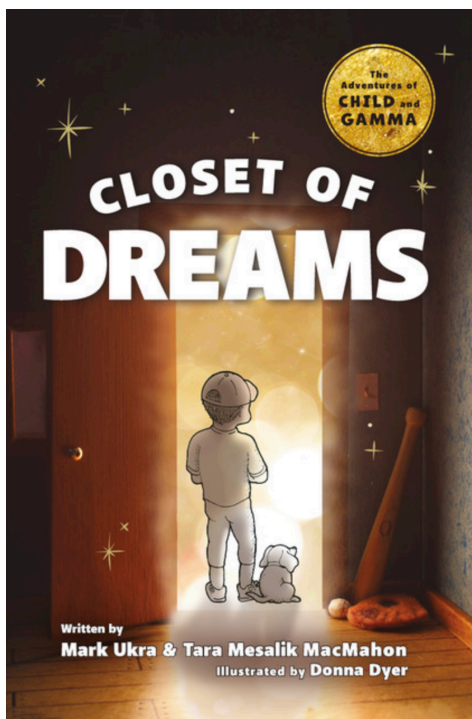
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Closet of Dreams is an excellent resource for classroom teachers. The activities in this guide provide students with an opportunity to explore academic and social-emotional connections in the classroom.

For more information on the guide and workbook, please visit  
[www.childandgamma.com/educators-guide](http://www.childandgamma.com/educators-guide)

# CLOSET OF DREAMS

BY MARK UKRA AND  
TARA MESALIK MACMAHON



## ABOUT THE BOOK

A true story about a pretend world. Meet a nine-year-old boy named Child who has big dreams—so big, he's got a Closet of Dreams in his home! But Child's fears are really big too and his path is lined with curve balls, especially those spun by class bully, Eddie...

Follow along with Child's adventures as he discovers the secret powers of his Closet of Dreams and of his incredible animal friends from Kids Park—Ele the elephant, Sister Sue the hippo, and Clarence the bear—all under the guiding paw of his dachshund, Hilda. You might just be in for a big surprise!

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Co-authors Mark Ukra and Tara Mesalik MacMahon are brother and sister and lifelong best friends. Mark is the author of "The Ultimate Tea Diet" (HarperCollins), and Tara is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet and James Hearst Poetry Prize winning author of "Barefoot Up the Mountain" (Open Country Press). Her poems appear widely in literary journals and anthologies, including North American Review, Red Hen Press, Nimrod International Journal, Poet Lore, Jabberwock Review, among many others.



# **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

## **Individual/Class/Small Group Activities**

Closet of Dreams provides so many opportunities for students to explore social-emotional themes such as friendship, empathy, the importance of emotional support systems, and understanding the perspectives of others.

### **Class Community Expectations**

Eddie and his gang did not treat others with respect. As a result, Child felt unsafe and alone. In your group discussion, think of five expectations that would contribute to a safe classroom community where the feelings of all students are considered. You will have 20 minutes to complete your list, then all groups will make a presentation to the class, explaining why each item is important to the class culture. After all groups have presented, the class will vote to decide on a final list of expectations to be followed so that all students feel safe and supported in our class.

### **Point of View**

Closet of Dreams is written in the first person from Child's point of view. Your group will choose an event from the book that includes Eddie's character then rewrite the event from Eddie's point of view. Discuss the changes that your group made to reflect Eddie's viewpoint.

### **Qualities of a Friend**

Randi was a good friend to Child when he needed support. In your group, brainstorm some qualities that make someone a good friend. Why is each quality important? Each group member should make contributions to the group, sharing their own experiences. Create a slide or a picture on poster paper that includes the top 5 qualities that make someone a good friend and why each quality is important. Each group will present their ideas to the class.

### **Support Systems/Friendships**

In the book, Randi and Gamma are great supporters of Child. Reflect on some of the close relationships that you have with your family members and friends. Choose one person you feel supports you. Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. Write your name on one side of the paper and your friend/supporter's name on the other side. On the side with your name, make a list of the things you do for the other person, or the ways that you support them. On the other side, under your friend/supporter's name, make a list of the ways that they support you. When you are finished with your lists, examine each side. Do you feel that both sides of your paper are equal for the most part, or is one person doing more of the work, while the other person receives more benefits?

# ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Closet of Dreams touches on subjects that can engage students in academic exploration. The following activities can be adapted for individual work, small groups, or whole class participation.

## **Theme Song (Character Study)**

Each group will be given one character from the story. Your group will find one song that could be used as that character's theme song. You will identify evidence in the lyrics that connect to the character's traits and/or experiences. Use chart paper to show your thinking. Each group will present their work to the class.

## **Memes (Character Study)**

Use a slide or paper to create a meme for Gamma, Eddie, and Child. Explain how your meme shows evidence of the characters' feelings, traits, and/or experiences.

## **Animal Project (Research)**

Research an animal that interests you. Create a poster or slideshow that informs your audience about the animal's habitat, food source, predators, and any other interesting facts. Use at least 3 types of text features.

## **Circus Animals (Research)**

Think of an animal that you might see at the circus. Research on the internet about what that animal's life might be like. Using the information, write at least two paragraphs from that animal's point of view. How do they feel about being in the circus?

## **The Zoo (Research)**

Zoos must follow strict rules in order to keep animals on their property. Who makes these rules? What are some examples of rules that zoos have to follow? What is the purpose of these rules? Find the answers to these questions and create a slideshow or a poster to inform your audience.

## **Struggle For Success (Research)**

Child struggled before he was successful. Think about a person who also had to struggle before they were successful. Research this person and write a short biography about them, including information about their birth, their struggle, and their success. Include a paragraph at the end about the characteristics that contributed to their success.



# Teacher Resource 50 WORKSHEETS

## Just Download and Print!

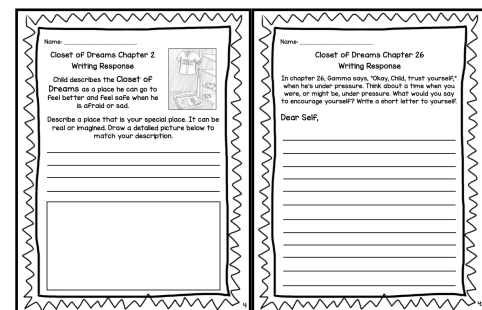
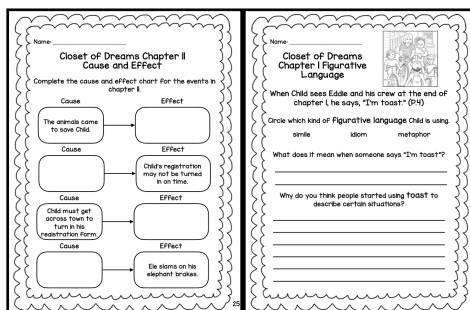
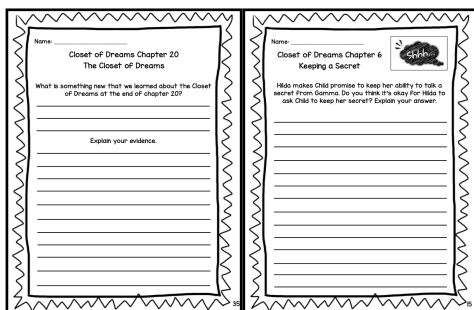
Perfect for small groups, whole class, or individual study.

Each chapter is supported by at least one worksheet that engages students in practice with:

Writing  
Responses

Reading

SEL/  
Reflections



For more information on the guide and workbook, please visit  
[www.childandgamma.com/educators-guide](http://www.childandgamma.com/educators-guide)