

Using Books To Help Children and Adolescents Cope With Death: Guidelines and Bibliography

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Guidelines

We now have at hand a large and growing body of books about issues related to dying, death, and bereavement for child and adolescent readers. These books are quite diverse in the topics they consider, their approaches or points of view, and their reading levels. For this we can be grateful. The practical problem facing a child, adolescent, or adult who would like to explore this literature is how to select a few useful titles from such a large variety of available books. Here are some useful guidelines that can be of help.

1. Evaluate the book yourself before attempting to use it with a child or adolescent.

It is not enough to find just any book on loss or grief; one also wants to be comfortable with the information that it contains and the attitudes that it conveys. In most cases, it should only take a short time for an adult to determine if a particular book is appropriate and satisfactory.

2. Select titles, topics, and approaches that suit the needs of an individual child or adolescent. To be useful, any book must respond to the needs of a particular young reader. Ask what one hopes to gain from a book and then search for titles that serve those purposes.

3. Be prepared to cope with limitations. Each book has its own strengths and limitations. For example, in *The Tenth Good Thing about Barney* (Viorst, 1971), a pet cat that has died is said to be “in the ground and he’s helping grow flowers.” Is that a good explanation, one that is comfortable and sufficient for you and your child reader? In *My Turtle Died Today* (Stull, 1964), one child says, “You have to live a long time before you die.” How would you reply if a child or adolescent questioned such a statement? When deficiencies or limitations are prominent, one must decide whether a book is nevertheless of sufficient value to still be useful or whether we can be creative in adapting it to our purposes.

4. Match materials to the capacities and concerns of an individual child or adolescent reader. Often this requires little more than determining a young person’s interests and reading abilities. The groupings that follow should only be taken as preliminary clusters, not as fixed categories for all children or adolescents, even for those in a particular age bracket. Children with special needs should be assessed with great care. For example, some older children whose reading abilities do not match their age might be invited to join a project in which they help an adult assess the suitability of simpler materials for younger readers.

5. Whenever possible, be available for discussion of, or read a particular book along with, a child or adolescent. Many books afford opportunities for rewarding interactions when they are shared between a child or adolescent reader and a sympathetic adult. Discussing a book together can spark a “teachable moment” from which all can profit. Reading together a book about death and grief can sometimes make it possible for children or adolescents and adults to support each other in coping with loss and sadness.

Selected Bibliography

For Adults

Adams, D. W., & Deveau, E. J. (Eds.). (1995). *Beyond the Innocence of Childhood* (3 vols.). Amityville, NY: Baywood. Contributors to these volumes address a broad range of issues involving children and adolescents, including perceptions and attitudes toward death, coping with life-threatening illness and dying, and coping with death and bereavement.

Corr, C. A., & Balk, D. E. (Eds.). (1996). *Handbook of Adolescent Death and Bereavement*. New York: Springer. A comprehensive resource for understanding and helping adolescents in their encounters with death and bereavement.

Corr, C. A., & Corr, D. M. (Eds.). (1996). *Handbook of Childhood Death and Bereavement*. New York: Springer. A comprehensive resource for understanding and helping children in their encounters with death and bereavement.

Fitzgerald, H. (1992). *The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Useful advice for parents and other helpers from an experienced counselor.

The Dougy Center. (1998). *Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers*. Portland, OR: Author. This 50-page booklet provides practical advice on grief in children and adolescents, developmental issues, helping grieving students, school-related deaths, and deaths involving special complications.

Gordon, A. K., & Klass, D. (1979). *They Need to Know: How to Teach Children about Death*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Provides a rationale and goals for teaching children about death, plus suggested curricula, activities, and resources laid out by grade level from preschool through high school.

Grollman, E. A. (1990). *Talking about Death: A Dialogue between Parent and Child* (3rd ed.). Boston: Beacon. Principles for helping children; a passage to be read with a child; guidelines for responding to questions that might arise from the read-along section; and a list of helpful resources.

Jewett, C. L. (1982). *Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss*. Boston: Harvard Common Press. Suggested techniques from a child and family therapist built around a phase theory of grief and mourning.

O'Toole, D., & Cory, J. (1998). *Helping Children Grieve and Grow*. Burnsville, NC: Compassion Press. Clear and practical guidance in an outline format in just 24 pages.

Rudman, M. K., Gagne, K. D., & Bernstein, J. E. (1993). *Books to Help Children Cope with Separation and Loss* (4th ed.; 1st ed., 1978, & 2nd ed., 1984, by Bernstein alone; 3rd ed., 1989, by Bernstein & Rudman). New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker. Contains knowledgeable guidance concerning bibliotherapy or the use of books to help children cope with loss and grief, along with informed and sensitive descriptions (and keen critical evaluations) of hundreds of books for children on a broad range of topics related to loss.

Schaefer, D. & Lyons, C. (1993). *How Do We Tell the Children* (2nd ed.). New York: Newmarket. Helpful advice for parents from a funeral director and his colleague.

Trelease, J. (1995). *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (3rd rev. ed.). New York: Penguin. The definitive guide to why and how adults should read books aloud with children.

