

BIBLIOTHERAPY LIST

Bereavement and Grief in Childhood

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FOR CHILDREN

Castellucci, C. (2010). *Grandma's Gloves*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Grandma's Gloves is a picture book written for children ages five and up regarding the loss of a loved one. In this story, a young girl speaks of a bond that she has formed with her grandmother, through learning all about gardening and taking care of 13 plants. The girl talks about visiting her grandmother in the hospital and of her experience seeing her mother's reaction to learning out about the death of her grandmother. She also shares how people came to the home to wish their condolences, and then the packing of her grandmother's belongings. The girl becomes upset when everyone seems to neglect the flowers and garden that her grandmother worked so hard to upkeep. Working on the garden triggers memories of her grandmother, and feelings of hurt and confusion that she is experiencing. The book continues to show strategies the girl comes up with to remember her grandmother and work through her emotions.

The author, Cecil Castellucci, lives in Los Angeles and writes books for adults. This book was her first children's book. Events in the book were inspired by her own memories of her grandmother and her garden, of seeing her grandmother through an illness, and then the death of her grandmother. The illustrator, Julia Denos, painted the pictures from her memories of her grandmother. Capturing the girl's feelings, the pictures convey the various emotions portrayed in bright and dark colors throughout the story.

Harris, R. H. (2001). *Goodbye mousie*. New York, NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books.

Goodbye Mousie is a story written for young children reading on a second grade reading level, who may be experiencing the loss of a loved one or a pet. This story is written from the perspective a young boy who woke up one morning only to find that his pet mouse won't wake up. Using simple language and pictures, the book follows the process of the boy understanding what it means for something to be dead. As he begins to understand what has happened, his parents help him sort through his confusing emotions and find ways to express some of the negative feelings he has while grieving for his loss.

The author, Robie H. Harris, formerly a teacher at Bank Street College of Education's School for Children, now writes many children's books discussing the complex emotions that many children experience as they grow. She discusses many issues from attachment and where babies come from, to the differences between boy's and girl's sexual health, and welcoming a new baby home. Robie is currently living in Cambridge, Massachusetts and enjoys her family and reading to her grandchildren.

Joslin, M. (1998). *The goodbye boat*. Oxford, England: Lion Publishing Plc.

The Goodbye Boat, by Mary Joslin, is a picture book geared for younger children between the ages of three and six. This author uses simple words to describe the experience of loss. Much of the emotion and explanation is shown through the colors and the pictures. These illustrations show the reader that while there is sadness when experiencing loss, there is hope that given time things will get easier, and it won't always be dark and stormy.

Mary Joslin is the author of many other children's books. The inspiration for *The Goodbye Boat* occurred after her three young children lost their grandfather who was very dear to them. This book was the result of her wanting to talk to her children about the experience and how they felt, as well as give them hope for the future,

Krasney Brown, L., & Brown, M. (1996). *When dinosaurs die: A guide to understanding death*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death is a short children's chapter book written for children between the ages of five and eight years old. The authors used bright cartoon pictures and simple language to discuss complicated questions that are difficult to discuss surrounding the loss of a loved one. The authors talk about the different feelings experienced with grief, what happens to people when they die, and ways that young children can help remember someone that they have lost in a question answer format. Each chapter is labeled by the question followed by a discussion over the following pages.

The authors, Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown, are husband and wife and live on Martha's Vineyard. Marc began writing down the bedtime stories he told to his children. These stories were published and include the *Aurthur* series. Many of the characters are based off of their own children and people they've encountered over the years. Marc and his wife then developed the *Dino Life Guide for Families* series of books on topics that parents often struggle with talking to their children such as, divorce, health, being a good friend.

Krementz, J. (1981). *How It feels when a parent dies*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc

How it Feels When a Parent Dies, by Jill Krementz, is a chapter book compilation with each chapter a different child's story. Within each chapter, there are photographs of each of the children and their families. With each story, the children recall their individual experiences of losing parents at various ages. Written for children seven years and older, children recall their memories of their late parents, and finding out about their passing. They discuss the various causes of death and the different ways of grieving depending on different family beliefs. Additionally they talk about how things changed with time, and how their families were able to adjust and move on. This book will help older children cope with their loss of a parent and help them understand that they are not alone. Reading about children like them help validate their feelings no matter the age and allow them to understand that they are entitled to the feelings that they have.

The author, Jill Krementz, had the idea for this book after attending the funeral of a friend who passed away suddenly. She saw her friend's son at the gravesite and the funeral fighting back tears. She was inspired to find other children who had gone through a similar experience to share their stories. Jill has published and photographed other children's compilation books including *How it Feels to be Adopted* and *How it Feels to Fight for Your Life*.

Plourde, L. (2003). *Thank you, grandpa*. New York, NY: Dutton Children's Books.

