



Books for Younger Children

- Mary Bahr. *If Nathan Were Here*. Illustrated by Karen A. Jerome. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000. After his best friend dies, a boy is comforted by the memories he stores in a memory box containing “all the best things we remember about Nathan.” Ages 4–8.
- Mary Bahr. *The Memory Box*. Illustrated by David Cunningham. Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman, 1995. A young boy and his grandfather, who has Alzheimer’s, create a box to store family tales and traditions. Ages 4–8.
- T. A. Barron. *Where Is Grandpa?* Illustrated by Chris K. Soentpiet. New York: Philomel Books, 2000. As his family reminisces about his grandfather’s death, a young boy copes with his feelings and thoughts by recognizing that his grandfather is still with him in a special way in all the places they shared. Ages 4–7.
- Cathy Blanford. *Something Happened*. Illustrated by Phyllis Childers. Western Springs, Ill.: Cathy Blanford, 2008. Beautifully illustrated. Discusses pregnancy loss in language easy for young children to understand. Also has information for grieving parents to help their children. Ages 3–7.
- Marc Brown. *When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death*. Illustrated by Laurie Krasny Brown. Boston: Little, Brown, 1996. This cartoon-like book offers comfort and reassurance to children by addressing their fears about death and explaining in simple language the feelings people may have when a loved one dies and ways of remembering someone who has died. Ages 3–8.
- Margaret Wise Brown. *The Dead Bird*. New York: Morrow, 2004. A simple story in which children find a dead bird and conduct a funeral and burial. Ages 4–8.
- Eve Bunting. *The Summer of Riley*. New York: HarperTrophy-Cotler, 2002. A boy adjusts to his parents’ divorce and his grandfather’s death by establishing a relationship with a dog. Ages 9–12.
- Jo Carson. *You Hold Me and I’ll Hold You*. Illustrated by Annie Cannon. New York: Orchard Books, 1992. A young girl and her father comfort each other at the funeral of her great-aunt. Ages 4–8.
- Seymour Chwast. *Ode to Humpty Dumpty*. Illustrated by Harriet Ziefert. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001. The ultimate book for understanding rituals. A town comes together to memorialize Humpty’s death. Ages 5–13.
- Bill Cochran. *The Forever Dog*. Illustrated by Dan Andreasen. New York: HarperCollins, 2007. Mike makes a Forever Plan with his dog, Corky, to be best friends forever; it works beautifully until Corky dies unexpectedly. In his grief, Mike is angry at Corky for breaking his promise. With his mother’s help, Mike realizes the Forever Plan is going to work differently. Corky will be in his heart forever. Ages 4–8.
- Janice Cohn. *I Had a Friend Named Peter: Talking to Children About the Death of a Friend*. Illustrated by Gail Owen. New York: Morrow, 1987. When Betsy’s playmate dies from an accident while chasing a ball into the street, her parents, teacher, and classmates help her cope with the loss and describe the coming funeral and burial, inviting her to attend if she wants to; includes two sections, one for parents and one for children. Ages 4–7.
- Janice Cohn. *Molly’s Rosebush: A Concept Book*. Illustrated by Gail Owen. Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman, 1994. Through the story of Molly, whose mother suffers a miscarriage, this book offers guidance to parents about how children are affected by such a loss and provides a way of explaining the loss to young children. Ages 3–6.

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Figure 10-3 Books for Helping Children and Teens Cope with Loss

Prepared with the assistance of Pamela Gabbay, Vice President of the Board of Directors of The National Alliance for Grieving Children. Additional resources can be found on *The Last Dance* website.



Books for Younger Children (continued)