Wass, H., & Corr, C. A. (Eds.). (1984). *Childhood and Death*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere. Sections on death, dying, bereavement, suicide, and helping children plus selected, annotated resources (books for adults, books for children, organizations, and audiovisuals).

Wass, H., & Corr, C. A. (Eds.). (1984). *Helping Children Cope with Death: Guidelines and Resources* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Hemisphere. Guidelines for parents and other adults, plus annotated resources (printed materials, audiovisuals, and organizations).

Wolfelt, A. D. (1996). *Healing the Bereaved Child: Grief Gardening, Growth through Grief and Other Touchstones for Caregivers*. Fort Collins, CO: Compassion Press. Advice, suggested activities, and resources for helping grieving children from a clinical psychologist.

Where to Learn About or Purchase Death-Related Literature

Boulden Publishing, P.O. Box 1186, Weaverville, CA 96093-1186;
800-238-8433; fax 530-623-5525; www.bouldenpub.com. Offering Boulden products exclusively as single items, packs, or kits, including age-graded activity books, videos, and CD-ROMs on serious illness, bereavement, and a variety of related topics.

Centering Corporation, 1531 N. Saddle Creek Road, Omaha, NE 68104;

402-553-1200; fax 402-553-0507; e-mail to J1200@aol.com. In business over 20 years offering over 100 of their own works and many works from other publishers, as well as caring cards, videotapes, and audiotapes.

Compassion Books, 477 Hannah Branch Road, Burnsville, NC 28714; 828-675-5909; fax 828-675-9687; www.compassionbooks.com; e-mail to Heal2grow@aol.com. In business for fifteen years offering over 400 of their own and other publishers' books, audios, and videos.

Picture and Coloring Books for Preschoolers and Beginning Readers

Bartoli, J. (1975). *Nonna*. New York: Harvey House. A boy and his younger sister, with good memories of their grandmother, are permitted to participate in her funeral, burial, and the division of her property among family members so that each receives some memento of her life.

Blackburn, L. B. (1987). *Timothy Duck: The Story of the Death of a Friend*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. Timothy Duck tries to understand his own reactions to the death of a friend and the ways in which the needs of his friend's sister are being overlooked by the adults around her. Sharing his questions and concerns with his mother and with his best friend is helpful.

Boulden, J. (1989). *Saying Goodbye*. Weaverville, CA: Boulden Publishing. This activity book tells a story about death as a natural part of life, the feelings that are involved in saying goodbye, and the conviction that love is forever, while allowing the child-reader to draw pictures, color images, or insert thoughts on its pages.

Brown, L. K., & Brown, M. (1996). *When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death*. Boston: Little, Brown. A cartoon format introduces young children to issues of death and loss.

Brown, M. W. (1958). *The Dead Bird*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Some children find a wild bird that is dead, touch its body, bury it in a simple ceremony, and return to the site each day to mourn ("until they forgot"). The moral is that sadness need not last forever; life can go on again.

Carlstrom, N. W. (1990). *Blow Me a Kiss, Miss Lilly*. New York: Harper & Row. Young Sara's best friend is Miss Lilly, an old lady who is her neighbor across the street. When Miss Lilly is taken to the hospital and dies, Sara cries, looks for the light in her house, and is lonely. In spring, Sara finds happiness in Miss Lilly's garden and in her conviction that Miss Lilly is blowing her a kiss.

Clardy, A. E. (1984). *Dusty Was My Friend: Coming to Terms with Loss*. New York: Human Sciences. Benjamin is eight when his friend Dusty is killed in an automobile accident. As Benjamin struggles to understand his reactions to this tragic event, his parents give him permission to articulate his thoughts and feelings, mourn his loss, remember the good times that he shared with Dusty, and go on with his own life.

Cohn, J. (1987). *I Had a Friend Named Peter: Talking to Children About the Death of a Friend*. New York: Morrow. The children's section of this book describes Beth's reactions when her friend Peter is killed by a car, along with the helpful ways in which Beth's parents and teacher respond to her needs, the needs of her classmates, and the needs of Peter's parents. An adult section tries to prepare adults to assist children in coping with death.

Dean, A. (1991). *Meggie's Magic*. New York: Viking Penguin. After eight-year-old Meggie's illness and death, her mother, father, and sister feel sad and lonely. But one day when Meggie's sister goes to their special place, she finds it still filled with the magical qualities of the games they used to play and she realizes that Meggie's magic still remains inside each of them.

De Paola, T. (1973). *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*. New York: Putnam's. One day, young Tommy is told that his beloved great-grandmother ("Nana Upstairs") is dead, but he does not believe this until he sees her empty bed. A few nights later, Tommy sees a falling star and his mother explains that it represents a kiss from Nana who is now "upstairs" in a new way. Later, an older Tommy repeats the experience and interpretation after the death of "Nana Downstairs." A charming story about relationships, whose interpretations should be addressed with caution.

Dodge, N. C. (1984). *Thumpy's Story: A Story of Love and Grief Shared by Thumpy, the Bunny*. Springfield, IL: Prairie Lark Press. In picture book, coloring book, and workbook formats (in both English and Spanish), a rabbit tells a simple story about the death of his sister, Bun, and its effects on their family.

