

Materials about Death, Dying, Grief and Sadness

Lanpher Memorial Library, Hyde Park

888-4628

Monday 12-7, Tuesday 10-5, Wednesday 10-5, Friday 1-5, Saturday 10-1

Books for Children

Fox: A Circle of Life Story, by Isabel Thomas, Illus. Daniel Egneus (2021)

In the frost-covered forest of early spring, fox is on a mission to find food for her three cubs. As they grow, she teaches them how to survive in the wild. Until one day, fox dies. Her body goes back to earth and grass and air, nourishing the world around her and bringing the forest to life. Death is not just an end: it's also a beginning.

Remembering Crystal, by Sebastian Loth (2010)

Crystal had lived in the garden for many years. She was growing old. Zelda was just starting out in life. They were best friends. But one day Crystal was not in the garden. In this gentle story, children learn, with Zelda, that true friendship is a gift that doesn't die.

Where Do People Go When They Die?, by Mindy Avra Portnoy (2004)

Using simple, straightforward language, this book tries to explain an extremely complicated concept.

Everett Anderson's Goodbye, by Lucille Clifton (1983)

A touching portrait of a little boy who is trying to come to grips with his father's death. Lucille Clifton captures Everett's conflicting emotions as he confronts this painful reality. We see him struggle through many stages, from denial and anger to depression and, finally, acceptance.

I'll Always Love You, by Hans Wilhelm (1985)

"In this gentle, moving story, Elfie, a dachshund, and her special boy progress happily through life together. One morning Elfie does not wake up. The family grieves and buries her. The watercolor illustrations, tender and warm in color and mood, suit the simple text perfectly."

Six Is So Much Less Than Seven, by Ronald Himler (2002)

Each morning when the old man wakes up, his cats are with him. The old man is content with his life, but something is missing, and it is only at the end of the book that the reader discovers what it is—a much missed friend. But turn the page and we are assured, as he is, that life goes on.

Rudi's Pond, by Eve Bunting (1999)

The young narrator's best friend, Rudi, is very sick, and it's hard for her to understand. When Rudi dies, the narrator and the other children in school help to build a pond by the big knobby oak to remember him by. Based on a true story, Rudi's Pond is an insightful book that will help young readers to deal with loss.

Goodbye Mousie, by Robie H. Harris (2001)

One morning a boy finds that his pet mouse won't wake up. The truth is Mousie has died. At first the boy doesn't believe it. He gets very mad at Mousie for dying, and then he feels very sad. But talking about Mousie, burying Mousie in a special box, and saying good-bye helps this boy begin to feel better about the loss of his beloved pet.

The Scar, by Charlotte Moundlic (2009)

When his mother dies, a young boy is overwhelmed with emotions. He misses her desperately, but he's also angry with her for leaving him alone with his dad and worried about how they're going to go on without her.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf, by Leo Buscaglia, Ph.D. (1982)

Freddie, a leaf, and his companion leaves change with the passing seasons, finally falling to the ground with winter's snow. This inspiring allegory illustrates the delicate balance between life and death.

The Dead Bird, by Margaret Wise Brown (1938/2016)

One day, the children find a bird lying on its side with its eyes closed and no heartbeat. They are very sorry, so they decide to say goodbye. In the park they dig a hole for the bird, cover it with warm ferns and flowers. Finally, they sing sweet songs to send the little bird on its way. Re-illustrated in 2016 by Christian Robinson.

Chester Raccoon and the Acorn Full of Memories, by Audrey Penn (2009)

After his mother explains why his classmate is not returning to school, she teaches Chester Raccoon how to make a memory.

Sammy in the Sky, by Barbara Walsh (2011)

Sammy, the best hound dog in the whole wide world, loves his girl and she loves him. When illness cuts Sammy's life short, the girl's family keeps his spirit alive by celebrating the things Sammy loved.

I Remember Miss Perry, by Pat Brisson (2006)

When their teacher is killed in a car accident, a grief counselor helps the children by asking them to share their memories of her to ease their pain.

And What Comes After a Thousand, by Anette Bley (2007)

"Otto and Lisa are special friends, and although Otto is old, he and Lisa still share a fascination with numbers, telling stories and gazing at the stars. When Otto dies, Lisa struggles to understand. Her rage, confusion and mourning are reflected in

heartwarming illustrations as she slowly comes to understand that while people die, memories last forever.