- Bill Cosby. *The Day I Saw My Father Cry*. Illustrated by Varnette P. Honeywood. New York: Scholastic, 2000. The sudden death of a family friend brings lessons in experiencing and expressing grief. Ages 4–10.
- Mary Newell DePalma. *A Grand Old Tree*. New York: A. A. Levine, 2005. Beautifully illustrated, easy-reader picture book about the life cycle. The grand old tree slowly crumbled and became part of the earth. The roots of her “grandchildren” sink deep into the earth and are home to many creatures. Ages 4–8.
- Tomie DePaola. *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*. New York: Penguin, 1978; reissued 1997. A boy learns to face the eventual deaths of his grandmother and great-grandmother. Ages 3–8.
- Dyanne DiSalvo-Ryan. *A Dog Like Jack*. New York: Holiday House, 2001. Story of loving and losing an aged pet. An epilogue contains suggestions for parents about pet loss. Ages 4–8.
- Joan Drescher. *The Moon Balloon: A Journey of Hope and Discovery for Children and Families*. Waltham, Mass.: Arvest Press, 2005. Beautifully illustrated book about hot-air balloons, each of which contains a feeling that a child might have when coping with change. Examples of the balloons include the angry balloon, the tear balloon, the stress balloon, the love balloon, and the giggle balloon. Gives children an opportunity to draw or write about their feelings and offers helpful tips for adults. Ages 6–11.
- Anne Fontaine. *Ocho Loved Flowers*. Illustrated by Obadinah. Seattle: Stoneleigh Press, 2007. A story about Annie and her cat, Ocho. Ocho becomes ill and the veterinarian tells Annie and her mother that Ocho has only one month to live. During Ocho’s last month, Annie learns how to help her mom care for him. After Ocho dies, Annie buys flowers in memory of Ocho. Ages 4–8.
- Mem Fox. *Tough Boris*. New York: Illustrated by Kathryn Brown. Harcourt Brace, 1994. When his parrot dies, Boris shows that even he, a scary pirate, can express his sadness and grief. Ages 4–8.
- Marilyn Gryte. *No New Baby*. Illustrated by Kristi McClendon. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 1999. A picture book for children whose brother or sister died before birth. Addresses common feelings, such as guilt and blame: “Did I do it when I patted too hard?” “Sometimes I didn’t want a new baby.” Includes tips for helping children cope with miscarriage, stillbirth, and neonatal death. Ages 4–8.
- Kathleen Hemery. *The Brightest Star*. Illustrated by Ron Boldt. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 1998. A young girl whose mother dies finds comfort in searching for the brightest star in the sky because her mother always searched for the brightest star and because finding the brightest star helps her feel closer to her mother. Ages 6–14.
- Margaret Holmes. *Molly’s Mom Died*. Illustrated by Susan Aitken. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 1999. Picture book about a young girl whose mother died. This book is very descriptive and will help children understand some of the emotions that they have when they are grieving. The mother of Molly’s friend also died; their friendship helps Molly feel better. Includes tips for helping grieving children. Ages 5–9.
- Margaret Holmes. *Sam’s Dad Died*. Illustrated by Susan Aitken. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 1999. Story about a boy whose father died. Helps children understand the emotions they experience when they are grieving. Addresses father loss through the eyes of a child. Includes tips for helping grieving children. Ages 5–9.
- Margaret Holmes. *A Terrible Thing Happened*. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press, 2000. A book to help children express their feelings after witnessing a trauma. Includes a caregiver’s resource section. Ages 4–11.