Fassler, J. (1971). *My Grandpa Died Today*. New York: Human Sciences. Although David's grandfather has tried to prepare the boy for his impending death, when it actually happens David still needs to mourn his loss. But he does find comfort in a legacy of many good memories from his relationship with his grandfather and in the knowledge that his grandfather does not want him to be afraid to live and enjoy life.

Fassler, D., & McQueen, K. (1990). *What's a Virus, Anyway? The Kids' Book About AIDS*. Burlington, VT: Waterfront Books. This book is designed to help parents and teachers begin to talk about AIDS with young children, using just a few words or pictures on each page so as to leave lots of room for coloring, drawing, and shared discussion.

Fox, M. (1994). *Tough Boris*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. Boris von der Borch is a tough, massive, scruffy, greedy, fearless, and scary pirate—just like all pirates. But when his parrot dies, Boris cries and cries—just like all pirates, and just like everyone else.

Gaines-Lane, G. (1995). *My Memory Book*. Gaithersburg, MD: Chi Rho Press. A good example of a workbook providing suggestions, guidelines, and space for children to draw or write out their memories of someone who has died.

Hazen, B. S. (1985). *Why Did Grandpa Die? A Book About Death*. New York: Golden. When Molly's beloved Grandpa dies suddenly, Molly cannot accept that harsh fact. She feels frightened, awful, and misses Grandpa very much, but cannot cry. Only after a long time is Molly able to acknowledge that Grandpa will not come back, to cry, and to realize that Grandpa still is available to her through pictures, in her memories, and in stories shared with her family.

Heegaard, M. E. (1988). *When Someone Very Special Dies*. Minneapolis, MN: Woodland Press. A story line about loss and death provides inspiration and opportunity for children to illustrate or color and thus to share thoughts and feelings.

Johnson, J. & Johnson, M. (1982). *Where's Jess?* Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. A good book to use in helping young children cope with infant sibling loss.

Jordan, M. K. (1989). *Losing Uncle Tim*. Niles, IL: Albert Whitman. When Uncle Tim becomes infected with HIV, develops AIDS, and dies, his nephew looks for solace through an idea they had once discussed: "Maybe Uncle Tim is like the sun, just shining somewhere else."

Kantrowitz, M. (1973). *When Violet Died*. New York: Parents' Magazine Press. After the death of their pet bird, Amy, Eva, and their friends have a funeral with poems, songs, punch, and even humor. It is sad to think that nothing lasts forever, but then Eva realizes that life can go on in another way through an ever-changing chain of life involving the family cat, Blanche, and her kittens.

London, J. (1994). *Liplap's Wish*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. As Liplap builds the winter's first snowbunny, he remembers his Grandma and misses her. He finds comfort in an old Rabbit's tale about how, long ago, when the First Rabbits died, they became stars in the sky who even now come out at night, watch over us, and shine forever in our hearts.

Mellonie, B., & Ingpen, R. (1983). *Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children*. New York: Bantam. Through many examples, this book affirms that "there is a beginning and an ending for everything that is alive. In between is living. . . . So, no matter how long they are, or how short, lifetimes are really all the same. They have beginnings, and endings, and there is living in between."

Numeroff, L., & Harpham, W. (1999). *Kid's Talk: Kids Speak Out about Breast Cancer*. Dallas, TX: Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. This book uses animal drawings to depict common situations experienced by children whose mothers are diagnosed with breast cancer. Death is not directly addressed, but the book conveys children's confusion

when confronted by difficult situations and offers guidelines to open communication and help parents talk to children on their level.

O'Toole, D. (1988). *Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope*. Burnsville, NC: Compassion Books. Designed to be read aloud, this is a story about how Aarvy Aardvark comes to terms with the loss of his mother and brother. Many animals offer unhelpful advice to Aarvy; only his friend, Ralph Rabbit, is truly helpful.

Rylant, C. (1995/1997). *Dog Heaven and Cat Heaven*. New York: Blue Sky Press. Vivid illustrations and charming story lines in these two books describe the delights that dogs and cats might find in their own special heavens.

Stickney, D. (1985). *Water Bugs and Dragonflies*. New York: Pilgrim Press. This little book focuses on transformations in life as a metaphor for transformations between life and death. One key point is that the water bug that becomes transformed into a dragonfly is no longer able to return to the underwater colony to explain what has happened. Each individual must wait for his or her own transformation in order to appreciate what it entails.

Stull, E. G. (1964). *My Turtle Died Today*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. When a pet turtle dies, a boy and his friends bury it and talk about what all of this means. They conclude that life can go on in another way through the newborn kittens of their cat, Patty. Much of this is sound, but the book also poses two questions that need to be addressed with care: Can you get a new pet in the way that one child has a new mother? and Do you have to live—a long time—before you die?

Varley, S. (1992). *Badger's Parting Gifts*. New York: Mulberry Books. Although Badger is old and knows that he must die, he is not afraid. He worries about his friends, who are sad when he dies but who find consolation in the special memories that Badger had left with each of them and in sharing those memories with others.

