

## Story Books to Support Children with the Issues of Death, Bereavement, Grief, and Loss

This booklist has been compiled by BackPocketTeacher. Please note that the inclusion of books on this list does not equal an endorsement. All children are unique and different books will be appropriate and beneficial for different children.

### Death, loss, and bereavement

- **A Jumble of Knotted Thoughts by Sarah Helton**

A sensory story to support bereavement and grief. A simple story that you read to children to help them process a death and to help them manage the emotions of bereavement and grief. Each line of the story is supported with a sensory activity or action, using everyday objects (not included with the book). Having a sensory element to the story helps the child to understand the subject matter more fully.

- **I Have a Question About Death by Arlen Grad Gaines and Meredith Englander Polsky**

Clear answers for children, including those with autism.

- **Why Do Things Die? - Lift the Flap First Questions & Answers (Board book) by Katie Daynes**

A beautiful and gentle look at the circle of life, using Christine Pym's gorgeous animal characters to explore the emotions and facts around death, with questions such as Is it ok to talk about dying? What happens when someone dies? Can I shout and cry and hide away? and How can I stop feeling sad?

- **A New Day by Fiona McDonald**

Grey mouse has died and Brown mouse is too sad to get out of bed. This book gently carries the reader through the early stages of grief.

- **When you were gone by Joanna Grace**

A sensory story written to help you share a memory of a loved one who has died, with a person in a sensory way.

- **When Dinosaurs Die by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown**

A book which helps answer the questions children might have about death using simple language.

- **I Miss You by Pat Thomas**

This reassuring picture book explores the difficult issue of death for young children. 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 come to terms with it.

- **Always and Forever by Alan Durant**

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

- **Water Bugs and Dragonflies by Doris Stickney**

A storybook which helps to answer some of the questions children might have about death, by telling the story of a water bug who turns into a dragonfly.

- **Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson**

Jess Aarons has been practicing all summer so he can be the fastest runner in the fifth grade. And he almost is, until the new girl in school, Leslie Burke, outpaces him. The two become fast friends and spend most days in the woods behind Leslie's house, where they invent an enchanted land called Terabithia. One morning, Leslie goes to Terabithia without Jess and a tragedy occurs. It will take the love of his family and the strength that Leslie has given him for Jess to be able to deal with his grief.

- **Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley**

Many families have found this book useful when helping children to come to terms with the death of someone close. It tells the story of Badger's peaceful death and his friends remembering what Badger taught them while he was alive.

- **The Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup**

A book which teaches children to celebrate the memories of someone who's died. When Fox lies down in the woods and falls asleep forever, his friends gather round to tell stories about his life.

- **Ethel and Ernest by Raymond Briggs**

Ethel and Ernest tells the story of Raymond Briggs' parents' marriage, lady's maid Ethel and milkman Ernest, from their first chance encounter in 1928, through the birth of their son Raymond in 1934, to their deaths, within months of each other, in 1971.

- **Sad by Michael Rosen**

This chronicles Michael's grief at the death of his son Eddie from meningitis at the age of 19. A moving combination of sincerity and simplicity, it acknowledges that sadness is not always avoidable or reasonable and explains complicated feelings in simple terms.

- **The Magical Wood by Mark Lemon**

This is a story about loss, friendship, and hope. The Magical Wood is set in a beautiful wood with a river wandering through. One cold and stormy day, the wind blew a terrible gale. The next day the tree family woke to find that Strongest Tree had fallen to the woodland floor and had sadly died. How would the tree family survive the seasons without the strength of Strongest Tree?

- **Where the Poppies Now Grow by Hilary Robinson & Martin Impey**

Set in WWI this story is a touching tribute to honour all those who sacrificed so much for the cause of peace.

- **Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie**

The book simply explains that all life has a beginning and an ending, and highlights the different life spans of different animals, plants and lastly humans -with a young child and an old person for comparison.

- **Ragtail Remembers by Liz Duckworth**

A story that helps children understand feelings of grief. Ragtail, a young mouse, has just lost his best friend. As he tries to understand what has happened, Ragtail is swept away by confusing feelings of denial, anger, and sadness. With the help of a new friend, he learns to deal with his feelings and soon discovers the comfort that comes from remembering.

- **Liplap's Wish by Jonathan London and Sylvia Long,**

A tale of a bunny called Liplap designed to help in coping with grief when someone close dies.

