

Death and Grief in General

FICTION FOR YOUNGER KIDS

Where Do They Go? By Julia Alvarez. Illus by Sabra Field. Triangle Square, 2016.

A beautiful and comforting meditation on death, asking questions young readers might have about what happens to those they love after they die.

Rafa Was My Robot by Alexandra Dellevoet. Illus by Ken Turner. Annick Press, 2014.

This quietly moving picture book will help young children through the difficult process of losing someone or something they love. Without diminishing the pain of losing a loved one, *Rafa Was My Robot* conveys a comforting message that by keeping them in your heart, they are never far away.

Always and Forever by Alan Durant. Random House, 2013.

When Fox dies, the rest of his family are distraught. How will Mole, Otter and Hare go on without their beloved friend? But months later, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they all realize that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories.

Life is Like the Wind by Shona Innes & Irisz Agocs. B.E.S. Publishing, 2014.

The authors explore the feelings we have when a loved one's life goes away, how we cope with missing them, and how we can celebrate their memory. It also introduces the various things people believe happens to a life that has moved on.

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst. Illus by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff. Little, Brown, 2018.

This heartwarming picture book for all ages explores questions about the intangible yet unbreakable connections between us, and opens up deeper conversations about love.

Ida, Always by Caron Levis. Illus by Charles Santoso. Atheneum Books, 2016.

An exquisitely told story of two best friends—inspired by a real bear friendship—and a gentle, moving, needed reminder that loved ones lost will stay in our hearts, always.

Remembering Crystal by Sebastian Loth. NorthSouth Books, 2010.

In this gentle story, children learn, with Zelda, that true friendship is a gift that doesn't die.

Always Remember by Cece Meng. Illus by Jago. Philomel Books, 2016.

After Old Turtle swims his last swim and breathes his last breath, and the waves gently take him away, his friends lovingly remember how he impacted each and every one of them. As the sea animals think back on how much better Old Turtle made their lives and their world, they realize that he is not truly gone, because his memory and legacy will last forever.

The Purple Balloon by Chris Raschka. Schwartz & Wade, 2007.

In disarmingly simple and direct language, accompanied by evocative potato print illustrations, Raschka in conjunction with Children's Hospice International (CHI), creates a moving, sensitive book that is also a

phenomenally useful tool to talk about death. The message of the book is clear: talking about dying is hard, dying is harder, but there are many people in your life who can help.

And So It Goes by Paloma Valdivia. Illus by Susan Ouriou. Groundwood Books, 2017.

In this gentle meditation on the cycle of life, author and illustrator Paloma Valdivia gives us an opportunity to reflect on those who have gone, those who will come, and those of us who are here in this world — for the time being.

NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER KIDS

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death by Lauren Krasny Brown. Illus by Marc Brown. Little, Brown Books, 1998.

This succinct and thorough guide helps dispel the mystery and negative connotations associated with death. This helpful book provides answers to kids' most-often asked questions and also explores the feelings we may have regarding the death of a loved one, and the ways to remember someone after he or she has died.

Death is Stupid by Anastasia Higginbotham. The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2016.

"She's in a better place now," adults say again and again. But mortality doesn't seem better, it seems stupid. This forthright exploration of grief and mourning recognizes the anger, confusion, and fear that we feel about death. Necessary, beautiful, and ultimately reassuring, *Death Is Stupid* is an invaluable tool for discussing death, but also the possibilities for celebrating life and love.

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen. Bantam, 1983.

A moving book for children of all ages, even parents too. It lets us explain life and death in a sensitive, caring, beautiful way. *Lifetimes* tells us about beginnings. And about endings. And about living in between. With large, wonderful illustrations, it tells about plants. About animals. About people. It tells that dying is as much a part of living as being born. It helps us to remember. It helps us to understand.

What Happens When a Loved One Dies?: Our First Talk About Death by Dr. Jillian Roberts. Illus by Cindy Revell. Orca Book Publishers, 2016.

Whether children are experiencing grief and loss for the first time or simply curious, it can be difficult to know how to talk to them about death. Using questions posed in a child's voice and answers that start simply and become more in-depth, this book allows adults to guide the conversation to a natural and reassuring conclusion. Additional questions at the back of the book allow for further discussion.

I Miss You: A First Look at Death by Pat Thomas. Illus by Leslie Harker. B.E.S. Publishing, 2001.

When a close friend or family member dies, it can be difficult for children to express their feelings. This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one's death.

Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death by Bonnie Zucker. Illus by Kim Fleming. Magination Press, 2016.

Written at a developmental level that is appropriate for two- and three-year-olds, the story explains death; lets children know that it is okay to feel sad; and reassures children that they can still love the person who died, and the person who died will always love them.

NONFICTION FOR OLDER KIDS

I Have a Question About Death: Clear Answers for All Kids, Including Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs by Arlen Grad Gaines & Meredith Englander Polsky. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017.