Viorst, J. (1971). *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*. New York: Atheneum. When a pet cat dies, a boy tries to think of ten good things to say about Barney at the funeral. At first, he can only think of nine things until he argues with a friend about whether or not cats go to heaven. Out in the garden, he realizes the tenth good thing is that "Barney is in the ground and he's helping grow flowers."

Warburg, S. S. (1969). *Growing Time*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. When his aging collie, King, dies, Jamie's father gets him a new puppy. At first, Jamie is not ready for the new dog, but after he is allowed to express his grief, he finds it possible to accept the new relationship.

Weir, A. B. (1992). *Am I Still a Big Sister?* Newtown, PA: Fallen Leaf Press. This simple story follows the concerns of a young girl through the illness, hospitalization, death, and funeral of her baby sister, and the subsequent birth of a new brother.

Wilhelm, H. (1985). *I'll Always Love You*. New York: Crown. A boy and his dog, Elfie, grow up together, but Elfie ages and dies while her master is still young. Afterward, family members regret that they did not tell Elfie they loved her. But the boy did so every night and he realizes that his love for her will continue even after her death. He doesn't want a new puppy right away, even though he knows that Elfie will not come back and that there may come a time in the future when he will be ready for a new pet.

Zolotow, C. (1974). *My Grandson Lew*. New York: Harper. When six-year-old Lewis wonders why his grandfather has not visited lately, his mother says that Lewis had not been told that his grandfather had died because he had never asked. The boy remarks that he hadn't needed to ask; his grandfather just came. Sharing warm memories of someone they both miss leads his mother to conclude, "Now we will remember him together and neither of us will be so lonely as we would be if we had to remember him alone."

Storybooks and Other Texts for Primary School Readers

Alexander, S. (1983). *Nadia the Willful*. New York: Pantheon Books. Nadia's older brother dies and her father decrees that no one may speak of his death. Nadia helps her family, particularly her father, deal with their grief by willfully talking about her brother.

Arnold, C. (1987). *What We Do When Someone Dies*. New York: Franklin Watts. This book provides information about death-related feelings, concepts, and beliefs, but gives most attention to disposition of the body, funeral customs, and memorial practices.

Buck, P. S. (1948). *The Big Wave*. New York: Scholastic. After a tidal wave kills his family and all the fishing people on the shore, Jiya chooses to live with his friend Kino's poor farming family instead of being adopted by a rich man. Years later, Jiya marries Kino's sister and decides to move back to the seaside with his new bride.

Bunting, E. (1982). *The Happy Funeral*. New York: Harper & Row. Two young Chinese-American girls are puzzled when their mother says they will have a "happy funeral" for their grandfather. In the end, the children realize that although no one was happy that their grandfather died, his good life and everyone's fond memories of him did make for a happy funeral.

Carrick, C. (1976). *The Accident*. New York: Seabury Press. Christopher's dog, Bodger, is accidentally killed when he runs in front of a truck. Christopher is angry at the driver, at his father for not getting mad at the driver, and at himself for not paying attention and allowing Bodger to wander to the other side of the road as they walked. Christopher's parents bury Bodger too quickly the next morning before he can take part, but anger dissolves into tears when he and his father are able to join together to erect a marker at Bodger's grave.

Chin-Yee, F. (1988). *Sam's Story: A Story for Families Surviving Sudden Infant Death Syndrome*. Available from the Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths,

Toronto, Ontario. A rare book that tells a story (with pictures) about the confusing experiences of a child in a family that has experienced the sudden death of his infant brother.

Coburn, J. B. (1964). *Annie and the Sand Dobbies: A Story About Death for Children and Their Parents*. New York: Seabury Press. When young Danny encounters the deaths of both his toddler sister from a respiratory infection and his dog after it ran away from home, a neighbor uses imaginary characters to suggest that the deceased are safe with God.

Coerr, E. (1977). *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. New York: Putnam's. This book is based on a true story about a Japanese girl who died of leukemia in 1955 as one of the long-term results of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima (which occurred when Sadako was two years old). While in the hospital, a friend reminded Sadako of the legend that the crane is supposed to live for a thousand years and that good health will be granted to a person who folds 1,000 origami paper cranes. With family members and friends, they began folding. Sadako died before the project was finished, but her classmates completed the work and children all over Japan have since contributed money to erect a statue in her memory.

Coleman, P. (1996). *Where the Balloons Go*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. When Corey asks where balloons go as they fly up into the sky, Grandma suggests that perhaps their destination is a lovely Balloon Forest. Later, after Grandma becomes sick and dies, Corey wishes that his balloons could carry him up to the Balloon Forest to see Grandma, but settles for attaching a message of his love to a balloon and releasing it.

Corley, E. A. (1973). *Tell Me About Death, Tell Me About Funerals*. Santa Clara, CA: Grammatical Sciences. This book depicts a conversation between a young girl whose grandfather has recently died and her father. In ways that avoid euphemisms, they discuss guilt, abandonment, and choices about funerals, burial, cemeteries, and mausoleums. At one point, we encounter a child's delightful misunderstanding about the "polarbears" who carry the casket.