- **Milly's Bug Nut by Jill Janey**

Milly's Bug-nut' is the story of a family finding their way through bereavement and of Milly who finds an unexpected answer to her heart's desire.

- **Chester Raccoon and the Acorn Full of Memories by Audrey Penn**

Chester Raccoon's good friend Skiddel Squirrel has had an accident and will not be returning - ever. Chester is upset that he won't get to play with his friend anymore. Mrs. Raccoon suggests that Chester and his friends create some memories of Skiddel, so that they will have good memories when they miss him.

- **My Henry by Judith Kerr**

Henry's wife can see no reason why they should stop just because one of them is no longer around. In fact, she can't help going a little bit over the top, imagining all sorts of wonderful outings, including dinosaur rides and dolphin drawn water ski sessions. In the end however, even the most magical and exotic daydreams can never quite compare to their past everyday life together.

- **The Copper Tree by Hilary Robinson**

When Olivia's teacher, Miss Evans, dies the children at her school are encouraged to think of everything that reminds them of her.

- **Grief is Like a Snowflake by Julia Cook**

After the death of his father, Little Tree begins to learn how to cope with his feelings and start the healing process. With the help and support of his family and friends, Little Tree learns to cope by discovering what is really important in life, and that his father's memory will carry on.

- **Everybody Feels Sad by Moira Butterfield**

Have you ever lost a favourite toy? Were you sad when a pet you loved died? How did you feel? Did your eyes fill with tears? Read about Chloe and Omar and what they did when they felt sad. With a mix of stories, questions for the reader, and advice, this book focuses on why children may feel a certain way and how they can deal with those feelings.

- **The Goodbye Book by Todd Parr**

A touching and hopeful story about saying goodbye.

- **Duck, Death, and the Tulip by Wolf Erlbruch's**

In a strangely heart-warming story, a duck strikes up an unlikely friendship with Death. "Who are you? Why are you creeping along behind me?" "Good. You've finally noticed me," said Death. "I am Death." Duck was startled. Death, Duck, and the Tulip will intrigue, haunt, and enchant teenagers and adults. Simple, unusual, warm, and witty - a picture book version of The Book Thief. This book deals with a difficult subject in a way that is elegant, straightforward, and thought-provoking.

- **You Will Be Okay by Julie Stokes**

An honest, comforting and strength-building guide, with excellent activities and graphics.

### Death of mother

- **A Sky of Diamonds by Camille Gibbs**

When Mia learns that her mother has died, all the colour in her world changes to a dreary grey. She feels guilty, angry, sad, and lost (sometimes all at once), and she doesn't know what to do to feel better. Little by little, with the help of her dad, Mia learns how to cope with her difficult feelings.

- **Missing Mummy by Rebecca Cobb**

This book deals with the death of a parent from a child's point of view. It explores the many emotions a bereaved child may experience, from anger to guilt and from sadness to bewilderment.

- **The Scar by Charlotte Moundlic**

When the boy in this story wakes to find that his mother has died, he is overwhelmed with sadness, anger, and fear that he will forget her. He shuts all the windows to keep in his mother's familiar smell and scratches open the cut on his knee to remember her comforting voice.

- **No Matter What by Debi Gliori**

'No matter what?' Small asks. But what if he turns into a bug, or a crocodile, or even a grizzly bear? Small has all sorts of questions about love, and his mummy must reassure him that her love will never, ever run out - no matter what.

- **The Memory String by Eve Bunting**

Each button on Laura's memory string represents a piece of her family history. The buttons Laura cherishes the most belonged to her mother - a button from her prom dress, a white one off her wedding dress, and a single small button from the nightgown she was wearing on the day she died.

- **Remembering Mama by Dara Dakas**

This story illustrates different emotional reactions to the loss of a parent, and a variety of nonfiction activities are suggested to help express grief.

### Death of father

- **Samantha's Missing Smile by Julie Kaplow**

Since Samantha Jane's dad died, she has been sad and quiet, keeping to herself. One day, her neighbour Mrs. Cooper gently asks her about her missing smile, and Sammy Jane begins to open up about her grief, her worries, and her confusion.

- **Princess and the Castle by Caroline Binch**

Genevieve lives with her mum and her brother Jack in a little stone harbour side house, but ever since the day that her daddy's fishing boat got lost at sea, she has stayed well away from the shore. Instead, she gazes across the harbour at the castle on the other side and dreams of being a princess. One day, a tall man arrives sailing a little boat with red sails. Genevieve's mum introduces him as Cedric, her new friend.