"What does it mean when someone dies?" "Why did someone I love have to die?" This book asks questions like these that a child might have about death before offering answers. It uses straightforward text and clear illustrations to explain what death means specifically to children with ASD and other Special Needs aged 5-11.

After Life: Ways We Think About Death by Merrie-Ellen Wilcox. Orca Book Publishers, 2018.

Why do we die? Why can't we live forever? What happens to us after death? Moving between science and culture, *After Life: Ways We Think About Death* takes a straightforward look at these and other questions long taboo in our society. By showing the fascinating, diverse ways in which we understand death, both today and throughout our history, the book also shines a light on what it is to be human. Each chapter includes a brief telling of a death legend, myth or history from a different culture or tradition, from Adam and Eve to Wolf and Coyote, and ends with a section on a common theme in our thinking about death, such as rivers and birds in the afterlife, the colors that different cultures use to symbolize death, and, of course, ghosts. The final chapter is about grief, which is both a universal human experience and unique to each person. The text offers suggestions for ways to think about our grief, when to ask for help and how to talk to friends who are grieving.

Death of a Sibling

FICTION FOR YOUNGER KIDS

Can You Hear Me Smiling?: A Child Grieves a Sister by Aariane Jackson & Leigh Lawhon. Child & Family Press, 2004.

A girl tells how, after she had a fight with her sister and said something mean, her sister got sick with pneumonia and died, and she describes her feelings of grief, anger, and loss.

Jenny: Coming to Terms with the Death of a Sibling by Stephanie Jeffs. Abingdon Press, 2006.

The story shows a warm and caring family learning to deal with long-term illness. It is a story about suffering and death, but also about the special place in heaven where there are no more tears, pain, or suffering

Ben's Flying Flowers by Inger Maier. Illus by Maria Bogade. Magination Press, 2012.

Bens Flying Flowers follows Emily as she tries to overcome her grief following her brothers death. As time passes, Emily finds a way to remember her brother and grows to understand that although Ben has died, her happy memories of him can continue to live on.

Finn's Feather by Rachel Noble. Illus by Zoey Abbott. Enchanted Lion Books, 2018.

Finn knows his brother is gone. But he also knows that Hamish sent the beautiful white feather on his doorstep. Finn runs to show his mother the feather from Hamish, but she only gives him a big hug. In school, Finn's teacher responds similarly. Why isn't anyone as excited as he is? Finn sits quietly, cradling the beautiful, amazing feather. "Why did Hamish give it to you?" asks his friend, Lucas. "Maybe he wanted to say hi?" wonders Finn. "Maybe," Lucas says, "Hamish wanted you to have fun with it." Finn's Feather is a story about resilience and memory—about a child, his brother, and a friend who meets him where he is.

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Wenny Has Wings by Janet Lee Carey. Atheneum Books, 2004.

In the fight with the truck barreling toward them, Wenny and Will lost big. Wenny lost her life. Will lost a sister -- and lost faith in himself.

But then Will starts writing letters to Wenny. He tells her all about the secret of his near-death experience, and the troubles he's having at home. Some letters are funny. Some letters are harsh. And when read together, they tell the story of a boy who finds a way to move past death and learns how to live again....

Umbrella Summer by Lisa Graff. HarperCollins, 2011.

Annie Richards knows there are a million things to look out for—bicycle accidents, chicken pox, runaway zoo animals. That's why being careful is so important, even if it does mean giving up some of her favorite things, like bike races with her best friend and hot dogs on the Fourth of July. Everyone keeps telling Annie not to worry so much, that she's just fine. But they thought her brother, Jared, was just fine too, and Jared died. It takes a new neighbor to make Annie realize that her plans for being careful aren't working out as well as she'd hoped. And with a lot of help from those around her, Annie just may find a way to close her umbrella of sadness and step back into the sunshine.

What is Goodbye? By Nikki Grimes. Illus by Raul Colon. Disney-Hyperion, 2004.

Jerilyn and Jesse have lost their beloved older brother. But each of them deals with Jaron's death differently. Jerilyn tries to keep it in and hold it together; Jesse acts out. But after a year of anger, pain, and guilt, they come to understand that it's time to move on. It's time for a new family picture-with one piece missing, yet whole again. Through the alternating voices of a brother and sister, Nikki Grimes eloquently portrays the grieving process in this gem of a book that is honest, powerful, and ultimately hopeful.

Bird Lake Moon by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow Books, 2010.

There are ghosts at Bird Lake, and they're haunting Mitch Sinclair and Spencer Stone. Not the Halloween kind, but ghosts of the past. Memories of how life was before—before the divorce, before the accident. Can their ghosts bring Mitch and Spencer together, as friends? Or will their secrets keep them apart?

Grounded by Kate Klise. Square Fish, 2013.

After her brother, sister, and father die in a plane crash, Daralynn Oakland receives 237 dolls from well-wishers, resulting in her nickname: Dolly. But dolls are little comfort to a twelve-year-old girl whose world is rocked by the dramatic changes in her life, including her angry, grieving mother's new job as a hairstylist at the local funeral home.