Donnelly, E. (1981). *So Long, Grandpa*. New York: Crown. Michael at 10 witnesses his grandfather's deterioration and eventual death from cancer. We learn about his reactions to these events and about the way in which Michael's grandfather had helped to prepare the boy by taking him to an elderly friend's funeral.

Douglas, E. (1990). *Rachel and the Upside Down Heart*. Los Angeles: Price Stern Sloan. After Rachel's daddy died when she was four, she was sad and had to move from a house with a yard, green grass, and two dogs in Kentucky to a noisy apartment in New York City. Mommy said Daddy would always be in Rachel's heart, so she began to draw hearts but could only make them upside down. Later, Rachel began to find some new friends and some of the hearts that she drew were upside up. Finally, when his father died, Rachel was able to talk to a new friend and help him with his loss.

Erling, J., & Erling, S. (1986). *Our Baby Died. Why?* Maple Plain, MN: Pregnancy and Infant Loss Center. A little boy shares his story about the death of his stillborn brother and the subsequent birth of sibling twins.

Goldman, L. (1997). *Bart Speaks Out: An Interactive Storybook for Young Children About Suicide*. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services. Provides words for children to use to discuss the sensitive topic of suicide.

Goodman, M. B. (1990). *Vanishing Cookies: Doing OK When a Parent Has Cancer*. Available from the Benjamin Family Foundation, Downsview, Canada. This book's goal is to bridge the gap between adults and children by helping them share feelings in situations when an adult is coping with cancer. Children are encouraged to ask questions and are offered information about cancer, treatments, coping with feelings, friends and school, and death. The title refers to the vanishing cookies that some children shared with their mother when they visited her in the hospital.

Graeber, C. (1982). *Mustard*. New York: Macmillan. Mustard is an elderly cat with a heart condition who needs to avoid stress. But one day Mustard runs outside and gets into a squabble with another animal, leading to a heart attack and to Mustard's death. After Father buries Mustard, Alex goes along to donate the cat's dishes and some money to the animal shelter where they had gotten Mustard. Because he is preoccupied with sadness, Alex wisely declines (for now) a well-meaning offer of a new pet.

Greene, C. C. (1976). *Beat the Turtle Drum*. New York: Viking. Mostly, this book describes thirteen-year-old Kate and eleven-year-old Joss' loving, warm family. When Joss is abruptly and unexpectedly killed in a fall from a tree, the family is flooded with grief. Conveying this sense of the many dimensions of bereavement is the book's strong point.

Gryte, M. (1991). *No New Baby*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. A caring Grandma explains the sadness and loss of miscarriage to her grandchild, reminding her that she's not to blame and that it's okay to ask questions and express her feelings.

Johnson, J., & Johnson, M. (1978). *Tell Me, Papa: A Family Book for Children's Questions About Death and Funerals*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. Using the format of a discussion between children and a grandparent, this slim book provides an explanation of death, funerals, and saying good-bye.

Krementz, J. *How It Feels When a Parent Dies* (1981) and *How It Feels to Fight for Your Life* (1989). Boston: Little, Brown; paperback by Simon & Schuster, 1991. Short essays by children and adolescents (seven to sixteen years old) describe individual reactions to the death of a parent and to a variety of life-threatening illnesses. An author's photo accompanies each essay.

Marshall, B. (1998). *Animal Crackers: A Tender Book About Death and Funerals and Love*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. A young girl describes her Nanny who hid

animal crackers all over her house for her grandchildren. After Nanny became forgetful and went to live in a nursing home, she eventually died. But the children always remember Nanny fondly through the good times they shared with her and through her “Nanny crackers.”

McNamara, J. W. (1994). *My Mom is Dying: A Child's Diary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. The illustrated diary format of this book presents an imaginary record of Kristine's conversations with God while her mother is dying. Notes from the author identify Kristine's reactions and suggest how they could provide a basis for discussions with children.

Miles, M. (1971). *Annie and the Old One*. Boston: Little, Brown. A ten-year-old Navajo girl is told that it will be time for grandmother to return to Mother Earth when her mother finishes weaving a rug. Annie tries to unravel the weaving in secret and to distract her mother from weaving, until the adults realize what is going on and her grandmother explains that we are all part of a natural cycle. When Annie realizes that she cannot hold back time, she is ready herself to learn to weave.

Powell, E. S. (1990). *Geranium Morning*. Minneapolis: CarolRhoda Books. Two young children—Timothy, whose father died suddenly in an accident, and Frannie, whose mother is dying—struggle with strong feelings, memories, guilt (“if onlys”), and some unhelpful adult actions. In sharing their losses, the children help each other; Frannie's father and her mother (before she dies) also are helpful.

Saltzman, D. (1995). *The Jester Has Lost His Jingle*. Palos Verdes Estates, CA: The Jester Co. This is the tale of a Jester who awakens one morning to find laughter missing from his kingdom. The Jester and his helper, Pharley, search high and low to find it. Ultimately, they discover that laughter—the best tonic for anyone facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles—is buried deep inside each of us.