Michael Rosen's Sad Book, by Michael Rosen (2006)

"What makes Michael Rosen sad is thinking about his son, Eddie, who died. In this book, he writes about his sadness, how it affects him, and some of the things he does to cope with it. This is a very personal story that speaks to everyone: whether or not you have known what it's like to feel really deeply sad, its truth will surely touch you."

Badger's Parting Gifts, by Susan Varley (1984)

"This book is about the death and life of someone very special. Badger was a friend, and almost everyone who knew him had warm and loving memories of when he was living with them. At first, those who loved Badger felt overwhelmed by their loss. In time though, whenever Badger's name was mentioned, someone would recall something about him that made them all smile. And Badger was part of their lives once more."

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney, by Judith Viorst (1979)

"Barney was a cat. He died last Friday. And everyone was sad. Whenever a cat dies, or a dog, or a bird, or any friend, it can be a little like this story about Barney. Since dying is as usual as living, it's good to know about him."

Poppy's Chair, by Karen Hesse (Vermont Author) (1993)

"On her first summer visit to her grandmother since her grandfather's death, Leah is saddened by his absence, but Gramm helps her learn how to remember Poppy with joy."

Grandad Bill's Song, by Jane Yolen (1994)

"What did you do on the day Grandad died?" the little boy asks. He is surprised by the answers he gets. Distinguished author Jane Yolen's lyrical poem of a child's struggle to express his feelings about a beloved grandfather's death overflows with warmth and understanding."

The Purple Balloon, by Chris Raschka (2007)

"Easy to read text reveals that dying is hard work, for the old and especially the young, and how good it is that so many people help when a person dies, from medical staff to clergy and friends to family members." Written in conjunction with Children's Hospice International.

Every Monday in the Mailbox, by Louisa Fox (1995)

“Melinda looks forward to getting letters and cards from her favorite neighbor who moved into a nursing home. When the old woman dies, Melinda finds a way to stop missing her so much.”

What Happens When a Loved One Dies? Our First Talk about Death, by Dr. Jillian Roberts (2016) “It can be difficult to know how to talk with children about death, whether they are experiencing grief and loss for the first time, or simply curious. To empower parents and caregivers to start conversations with little ones about challenging subject matter.”

The Heart and the Bottle, by Oliver Jeffers (2010) “Once there was a girl whose life was filled with all the wonder of the world around her. Then one day something occurred that caused the girl to take her heart and put it in a safe place. However, after that it seemed that more things were empty than before. Would she know when and how to get it back?”

Cry Heart but Never Break, by Glenn Ringtved (2016) “Aware their grandmother is gravely ill, four siblings make a pact to keep death from taking her away. But Death does arrive all the same, as it must. He comes gently, naturally. And he comes with enough time to share a story with the children that helps them to realize the value of loss to life and the importance of being able to say goodbye.”

Tough Boris, by Mem Fox (1994) “Boris von der Borch is a mean, greedy old pirate--tough as nails, through and through, like all pirates. Or is he? When a young boy sneaks onto Boris’s ship, he discovers that even pirates cry. And so does he.”

When Aunt Mattie Got Her Wings, by Petra Mathers (2014) “When Aunt Mattie dies, best friends Lottie and Herbie console each other and celebrate Aunt Mattie's life by scattering her ashes and preparing her favorite snack--peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (with bananas).”

Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler’s Guide to Understanding Death (2016), by Bonnie Zucker; Illus. Kim Fleming “Since the two-to three-year old child cannot read, this story is intended to be personalized to help the child better grasp the content; certain words are color-coded in red to cue...Includes an extensive note to parents and caregivers with more information about talking to children about death,....”

Death Is Stupid, by Anastasia Higginbotham (2016) “ There are images that may be familiar to readers (flowers, a coffin, a hearse), along with well-intentioned but confusing condolences. “Now your grandma can watch over you wherever you are!” reads one, as the horrified boy imagines a spirit swirling overhead as he guzzles whipped cream straight from the can. It’s that exact mix of true-to-life humor and unflinching honesty.”

The Rough Patch, by Brian Lies (2018) Evan (a fox) and his dog do everything together. ..mostly in Evan’s extraordinary garden...and when Evan loses his friend, he destroys the place that meant most to them and creates something that matches his mood...Until one day...”

Holes in the Sky, by Patricia Polacco (2018) “When Patricia’s grandmother passes away through the ‘holes in the sky’, Trisha waits for a sign from her to let her know she is watching over her.