See You at Harry's by Jo Knowles. Candlewick, 2013.

Starting middle school brings all the usual challenges for twelve-year-old Fern. She feels invisible — until the unthinkable happens, and Fern feels not only more alone than ever, but also responsible for the tragedy that has wrenched her family apart. Nothing will ever be the same — but can Fern and her family find a way to heal?

The Only Game by Mike Lupica. Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Can a young baseball star maintain his love of the game after the loss of his brother? Find out in this start to the Home Team series about a small town with high hopes.

Edward's Eyes by Patricia MacLachlan. Atheneum Books, 2009.

Patricia MacLachlan, one of the most beloved children's book authors writing today, has painted a deeply stirring, delicately lyrical portrait of a child, a son, a family, and a brother. Through Edward's eyes, we see what gifts all of these things truly are to those around them, and how those gifts live on and grow.

The Stars Beneath Our Feet by David Barclay Moore. Yearling, 2019.

It's Christmas Eve in Harlem, but twelve-year-old Lolly Rachpaul and his mom aren't celebrating. They're still reeling from his older brother's death in a gang-related shooting just a few months earlier. Then Lolly's mother's girlfriend brings him a gift that will change everything: two enormous bags filled with Legos. Lolly's always loved Legos, and he prides himself on following the kit instructions exactly. Now, faced with a pile of building blocks and no instructions, Lolly must find his own way forward.

FOR PARENTS

When the Bough Breaks: Forever After the Death of a Son or Daughter by Judith R. Bernstein, Ph.D. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1998.

When the Bough Breaks presents a breakthrough concept of mourning, documenting the process of evolution from initial grief to an altered outlook on life. Excerpts from interviews with 50 parents who lost a child from five to forty-five trace the road from utter devastation to a revised view of life, resulting in a work that is a tribute to resilience and the indomitable human spirit.

Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief by Joanne Cacciatore, Ph.D. Wisdom Publications, 2017.

Organized into fifty-two short chapters, Bearing the Unbearable is a companion for life's most difficult times, revealing how grief can open our hearts to connection, compassion, and the very essence of our shared humanity. Dr. Joanne Cacciatore—bereavement educator, researcher, Zen priest, and leading

counselor in the field—accompanies us along the heartbreaking path of love, loss, and grief. Through moving stories of her encounters with grief over decades of supporting individuals, families, and communities—as well as her own experience with loss—Cacciatore opens a space to process, integrate, and deeply honor our grief.

Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief by Martha Whitmore Hickman. William Morrow, 1994.

For those who have suffered the loss of a loved one, here are thoughtful words to strengthen, inspire and comfort.

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D. & David Kessler. Scribner, 2014.

Just as *On Death and Dying* taught us the five stages of death—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—*On Grief and Grieving* applies these stages to the grieving process and weaves together theory, inspiration, and practical advice, including sections on sadness, hauntings, dreams, isolation, and healing.

Beyond Tears: Living After Losing a Child by Ellen Mitchell et. al. St. Martin's Griffin, 2009.

Meant to comfort and give direction to bereaved parents, *Beyond Tears* is written by nine mothers who have each lost a child. This sharing in itself is a catharsis and because each of these mothers lost her child at least seven years ago, she is in a unique position to provide perspective on what newly bereaved parents can expect to feel. The mothers of *Beyond Tears* offer reassurance that the clouds of grief do lessen with time and that grieving parents will find a way to live, and even laugh again.

Shattered: Surviving the Loss of a Child by Gary Roe. CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2017.

Bestselling author, hospice chaplain, and grief specialist Gary Roe uses his three decades of experience interacting with grieving parents to give us this heartfelt, easy-to-read, and intensely practical book. In *Shattered*, Roe walks the reader through the powerful impact a child's death can have - emotionally, mentally, physically, relationally, and spiritually.

Michael Rosen's Sad Book by Michael Rosen. Illus by Quentin Blake. Candlewick, 2005.

Sad things happen to everyone, and sometimes people feel sad for no reason at all. What makes Michael Rosen sad is thinking about his son, Eddie, who died suddenly at the age of eighteen. In this book the author writes about his sadness, how it affects him, and some of the things he does to cope with it—like telling himself that everyone has sad stuff (not just him) and trying every day to do something he can be proud of. Expressively illustrated by the extraordinary Quentin Blake, this is a very personal story that speaks to everyone, from children to parents to grandparents, teachers to grief counselors. Whether or not you have known what it's like to feel deeply sad, the truth of this book will surely touch you.

Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart by Alan Wolfelt. Companion Press, 2004.

Explaining the important difference between grief and mourning, this book explores every mourner's need to acknowledge death and embrace the pain of loss. Also explored are the many factors that make

each person's grief unique and the many normal thoughts and feelings mourners might have. Questions of spirituality and religion are addressed as well. The rights of mourners to be compassionate with themselves, to lean on others for help, and to trust in their ability to heal are upheld. Journaling sections encourage mourners to articulate their unique thoughts and feelings.