Shriver, M. (1999). *What's Heaven*. New York: Golden Books. When little Kate's Great-grandma dies, she explores with her mother questions like what is heaven, how come you can't see it, how do you get to heaven, what is a person's soul, what's a funeral, and why do we bury dead bodies?

Simon, N. (1979). *We Remember Philip*. Chicago: Whitman. When the adult son of an elementary school teacher dies in a mountain climbing accident, Sam and other members of his class can observe how Mr. Hall is affected by his grief. In time, the children persuade Mr. Hall to share with them a scrapbook and other memories of his son, and they plant a tree as a class memorial.

Sims, A. (1986.) *Am I Still a Sister?* Albuquerque, NM: Big A & Company. A young girl writes about her real-life experiences when her baby brother died from cancer.

Smith, D. B. (1973). *A Taste of Blackberries*. New York: Scholastic. After the death of Jamie as a result of an allergic reaction to a bee sting, his best friend (the book's unnamed narrator) reflects on this unexpected event. Did it really happen or is it just another of Jamie's pranks? Could it have been prevented? Is it disloyal to go on eating and living when Jamie is dead? He concludes that no one could have prevented this death, "some questions just don't have answers," and life can go on.

White, E. B. (1952). *Charlotte's Web*. New York: Harper. This book is now a classic with its story of friendship on two levels: that of a young girl named Fern who lives on a farm and saves Wilbur, the runt of the pig litter; and that of Charlotte, the spider, who spins fabulous webs that save an older and fatter Wilbur from the butcher's knife. In the end, Charlotte dies of natural causes, but her achievements and her offspring live on.

Whitehead, R. (1971). *The Mother Tree*. New York: Seabury Press. Where do eleven-year-old Tempe and her four-year-old sister, Laura, turn for comfort in the early 1900s when their mother dies and Tempe is made to assume her mother's duties? To a temporary spiritual refuge in the large, backyard tree of the book's title and eventually to good memories of their mother that live on within them.

Literature for Middle School Readers

Arrick, E. (1980). *Tunnel Vision*. Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury. After Anthony hangs himself at fifteen, his family, friends, and teacher cope with feelings of bewilderment and guilt. There is no easy resolution for such feelings, but important questions are posed: What should be done in the face of serious problems? and Where should one turn for help?

Bernstein, J. E. (1977). *Loss: And How to Cope with It*. New York: Clarion. This book provides knowledgeable advice for young readers about how to cope with loss through death, for example, how to handle feelings and how to deal with traumatic deaths such as suicide or murder.

Blume, J. (1981). *Tiger Eyes*. Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury. After her father is killed during a holdup of his 7-Eleven store in Atlantic City, Davey (fifteen), her mother, and her younger brother all react differently and are unable to help each other in their grief. They attempt a change of location to visit Davey's aunt, but eventually decide to move back to New Jersey to rebuild their lives.

Boulden, J., & Boulden, J. (1994). *The Last Goodbye*. Weaverville, CA: Boulden Publishing. This is a memory book, designed to be a stimulus for recording personal reactions to a death and memories of the person who died.

Cleaver, V., & Cleaver, B. (1970). *Grover*. Philadelphia: Lippincott. When Grover was eleven his mother became terminally ill and took her own life in order (she thought) to "spare" herself and her family the ravages of her illness. His father and other adults around Grover surround this death in mystery. Issues posed include whether one must

endure life no matter what suffering it holds; whether religion is a comfort; and how one should deal with grief.

Dragonwagon, C. (1990). *Winter Holding Spring*. New York: Macmillan. At first, nothing is the same for eleven-year-old Sarah and her father after her mother dies. Each is in pain, but gradually they begin to share their experiences and their memories of Sarah's mother. Eventually, they realize together that "nothing just ends without beginning the next thing at the same time"; each season somehow contains its successor (winter always holds spring). And Sarah knows that "love is alive in me and always will be."

Farley, C. (1975). *The Garden Is Doing Fine*. New York: Atheneum. While her father is dying of cancer, Corrie searches for reasons to explain why a good person like her father would die. A wise neighbor helps Corrie see that even though there may be no reasons for her father's death, he has left an important legacy (his "garden") in the form of his children. The seeds that he has planted in them will live on and she can let go without betraying him.

Fox, P. (1995). *The Eagle Kite*. New York: Orchard Books. Liam Cormac struggles to make sense of things when his father develops AIDS, moves out of their home to a rented cabin, and ultimately dies. Liam is confused, puzzled by the half-truths that he is told, and unable to understand his mother and his aunt's very different reactions. Ultimately, Liam realizes that his father is gay and comes to terms with this by sharing it with his father and later telling his mother what he knows.

Girard, L. W. (1991). *Alex, the Kid with AIDS*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. Alex, the new kid in the fourth grade class, is at first treated differently and left out of some activities because he has AIDS. Gradually, Michael comes to appreciate Alex's sense of humor and they become friends. Their teacher realizes that Alex needs to be treated as a member of the class, not as someone odd or special.