- **Daddy, Up and Down: Sisters Grieve the Loss of Their Daddy by Anna Stenson and Lila Stenson**

A book for children who have lost a parent. It is written by children, so it is perfect for children to read & maybe help them handle the loss of a parent.

### Death of sibling

- **The coat I wear by Mel Maxwell and Michelle Stewart**

A story which follows the grief of a child after their sibling dies. They describe their grief like wearing a heavy, uncomfortable coat, which over time becomes easier to wear.

- **Can You Hear Me Smiling? A Child Grieves a Sister by Aariane R. Jackson**

In Can You Hear Me Smiling? the author recounts with honesty, tenderness, and courage the story of her older sister's illness and death.

- **Stacy Had a Little Sister by Wendie Old**

Stacy sometimes feels jealous of her new baby sister Ashley, wishing she would go away, but when Ashley dies of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Stacy must find a way to cope with her guilt and with her family's loss.

- **Where's Jess? by Marvin Johnson**

A story for children who have a brother or sister die.

### Death of grandparent

- **Granpa by John Burningham**

About the enduring relationship between a child and their grandfather.

- **Grandad, I'll Always Remember You by Ann De Bode & Rien Broere**

Tom arrives home from school one day to find everyone looking very sad. His grandfather has died suddenly. Grandma explains what happened, that grandad was very tired and went to rest on the settee where she found him later.

- **Grandpa's Boat by Michael Catchpool**

Since Grandpa's death, his family have left his boat, The Periwinkle, untouched and unused. But one day they decide to repair the boat in memory of Grandpa and find that it is better to remember than to forget.

- **Grandma and Grandpa's Garden by Neil Griffiths**

A gentle story that will bring a tear to your eye and touch all those who have lost a loved one. Grandma and Grandpa loved being together in their beautiful garden.

- **Grandma's Bill by Martin Waddell**

When Bill visits Grandma, she tells him about "my other Bill...your daddy's daddy," showing Bill a photo album that goes back to his grandfather's infancy. In zippy, expertly tuned dialogue, the two cover three generations of family history, Waddell deftly conveying the child's cheery self-confidence with just a glimmer of the deeper meaning the story has for Grandma.

- **Ladder to the Moon by Maya Soetoro-Ng**

Little Suhaila wishes she had known her grandma, who (her mother tells her) would have wrapped her arms round the whole world if she could. And one night Suhaila gets her wish when a golden ladder appears at her window and Grandma Annie, arms outstretched, invites the girl to come along with her on a journey.

- **Little Bear's Grandad by Nigel Gray**

Little Bear visits his Grandad every week. The two bears have tea together then climb into the treehouse where Grandad tells Little Bear stories. One day, Grandad falls ill and is taken to hospital.

- **The Grandad Tree by Trish Cooke**

Leigh and Vin used to play with Grandad under the apple tree in their garden. Now Grandad has gone but, like the tree, the children's love for him lives on forever. This is a tale about the cycle of life and the enduring power of love.

- **Grandad's Island by Benji Davies**

This book deals with the emotional topic of a grandparent dying.

- **Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs by Tomie De Paola**

Tommy is four years old, and he loves visiting the home of his grandmother, Nana Downstairs, and his great-grandmother, Nana Upstairs. But one day Tommy's mother tells him Nana Upstairs won't be there anymore, and Tommy must struggle with saying good-bye to someone he loves.

- **When Your Grandparent Dies by Victoria Ryan**

The death of a grandparent is often a child's first experience with grief. The ordeal can be as bewildering as it is painful. Explaining what happens from a child's-eye view, the little elves in this book depict the difficult days before, after, and beyond a grandparent's death. They explore the meaning of death and heaven, as well as how to stay close in spirit with a grandparent who has died.

### **Death in a special school**

- **Remembering Lucy by Sarah Helton**

Children with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) often experience grief at a much younger age than other children. This touching short story will help children with SEND understand feelings caused by death and loss, and the beautiful hand drawn illustrations help convey the complex experience of bereavement in a simple and clear way. Included is a teacher's guide to talking about bereavement, grief, and loss, making this the ideal aid for teachers and support staff at SEND schools and colleges.