Thank You, Grandpa, by Lynn Plourde, is a story about special relationship between a girl and her grandfather. Written for children between the ages of four and

eight, this picture book features beautiful images of nature to illustrate the beautiful relationship that developed over the years. The story follows walks that the two used to take together over the seasons. Beginning early on when the little girl is barely able to walk, the story follows their relationship ending when the grandfather is older and having difficulty walking. The young girl discovers creatures and animals on their walks, and her grandfather provides her with many thoughts and lessons as the time goes by. The girl learns to use the recollections and lessons her grandfather taught her over the years to sustain her memory of her grandfather.

Lynn Plourde struggled as an author for 13 years before publishing her first children's book, *Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud*. Lynn was inspired after marrying her husband and falling in love with her two young stepsons. Lynn recalls reading her stepsons bedtime stories every night and continued to read even after the boys were sleeping. This inspired her to try to write her own stories. Lynn Plourde is now a full time author of children's stories.

Rogers, F. (1988). *When a pet dies*. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

When a Pet Dies, by Fred Rogers, was written in the late 1980's for young children between the ages of four and six. *When a Pet Dies* is part of Fred Rogers' series of First Experience books. Using simple language and real photographs of children with their pets, the author hopes to help the reader understand the natural feelings that occur after experiencing a loss, and that it is normal to grieve. The book also reassures children, that with time, the pain will ease and they will be able to move on.

Fred Rogers is known for his television show that helps teach young children many valuable lessons using stories, puppets and songs written by Mr. Rogers himself. In addition to his show Fred Rogers, an ordained minister, wrote children's stories regarding early first experiences, some of which included *Going to the Potty*, *Going to the Hospital*, and *Making Friends*. Over the years Fred Rogers won many awards including, four Daytime Emmy Awards, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Schwiebert, P., & DeKlyen, C. (2010). *Tear soup: a recipe for healing after loss* (9th ed.). Portland, OR: Grief Watch.

Tear Soup is an incredible book for children ages eight and up, who have lost someone close to them. This story is told from the perspective of Grandy who has lost someone very close to her, whom the book does not specify. The metaphor of grief is portrayed by Grandy making tear soup. All the different emotions that one experiences through the stages of grief are all ingredients that Grandy adds to the pot. The metaphor is carried throughout the book when people don't tend to their tear soup properly, and people asking when the tear soup will be finished. Once Grandy has finished her tear soup, she freezes it, so that she can have a little taste when she needs it. This book is all about the healing process. The end of the book has "Grandy's Cooking Tips". These include discussions regarding who is the one making the soup, and a list of other places to go to for grief questions and support.

The authors of the book are mother and her son. Pat Schwiebert is a registered nurse and for 30 year, has worked in the area of bereavement. She has published other

“healing” books, such as *We Were Gonna Have a Baby, but We had an Angel Instead* and *When Hello Means Goodbye: A Guide for Parents Whose Babies Have Died*. Her son Chuck has his B.A. in Drama from University of Portland. He is married with two children. This is Chuck’s first book.

Stickney, D. (1997). *Water bugs and dragonflies*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press.

Water Bugs and Dragonflies uses the beautiful metaphor of water bugs transforming into dragonflies to help young children understand death. The story begins with a colony of water bugs discussing and wondering what happened when one of their own broke through the water and didn’t return. They were all confused and puzzled so they all agree that the next one to go would promise to come back and tell the others what happened out of the water. One day one of the water bugs leaves the water and experiences the transformation into dragonfly. When he tries to go back to the water to tell his water bug friends that he became a dragonfly, he realizes that with his wings he is unable to break the water surface.

Water Bugs and Dragonflies is an appropriate story for children as young as four to help learn and understand the finality of death. It is a beautiful fable written in simple language that can really be used at any age. The questions the water bugs have are similar to those questions that children may asked when faced with the death of a loved one. The author Doris Stickney wrote this story after a young child in the neighborhood died. She was inspired to find a sensitive way of explaining such a difficult issue to children.

Thomas, P. (2000). *I miss you: A first look at death*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series Inc.

I Miss You: A First Look at Death, by Pat Thomas, is a book meant for children ranging from four to eight years old. The book is a picture book using simple language written as though the author is talking to the reader. Throughout the book there are questions prompting and encouraging the reader to think about their individual experience. In a sensitive manner, the author discusses the various possible causes of death from illness to the unexpected. Then the reader is reassured that the different feelings they may have are normal, providing hope that it will get easier and less painful with time. The last page of the book features recommendations for adults and teachers, as well as a glossary and a list of additional resources.

The author, Pat Thomas, is a trained psychotherapist. Formerly a journalist and broadcaster, Pat now works in the child development fields and has published many books in the A First Look At series. Topics include bullying, anger, adoptions, disabilities, health issues, racism and many others.