Grollman, S. (1988). *Shira: A Legacy of Courage*. New York: Doubleday. Shira Putter died at the age of nine in 1983 from a rare form of diabetes. This book tells Shira's story based on her own writings and personal accounts from family members and friends in a way that celebrates courage, love, and hope in a life containing much hardship.

Heegaard, M. E. (1990). *Coping with Death and Grief*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications. This book describes change, loss, and death as natural parts of life, provides information and advice about coping with feelings, and suggests ways to help oneself and others who are grieving.

Jampolsky, G. G., & Taylor, R. (Eds.). (1978). *There Is a Rainbow Behind Every Dark Cloud*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts. Eleven children, eight to nineteen years old, explain what it is like to have a life-threatening illness and the choices that youngsters have in helping themselves, for example, when one is first told about one's illness, in going back to school, in coping with feelings, and in talking about death.

Jampolsky, G. G., & Murray, G. (Eds.). (1982). *Straight from the Siblings: Another Look at the Rainbow*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts. Brothers and sisters of children who have a life-threatening illness write about the feelings of siblings and ways to help all of the children who are involved in such difficult situations.

LeShan, E. (1976). *Learning to Say Good-by: When a Parent Dies*. New York: Macmillan. This book offers advice to bereaved children and the adults around them on a broad range of topics, including: what grief is like; the importance of honesty, trust, sharing, and funerals; fear of abandonment, anticipatory grief, and guilt; accepting the loss of the deceased, maintaining a capacity for love, and meeting future changes.

Little, J. (1984). *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird*. New York: Viking Kestrel. Jeremy and his younger sister, Sarah, only learn that their father is dying from cancer by overhearing people talk about it. They experience many losses, large and small, that accompany his dying and death, often compounded by lack of information and control over their situation.

Mann, P. (1977). *There Are Two Kinds of Terrible*. New York: Doubleday/Avon. Robbie's broken arm is one kind of terrible, but it ends; his mother's death seems to leave Robbie and his "cold fish" father an experience with no conclusion. They are together, but each grieves alone until they begin to find ways to share their suffering and their memories.

Maple, M. (1992). *On the Wings of a Butterfly: A Story about Life and Death*. Seattle: Parenting Press. Lisa, a child dying of cancer, and Sonya, her caterpillar friend, share insights and experiences as Lisa approaches her death and Sonya prepares for her transformation into a Monarch butterfly.

Paterson, K. (1977). *Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: Crowell. Jess and Leslie have a special, secret meeting place in the woods called Terabithia. But when Leslie is killed one day in an accidental fall, the magic of their play and friendship is disrupted. Jess mourns the loss of this special relationship, is supported by his family, and ultimately is able to initiate new relationships that will share friendship in a similar way with others.

Richter, E. (1986). *Losing Someone You Love: When a Brother or Sister Dies*. New York: Putnam's. Fifteen adolescents describe in their own words how they feel in response to a wide variety of experiences of sibling death.

Rofes, E. E. (Ed.), and the Unit at Fayerweather Street School. (1985). *The Kids' Book About Death and Dying, by and for Kids*. Boston: Little, Brown. The result of a class project, this book describes what these young authors have learned about a wide range of death-related topics, making clear what children want to know about these subjects and how they want adults to talk to them. One main lesson is that "a lot of the mystery and fear surrounding death has been brought about by ignorance and avoidance." Another lesson is expressed in the hope "that children can lead the way in dealing with death and dying with a healthier and happier approach."

Romond, J. L. (1989). *Children Facing Grief: Letters from Bereaved Brothers and Sisters*. St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press. In the form of letters to a friend, the author records the observations of eighteen children (ages six to fifteen) who have each experienced the death of a sibling. Helpful comments from young people who have been there in grief.

Shura, M. E. (1988). *The Sunday Doll*. New York: Dodd, Mead. This is a complex story of a thirteen-year-old girl whose parents exclude her from something terrible involving her older sister (the suicide of a boyfriend) and who is frightened by her Aunt Harriet's life-threatening "spells" (transient ischemia attacks). Like the Amish doll without a face, Emily learns that she has her own strengths and can choose which face to present to the world.

Sternberg, E., & Sternberg, B. (1980). *If I Die and When I Do: Exploring Death with Young People*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. This book is the result of a nine-week middle-school course on death and dying. The text mainly consists of drawings, poems, and statements by the students on various death-related topics, plus a closing chapter of 25 suggested activities.

Traisman, E. S. (1992). *Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing a Loss*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. The aim here is to provide a vehicle to be used as a journal by teenagers who have experienced a loss. A line or two of text on each page and many small drawings offer age-appropriate prompts for this purpose.

Traisman, E. S., & Sieff, J. (Comps.). (1995). *Flowers for the Ones You've Known: Unedited Letters from Bereaved Teens*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. This is a support book for grieving teens mainly consisting of unedited letters and poems written by bereaved peers and reproduced here in various handwritten and print formats.

Wiener, L. S., Best, A., & Pizzo, R. A. (Comps.). (1994). *Be a Friend: Children Who Live with HIV Speak*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. The vivid colors, drawings, and layout in this book are intended to permit children who are living with HIV infection to speak in their own voices.