Blue, by Laura Vaccaro Seeger (2018) “Seeger explores ways color evokes emotion and in “Blue” tells the story of one special and enduring friendship between a child and a dog.

Maybe Tomorrow? , by Charlotte Agell, Illus. Ana Ramirez Gonzalez (2019) Elba has a big block she’s been dragging around for some time. This tender exploration of loss illuminates how kindness, empathy and friendship can lift our spirits and see us through many tomorrows.

The Day We Lost Pet, by Chuck Young, Illus. Aniela Sobieski (2019) Part creation myth, part fairy tale, *The Day We Lost Pet* tells the story of a family that comes together to mourn the death of their beloved Pet. These endearing balloon characters harness the language of poetry, science, and nature in order to understand one of life’s most difficult moments.

One Wave at a Time: A Story About Grief and Healing, by Holly Thompson; Illus. Ashley Crowley (2019) After his father dies, Kai experiences all kinds of emotions: sadness, anger, fear, guilt. Sometimes they crash and mix together. Other times, there are no emotions at all—just flatness. As Kai and his family adjust to life without Dad, the waves still roll in. But with the help of friends and one another, they learn to cope—and begin to heal.

Helen’s Birds, by Sara Cassidy, Illus. Sophie Casson (2019)
Ever since she was little, Saanvi has been friends with her elderly neighbor Helen. They play cards, read, and garden together and, especially care for the wild birds that visit Helen’s yard. But one night everything changes. This beautifully illustrated, wordless graphic novel shows Saanvi’s journey through close friendship, loss and change—until she finds hope again.

The End of Something Wonderful: A Practical Guide to a Backyard Funeral, by Stephanie Lucianovic; Illus. George Ermos (2019) In a warm, understanding, sometimes funny way, it guides children as they plan a backyard funeral to say goodbye, from choosing a box and a burial spot to giving a eulogy and wiping away tears. Most of all, it reassures them that it’s not the end of everything . . . and that Something Wonderful can always happen again.

Rabbit and the Motorbike, by Kate Hoefler, illus. Sarah Jacoby (2019) Rabbit lives in a quiet field of wheat that he never leaves. Dog has spent most of his life going all over the country on his motorbike and loves telling Rabbit about the places he felt most alive. But one day, Dog isn't there to tell stories anymore. Rabbit isn't sure he'll ever be brave enough to go on an adventure...but his bravery in the face of grief ultimately consoles him.

The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden, by Heather Smith and Rachel Wada (2019) Inspired by a true story. Makio lost his father. Sadly, he was not alone. Everyone lost someone the day the big wave came. With the villagers silenced by grief, Makio's anger grows. Then one day his neighbor, Mr. Hirota builds a phone booth on a hill, giving Makio and the villagers a chance to feel close to their loved ones again. Although the phone is not connected, words are carried on the wind.

An Ordinary Day, by Elana K. Arnold; illus. Elizabet Vukovic (2020)

An ordinary day in an ordinary neighborhood turns out to be extraordinary in this story about new life, death, and family."

Nonfiction for Children:

Sadness, by Lenore Franzen (2007)

This book discusses what sadness is as a feeling, how people show sadness, what can make people sad, and different ways to cope with the feeling of sadness.

Saying Good-bye: A Special Farewell to Mama Nkwelle, by Ifeoma Onyefulu

(2001)"Through the eyes and words of her young narrator, Ifeoma Onyefulu presents a warm tribute to a beloved great-grandmother and member of the community, as well as a fascinating look at the customs and life in contemporary Nigerian village."

Pablo Remembers: the Fiesta of the Day of the Dead, by George Ancona (1993) "From October 31 to November 2, people in Mexico celebrate the festival of el Dia de Los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. This photodocumentary follows Pablo and his family as they prepare to honor the memory of Pablo's grandmother."

I Miss You: A First Look at Death, by Pat Thomas (2000) 155.9

Children's feelings and questions about this sensitive subject are looked at in a simple but realistic way. This book helps them to understand their loss and to come to terms with their feelings.

Sometimes I'm Scared, by Jane Annunziata and Marc Nemiroff (2009) 155.4

This book empowers kids by giving them the tools and information they need to understand and overcome common childhood fears.

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children, by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen (1983) 306.9

A moving book for children of all ages, and parents too. It lets us explain life and death in a sensitive and caring way.