- **A Special Kind of Grief by Sarah Helton**

The complete guide for supporting bereavement and loss in special schools (and other SEND settings)

## Illness and death

- **Gentle Willow: A Story for Children about Dying**

Written for children who may not survive their illness or for the children who know them, this tale helps address feelings of disbelief, anger, and sadness, along with love and compassion. Amanda and Little Tree discover that their friend Gentle Willow isn't feeling very well.

- **The Secret C (Straight Talking About Cancer) by Julie Stokes**

A book that explains to children what cancer is.

- **When someone has a very serious illness: children can learn to cope with loss and change by Marge Heegaard**

A book that was created to help children understand the changes when someone in their family has a serious illness. Each section of text has a blank space underneath for children to illustrate and show their own feelings about what's happened.

- **Rudi's Pond by Eve Bunting**

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. A hummingbird feeder that Rudi made hangs by the pond, and one day a special hummingbird comes to visit.

## Loss and sadness

- **Rabbityness by Jo Empson**

Rabbityness celebrates individuality, encourages the creativity in everyone and positively introduces children to dealing with loss of any kind.

- **The Lonely Tree by Nicholas Halliday**

The Lonely Tree is a charmingly illustrated picture book which will help children and their families in times of loss or change with the gentle reassurance that saying goodbye is a natural part of life.

- **The Invisible String by Patrice Karst and Geoff Stevenson**

The Invisible String looks at how to cope with loneliness and separation from someone you love.

- **Clown by Quentin Blake**

Follow the fortunes of Clown, an exuberant fellow who starts out in a dustbin but ends up with a happy family in this inventive picture story. Master illustrator Quentin Blake has created an irrepressible character, an action-filled plot and an eloquent story that can be read on several levels--all without the use of a single word.

- **The Paper Dolls by Rebecca Cobb**

This simple story is a lovely way of helping children to understand that memories live on long after physical things - or people - are no longer with us.

- **Stick Man by Julia Donaldson**

It is the story of a stick man who is separated from his family, when he goes for a jog and is picked up by a dog. He then ends up on all sorts of adventures, with the reader wondering if he will ever get home.

- **Bear Shaped by Dawn Coulter-Cruttenden**

This book is based on a true story about a 7-year-old boy who has autism and what happened when he lost his favourite teddy bear.

- **Old Bear by Jane Hissey**

Bramwell Brown and his friends Little Bear, Duck and Rabbit attempt to rescue Old Bear from the attic using a number of ingenious methods.

- **The Boy Who Didn't Want to Be Sad by Robb Goldblatt**

A boy who doesn't want to be sad tries eliminating all sources of sadness from his life, including toys (they can get broken), pets (they can't live forever), friends (what if they don't call?), even his own family (sometimes they get mad at him). Ultimately, he realises that all sources of sadness are also his sources of happiness, and he reclaims them all.

- **Dogger by Shirley Hughes**

When Dave loses his favourite toy, Dogger, he is desolate. But then Dogger turns up at the school summer fair, and everything seems all right - until someone else buys him before Dave can get the money!

- **Lost and Found by Oliver Jeffers**

There once was a boy... and one day a penguin arrives on his doorstep. The boy decides the penguin must be lost and tries to return him.

- **The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers**

This book explores themes of love and loss in this life-affirming and uplifting tale.

- **My Friend is Sad by Mo Willems**

A story of friendship - in My Friend is Sad, Gerald is sad. How can Piggie be happy if Gerald is sad?

- **Where are you? by Laura Olivieri**

A kind and supportive text with beautiful illustrations designed to help children of all ages cope with the loss of a loved one.

- **Overcoming Loss by Julia Sorensen**

This book is full of creative and play-based activities to help children understand and come to terms with different emotions including shame, anger, and jealousy.

- **The Elephant in the Room: A Children's Book for Grief and Loss by Amanda Edwards**

A children's storybook with whimsical illustrations and rhyming verses of positive strategies for coping with grief and loss. The gender-neutral elephant character demonstrates the potential emotions that children may experience when faced with any type of loss such as death of a pet or a relative, a friend moving away, foster care, hospitalisation, etc.

- **Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss by Pat Schwiebert**

In this modern-day fable, a woman who has suffered a terrible loss cooks up a special batch of "tear soup," blending the unique ingredients of her life into the grief process. Along the way she dispenses a recipe of sound advice for people who are in mourning.

### **Death due to a road accident**

- **Someone has Died in a Road Crash by Mary Williams OBE & Caroline Chisholm**

Someone has died in a road crash is a children's book for all ages, taking children step by step through this sudden death. From practical things such as funerals and police investigations and exploring normal emotions and feelings.