Literature for High School Readers

Agee, J. (1969). *A Death in the Family*. New York: Bantam. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel unerringly depicts the points of view of two children in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1915 when they are told of the accidental death of their father. Agee skillfully portrays ways in which the children experience unusual events, sense strange tensions within the family, struggle to understand what has happened, and strive to work out their implications.

Bode, J. (1993). *Death is Hard to Live with: Teenagers and How They Cope with Death*. New York: Delacorte. Teenagers speak frankly about how they cope with death and loss.

Craven, M. (1973). *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*. New York: Dell. This novel describes a young Episcopal priest with a terminal illness who is sent by his bishop to live with Native Americans in British Columbia who believe that death will come when the owl calls someone's name. From them, the bishop hopes that the young priest will learn to face his own death.

Deaver, J. R. (1988). *Say Goodnight, Gracie*. New York: Harper & Row. Jimmy and Morgan have been close friends since birth. When Jimmy is killed by a drunken driver in an automobile accident, Morgan is so disoriented by the extent of her loss that she is unable to face her feelings, attend Jimmy's funeral, or speak to his parents. Her own parents offer support and tolerate Morgan's withdrawal from the world, but it is not until a wise aunt intervenes that Morgan is able to confront her feelings in a way that leads her to more constructive coping and to decide to go on with living.

Geller, N. (1987). *The Last Teenage Suicide*. Auburn, ME: Norman Geller Publishing. Text and pen-and-ink drawings describe the death by suicide of a high school senior, together with reactions from his family, friends, and acquaintances. The death mobilizes citizens to develop a program to identify and respond to the needs of those who are potentially suicidal or hurting emotionally with the goal of making this death the last teenage suicide in their community.

Greenberg, J. (1979). *A Season In-Between*. New York: Farrar. Carrie Singer, a seventh grader, copes with the diagnosis of her father's cancer in spring and his death that summer. She draws on the rabbinical teaching: turn scratches on a jewel into a beautiful design.

Gunther, J. (1949). *Death Be Not Proud: A Memoir*. New York: Harper. An early biographical account of a lengthy struggle with a brain tumor by the author's fifteen-year-old son.

Hughes, M. (1984). *Hunter in the Dark*. New York: Atheneum. A boy with overprotective parents sets out to face life and death on his own by confronting threats at different levels: his leukemia and the challenge of going hunting in the Canadian woods for the first time.

Lewis, C. S. (1976). *A Grief Observed*. New York: Bantam. The author, a celebrated British writer and lay theologian, recorded his experiences of grief after the death of his wife. The published result is an unusual and extraordinary document, a direct and honest expression of one individual's grief that has helped innumerable readers by normalizing their own experiences in bereavement.

Martin, A. M. (1986). *With You and Without You*. New York: Holiday House; paperback by Scholastic. Family members (parents and four children) struggle to cope when the father is told that he will soon die as a result of an inoperable heart condition. Before his death, each member of the family tries to make the father's remaining time as good as

possible; afterwards, they each strive to cope with their losses. One important lesson is that no one is ever completely prepared for a death; another is that each individual must cope in his or her own way.

O'Toole, D. (1995). *Facing Change: Falling Apart and Coming Together Again in the Teen Years*. Burnsville, NC: Compassion Books. This little book is intended to help adolescents understand loss, grief, and change, and to think about how they might respond to those experiences.

Pendleton, E. (Comp.). (1980). *Too Old to Cry, Too Young to Die*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Thirty-five teenagers describe their experiences in living with cancer, including treatments, side effects, hospitals, parents, siblings, and friends.

Scrivani, M. (1991). *When Death Walks In*. Omaha, NE: Centering Corporation. This little booklet was written for teen readers to explore the many facets of grief and how one might cope with them in productive ways.

Tolstoy, L. (1960). *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories*. New York: New American Library. The title story is an exceptional piece of world literature in which a Russian magistrate in the prime of his life is afflicted with a grave illness that becomes steadily more serious. As his health deteriorates, Ivan suddenly realizes that glib talk in college about mortality does not just apply to other people or to humanity in general. He also discovers that only one servant and his young son treat him with real compassion and candor.

Charles Corr, PhD, CT, is Professor emeritus in the Department of Philosophical Studies at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Dr. Corr's publications in the field of death, dying, and bereavement include more than 30 books and booklets, and over 80 articles and chapters. His most recent publications are the fourth edition of *Death and Dying, Life and Living* (Wadsworth, 2003), co-authored with Clyde M. Nabe and Donna M. Corr, and a special 2004 issue in *Omega, Journal of Death and Dying*, on "Death-Related Literature for Children." Dr. Corr was seen on the Hospice Foundation of America's second annual National Bereavement Teleconference, *Children Mourning, Mourning Children* and its most recent teleconference in 2005, *Living with Grief: Ethical Dilemmas at the End of Life*. This bibliography draws on material in Corr, C. A., Nabe, C. M., and Corr, D. M., *Death and Dying, Life and Living* (4th ed., 2003). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.