Is Nothing Something? Kids' questions and Zen answers about life, death, family, friendship and everything in between, by Tich Nhat Hanh (2014) 294.3

Zen Master answers heartfelt, difficult and funny questions from children of all ages. Both humorous and profound, a perfect resource for kids with questions and adults looking to answer them.

Jenny Is Scared!: When Sad Things Happen in the World, by Carol Shuman (2003) 152.4

Jenny and her brother Sam are scared! The TV has played news all morning...Jenny and Sam want to know what's going on and how not to be so scared, and Mom and Dad can help. Honest sensitivity, explores children's fears and reactions surrounding terrorism, war and other violent events. Note to parents on back pages.

Dear Pope Francis: The Pope Answers Letters from Children Around the World, by Pope Francis (2016) 248.4

Pope Francis answers questions and concerns that rest deep in the hearts of children.

When Dinosaurs Die: A guide to understanding Death, by Laurie Kransy Brown and Marc Brown, (2009) 155.9

A comprehensive, sensitive guide for families dealing with the loss of loved ones. Helps readers understand what death means, and how best to cope with their feelings.

For Adults:

When Children Grieve: For Adults to help Children Deal with Death, Divorce, Pet Loss, Moving and Other Losses, by John W. James and Russell Friedman 2001

Guiding Your Child Through Grief, by Mary Ann Emswiler, M.A., M.P.S and James P. Emswiler, M.A., M.Ed (2000)

What Helped Me When My Loved One Died, edited by Earl A. Grollman

A series of essays written by people who have all experienced the death of a different type of loved one. From the death of an infant to accidental deaths, spouses, parents and friends, these essays reveal what helped others through mourning processes.

A Time to Grieve: Loss as a Universal Human Experience, by Bertha G. Simos

This book traces the cycle of loss, grief, mourning to healthy restitution. Dr. Simos also covers what happens with unresolved grief and dysfunctions that can occur with less favorable outcomes of loss.

What Do We Tell the Children?: Talking to Kids about Death and Dying, by Joseph M. Primo

Talking With Children About Loss: Words, Strategies, and Wisdom to Help Children Cope with Death, Divorce and other Difficult Times, by Maria Trozzi with Kathy Massimini, FWD. By T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. 155.9

Through captivating stories and thoughtful analysis, explains how to handle the difficult job of talking to children and adolescents about loss.

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Supporting grieving children requires intentionality, open communication, and patience. Rather than avoid all conversations on death or pretend like it never happened, normalizing grief and offering support requires us to be in tune with kids through dialogue as they grapple with questions of “how” and “why.” When listening to children in grief, we often have to embrace the mystery, offer love and compassion, and stick with the basics.

Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope when a Special Person Dies, by Janis Silverman 155.9

Art therapy book that encourages children to express their feelings in words and pictures.

Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child, by Earl A Grollman 155.9

Talking about Death is a classic guide for parents helping their children through the death of a loved one. With a helpful list of dos and don'ts, an illustrated read-along dialogue, and a guide to explaining death, Grollman provides sensitive and timely advice for families coping with loss.

Picture Books about Gun Violence/Trauma/News

Momma, did You hear the News?, by Sanya Whittaker Gragg, MSW illus. Kim Holt(2017)
Ten year old Avery is in a panic over the shooting of another unarmed black man. His parents decide it is time to have “The Talk”. They teach him and his brother a catchy and easy way to remember what to do if approached by an officer, while also emphasizing that all policemen are not bad.

Something Happened in our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice, by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins and Ann Hazzard; illus. by Jennifer Zivoin (2018)
This book follows a White family and a Black family as they discuss a police shooting of a Black man. It is designed to engage young children in a compelling story as well as spark important discussions about racial injustice. In addition to modeling conversations about race, this book provides messages of acceptance, empowerment and positive community support. Includes an extensive Note to Parents and Caregivers that provides general guidance about addressing racism with children, child-friendly vocabulary definitions, conversation guides, and a link to additional online resources for parents and teachers.

Come With Me, by Holly M. McGhee, illus. by Pascal Lemaitre (2017)
As the news tells and retells of anger and hatred, a little girl asks her parents what she can do to make the world a better place. One step at a time, the girl begins to understand that her part, as small as it may seem, matters to the world.

For the Right to Learn: Malala Yousafzai’s Story, by Rebecca Langston-George illus. Janna Bock (2016)
Tells Malala Yousafzai’s harrowing story of standing up for girls’ education against the Taliban, being shot in the head, and surviving to continue the fight.