Varley, S. (1984). *Badger's parting gifts*. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

Badger's Parting Gifts, by Susan Varley was written for children ages five and above. This story is written about Badger who was a friend to everyone. With simple pictures and beautiful wording, the story follows the elderly character Badger through the recognition of his old age and his understanding that it may soon be his time to pass. Badger reassures his friends that he is not afraid and that he will be okay. When Badger's friends discover that he has passed away in his sleep, they are all very sad. They

soon discover however, that they all have special things that Badger has taught them over the years. These memories help them grieve and cope with the loss of their dear friend.

The author, Susan Varley, is from Blackpool England. This was her first children's book which she wrote and illustrated. Susan went to Manchester Polytechnic for graphic design. Publishing *Badger's Parting Gifts* won Susan the Mother Goose Award as the most exciting newcomer to British children's book illustration.

Willems, M. (2010). *City dog, country frog*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

City Dog, Country Frog is written in simple language, using bright watercolor pictures to illustrate the story. This book is appropriate for all children, but is meant for children between the ages of three and six. The book is written from the perspective of the city dog, who was allowed to run free in the country. While he is running he meets country frog. The dog asks the frog what he is doing, and he tells him "Waiting for a friend, but you'll do." The two develop a relationship, and every season when the dog comes to the country, he looks for his friend country frog. With every visit, country frog has gotten older and is unable to play as much. One winter the dog comes to look for his friend, but he is not there. The dog returned in spring but there was still no frog. He sat and waited until a squirrel, the start of a new relationship, approached him.

This book helps young children understand that it is okay to be sad, but as time goes on, the pain that is experienced from loss lessens. Children will learn that and you are able to move on with life. The author Mo Willems was a writer and animator for Sesame Street before he wrote children's books. Mo is known for *Don't Let the Pigeon*

Drive the Bus! and has won several awards for his books including the Caldecott Honor three times, and two Geisel Medals.

Woodson, J. (2000). *Sweet, sweet memory*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

Sweet, Sweet Memory is written for children between the ages of five and nine who have experience the loss of someone close to them. The story is written from the perspective of a young girl, Sarah, who has just lost her grandfather. Surrounded by family and friends mourning the loss, they all recall memories. Sarah remembers her grandfather telling her that “everything and everyone goes on and on” as he referred to his garden and his harvest. As her family shares memories of her grandfather, Sarah sits quietly keeping her story to herself. When she is asked to share a memory of her grandfather, Sarah begins to cry. Her uncle comforts her by telling her it’ll pass, and he uses a familiar phrase “everything and everyone goes on and on.” Sarah’s family all share this same memory of her grandfather saying this to all of them at a different time in life. Sarah is able to hold on to this memory as she begins to move on with her grief, realizing that a part of her grandfather will always be with her.

Born in 1963 in South Carolina, Jacqueline Woodson knew from a very young age that she wanted to be a writer. She received her B.A. in English and then worked as a drama therapist for homeless children and runaways. Jacqueline has won many awards for her books for young adults including a Newbery Honor in 2006, Corretta Scott King Honor in 2001 and 2004, and *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults from the Young Adult Library Services Association.

FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Emswiler, M. A., & Emswiler J. P. (2000). *Guiding your child through grief*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Guiding Your Child Through Grief is a book written for parents of children struggling with grief. The authors Mary Ann and her husband James are both mental health professionals. James has a master's degree in counseling and education and is the executive director of a support program for grieving children. Before working in the field of grief and bereavement, James was a publisher. He became interested in the field after losing his wife and parenting his three children. Mary Ann, his current wife is a licensed mental health counselor with a master's degree in clinical psychology. She has also worked in organizing a symposium on children's grief with over 100 professionals.

This book talks about many different things regarding a child who has experienced loss. The authors discuss how children understand death and the ways that they may respond. Various chapters highlight topics such as the natural grief process and when to worry. The authors discuss communication with children suffering from a loss, as well as how to deal with anniversaries and holidays surrounding the death. There is also a chapter on step-parenting a grieving child. There is a section at the end of the book for frequently asked question and additional readings to use for children of different ages.

Melloni, B., & Ingpen, R. (1983). *Lifetimes: a beautiful way to explain death to children*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Lifetimes is a book written for children ages five years and older. This book uses the themes of nature to explain that everything has a beginning and an end, and

that life happens between. With simple language and pictures, the authors illustrate ideas that are hard for young children to grasp. These include beliefs such as; anything that lives, does not live forever, and that there are times when living things cannot recover from injuries. The authors talk about the average life for different animals in nature and ends with the human life, stressing that there is a whole life between the beginning and the end.

Robert Ingpen, born in Australia has illustrated and/or written over 100 children's books over the years. Robert was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Illustration in 1986 and the Dromkeen Medal, for significant contribution to the appreciation and development of children's literature in 1989.