- **Saying Goodbye to Daddy by Judith Vigna**

Frightened, lonely, and angry after her father is killed in a car accident, Clare is helped through the grieving process by her mother and grandfather.

### Death of a pet

- **Goodbye Mog by Judith Kerr**

Join the Thomas family as they say goodbye to their dear pet Mog and get a new kitten. It could all be a disaster, but Mog is still there to help...

- **Harry and Hopper by Margaret Wild**

Harry and his dog Hopper have done everything together, ever since Hopper was a jumpy little puppy. But one day the unthinkable happens: when Harry comes home from school, Hopper isn't there to greet him.

- **I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhelm**

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.

- **Sammy in the Sky by Barbara Walsh**

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 his love of chasing wind-blown bubbles, keeping loyal guard at night, and offering his velvety fur for endless pats and tummy scratches.

- **We Love Them by Martin Waddell**

Two children and their dog, Ben find a baby rabbit lost and cold in the snow. They bring her home and name her Zoe, and she and Ben become the best of friends. But Ben is growing old....

- **Saying Goodbye to Lulu by Corinne Demas**

A young girl and her lovable dog, Lulu, are the best of friends. They play games together, explore their neighbourhood, and even cuddle up to read bedtime stories each night. Lulu is the best dog a girl could ever hope for, but when she grows older and gradually becomes weak, the little girl must face the sad possibility of losing her dear friend, and inevitably, cope with the death of her canine companion.

- **Goodbye Mousie by Robie H. Harris**

One morning a boy finds that his pet, Mousie, 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.

### Books about people who are different

#### - to help those with disabilities who may be grieving for the life they wish they had

- **Dreams of Freedom by Amnesty International**

This inspirational book contains 17 quotations about many different aspects of freedom, from the freedom to have an education to that not to be hurt or tortured, the freedom to have a home and the freedom to be yourself. All the chosen quotations are in simple words that can be understood by young children.

- **The 5 of Us by Quentin Blake**

A powerful book that reminds us that the world is a better place when we focus on what we can do, rather than on what we can't.

- **Something Else by Kathryn Cave and Chris Riddell**



A simple story, about a small creature who does his best to join in with the others. But he's different. No matter how he tries, he just doesn't belong. Then Something turns up and wants to be friends.

- **Just Because by Rebecca Elliott**

A story promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.

- **The Snow Rabbit by Camille Garoche**

Two sisters look longingly through their window at the snowy sky. One goes out and sculpts a little rabbit, but when she brings it back inside to her wheelchair-bound sister, it begins to melt. So, they take it outside and into the forest where enchanted things begin to happen.

- **My Many Coloured Days by Dr Seuss**

You'd be surprised how many ways I change on different coloured days.'Maybe on some days you feel sort of brown, like a bear; you feel slow and low, low down. But then comes a yellow day and wheeeeeeeeee you feel like a busy, buzzy bee.

- **Susan Laughs by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross**

Susan laughs, she sings, she flies, she swings. She's good, she's bad, she's happy and she's sad. In fact, Susan is just like everybody else, even though she is in a wheelchair.

### Books Beyond Words

**Beyond Words** is a charity that provides books and training to support people who find pictures easier to understand than words. Whether supporting somebody with a learning disability or communication difficulty, these resources empower people through pictures.

**Titles:**

- Am I going to die
- Going into hospital
- Getting on with cancer
- When Dad died
- When Mum died

And many, more available here - <https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/bookshop>

**Books available from the Child Bereavement Charity Winston's Wish**

- **We All Grieve**

Supporting bereaved children who have special educational needs and disabilities.

- **Never Too Young Too Grieve**

Supporting children under 5 after the death of a parent.

- **A Child's Grief**

Supporting a child when someone in their family has died.

- **As Big As It Gets**

Supporting a child when a parent is seriously ill.

- **Beyond The Rough Rock**

Supporting a child who has been bereaved through suicide.

- **You Just Don't Understand**

Offering practical advice for those supporting bereaved teenagers.

- **Out Of The Blue**

Supporting teenagers through their bereavement using a range of activities.

- **Hope Beyond The Headlines**

Supporting a child or young person bereaved through murder or manslaughter.

- **The Family Has Been Informed**

Supporting bereaved children and young people from military families.

- **Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine**

An activity book offering practical and sensitive support for bereaved younger children.

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For further support and advice please contact -

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