



Surf Soup®: Hot & Sour Soup Reader Guide For Teachers, Librarians, and Parents



SURF SOUP®: HOT & SOUR SOUP

When Moods Boil Over by Donna Kay Lau

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Note to Librarians, Teachers, and Parents

Welcome to Surf Soup®: Hot & Sour Soup—When Moods Boil Over!

This reader guide is designed to help you bring the story to life for children ages 6–10, whether in the classroom, library, or at home. The activities inside encourage social-emotional learning (SEL), critical thinking, artistic expression, and hands-on STEM/STEAM exploration, all while keeping the magic of the Surf Soup® characters at the heart of learning. Through the story, children explore how feelings—just like soup—need balance, patience, and care. They'll meet Unco, Koa, EggOh, Brock Lee, and Praha the Piranha as they navigate bubbling emotions, practice teamwork, and discover the joy of cooking together.

The guide includes:

Discussion prompts for reflection and comprehension

Creative art and writing activities

STEM/STEAM experiments connected to the story

A kid-friendly Hot & Sour Soup recipe

Practical ways to connect the story to everyday feelings

Use this guide to inspire curiosity, mindfulness, and a love of stories that combine culture, cooking, and emotional growth. Thank you for bringing Surf Soup® to your students, readers, and families!

— Donna Kay Lau, Surf Soup® TV Studio

1 Discussion Questions

Which character in the story do you relate to most? Why?
How did Brock Lee and Praha the Piranha help Koa and EggOh handle their big feelings?

Why is balance important in both soup and feelings?

What would happen if one ingredient in the soup took over the whole pot? Can you think of a real-life example?

How do you calm yourself when your feelings “boil over”?

2 SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) Activities

A. Stir Your Feelings

Give kids three small bowls labeled Hot (anger/excitement), Sour (frustration/disappointment), Sweet (happiness/fun).

Ask them to write or draw a feeling in each bowl.

Have kids “stir” the feelings with a spoon while practicing breathing and calm voices.

Discussion: How can you balance these feelings every day?

B. Emotion Charades

Kids act out different emotions from the story (hot, sour, frustrated, calm).

Classmates guess the feeling.

Discuss ways to respond to those feelings positively.

3 STEM / STEAM Experiments

A. Balance the Flavors

Materials: water, a tiny pinch of salt, a few drops of vinegar, optional food coloring.

Mix ingredients in small cups and taste carefully with adult supervision.

Observe how adding more vinegar or salt changes the flavor—relate to emotions: “Too much of one feeling can overwhelm.”

B. Bubble Science

Use baking soda + vinegar to create bubbles in a small clear container.

Relate bubbling to the boiling soup in the story.

Discuss how emotions can “bubble over” if not managed.

C. Floating Ingredients Experiment

Drop different safe items (grapes, tofu, small pieces of paper) in water to see which float or sink.

Relate to how some feelings rise to the top, some stay calm underneath.

4 Art & Writing Activities

A. Design Your Own Surf Soup Character

Invent a new “ingredient” character with a unique feeling (e.g., Ticklish Noodle, Angry Garlic).

Draw your character and write a short story about how they fit in the soup.

B. Color & Illustrate

Print or draw a Surf Soup pot and have children color it.

Label the ingredients with feelings they represent.

C. Recipe Story Writing

Ask kids to invent their own special soup recipe.

Include at least three ingredients and assign each ingredient a “feeling” or personality.

5 Cooking & Recipe Exploration

Read Grandma’s Hot & Sour Soup recipe together.

Have kids measure ingredients with help, stir slowly, and taste carefully.

Discuss: “Which flavor is hot? Which is sour? How do they balance each other?”

Optional: Have kids write a mini “recipe story” for friends or family, mixing flavors and feelings.

6 Literacy Tie-Ins

Vocabulary words: balance, bubbling, flavors, patience, teamwork, emotions, simmer, taste, stir

Reading comprehension: Identify the problem in the story and how characters solved it.

Sequencing activity: Ask kids to retell the story in order using picture cards or drawing.

7 Optional Take-Home / Family Extension

Families try the Hot & Sour Soup recipe at home.

Encourage discussion: “Which character was like you today?

How did you balance your feelings?”

Ask children to draw a “Feelings Soup” with ingredients representing their day’s emotions.