- Deborah Hopkinson. *Bluebird Summer*. Illustrated by Bethanne Anderson. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2001. Two children work on grandpa's farm after grandma's death, nurturing and maintaining her garden. Ages 4–8.
- Eiko Kadono. *Grandpa's Soup*. Illustrated by Satomi Ichikawa. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999. After Grandma's death, Grandpa fixes her soup recipe for his friends, including his mice friends. Ages 4–8.
- Laurie A. Kanyer. *25 Things to Do When Grandpa Passes Away, Mom and Dad Get Divorced, or the Dog Dies*. Seattle: Parenting Press, 2004. Offers education to parents or other adults who are working with grieving children. The second half of the book describes twenty-five activities to help children who are experiencing loss, including art and craft activities as well as high-energy outdoor activities. Ages 6–11.
- Miska Miles. *Annie and the Old One*. Illustrated by Peter Parnall. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971. The story of a Navajo girl's efforts to prevent the inevitable by unraveling each day's weaving on a rug whose completion she fears will bring her grandmother's death. Ages 6–10.
- Marjorie Blain Parker. *Jasper's Day*. Illustrated by Janet Wilson. Tonawanda, N.Y.: Kids Can Press, 2002. Knowing that their beloved dog, Jasper, is dying and in pain, the family plans a day to celebrate before taking him to the vet to be euthanized. Ages 4–8.
- Fred Rogers. *When a Pet Dies*. Photographs by Jim Jukis. New York: Putnam, 1988. Portrays a family whose dog dies and another family whose cat dies. The grieving children ask their parents questions about their losses. Ages 3–8.
- Ellen Sabin. *The Healing Book*. New York: Watering Can Press, 2006. Beautifully illustrated and colorful memory book filled with page after page of opportunities for children to work through grief-related feelings as well as remember the person who died. Excellent tool for adults working with grieving children. Ages 6–13.
- Rachel Ellenberg Schulson. *Guns: What You Should Know*. Illustrated by Mary Jones. Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman, 1997. Includes descriptions of different kinds of guns and explains what a bullet is and what it can do. The text lists three rules for children when they see a gun: (1) Never assume it is a toy gun—stay away. (2) Find a grownup; never stay in a room with a child who is touching a gun. (3) Never let someone aim a gun at you, even if they say it is unloaded. Ages 4–8.
- Harold Ivan Smith and Joy Johnson. *What Does That Mean?* Omaha: Centering Corporation, 2006. A dictionary of death, dying, and grief terms for children. Offers age-appropriate definitions of words that grieving children hear but may not understand. Ages 6–12.
- Pat Thomas. *I Miss You: A First Look at Death*. Illustrated by Lesley. Harker Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's, 2001. "Every day someone is born and every day someone dies" begins this frank and sensitive look at death, including how people die, funerals, a survivor's feelings; it ends with the statement that "no one is completely gone as long as you can remember the one you love." Ages 4–8.
- Susan Varley. *Badger's Parting Gifts*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1984. The story of a beloved animal's death and the grief of those who loved him. Ages 5–9.
- Judith Vigna. *Saying Goodbye to Daddy*. Morton Grove, Ill.: Albert Whitman, 1991. A girl in kindergarten whose father dies in a car accident has difficulty living with the loss. With the help of her mother and grandmother, she comes to understand his absence. Ages 4–8.
- Judith Viorst. *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*. Illustrated by Erik Blegvad. New York: Atheneum, 1971. A boy thinks of the ten best things about his pet cat, who has died. Ages 3–9.

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Books for Younger Children (continued)

- E. B. White. *Charlotte's Web*. Illustrated by Garth Williams. New York: Harper & Row, 1952. Classic story describes grief experienced at the death of a close friend—Charlotte, a spider—and the continuing of life through her offspring. Ages 3 and up.
- Jeanette Winter. *September Roses*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004. South African sisters who raise roses come to New York on September 11, 2001. Addresses the sorrow of the terrorist attack and the response of those living through the disaster. A picture book, although some children may have difficulty reading the text because it is in cursive. Ages 4–8.
- Charlotte Zolotow. *My Grandson Lew*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. Lew learns the value of memories of his deceased grandfather. Ages 3–7.

Books for Older Children and Teens

- Tara Altebrando. *What Happens Here*. New York: MTV Books, 2008. A frank story about Lindsay's murder, told by her best friend, Cloe. Lindsay went missing after a night out at a nightclub in Las Vegas. Separated from her friends, she ended up walking around on her own. Two days later, her body was found in a Dumpster in a duffle bag. She had been beaten, raped, and strangled. The police had no idea who had done it. Young adult novel. Ages 14–18.
- The Dougy Center (Portland, Ore.). *After a Death: An Activity Book for Children*, 2007; *After a Murder: A Workbook for Grieving Kids*, 2002; *After a Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids*, 2001. Interactive workbooks in which children learn from other children who have experienced a death. These workbooks encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings through a variety of activities, including drawings, puzzles, word games, and helpful stories and advice from other kids and adults. Ages 9 and up.
- Helen Fitzgerald. *The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. This classic covers many issues related to grief. It guides teens through everything from the sickbed to the funeral, from the first day back at school to the first anniversary of the death. Practical and encouraging, this book lets teens know that they are not alone. Resources and website(s) are dated, but the content is as true for this century as for the last. Ages 13–18.
- Paula Fox. *The Eagle Kite*. New York: Dell/Laurel-Leaf, 1996. When Liam, a high school freshman, learns that his father is dying of AIDS, he experiences feelings of shame and betrayal, heightened by family secrets, as he reckons with the truth and ultimately finds healing in his relationship with his father. Ages 11–14.
- Dina Friedman. *Playing Dad's Song*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006. When Gus was nine, his father died in the attack on the World Trade Center. Gus struggles with missing his father and, at the same time, does not want anyone to ask him about his father. He feels isolated because he is the only person he knows whose parent died on 9/11. He uses music for comfort and to honor the memory of his father. Ages 9–12.
- Marc Gellman and Thomas Hartman. *Bad Stuff in the News: A Guide to Handling the Headlines*. New York: SeaStar Books, 2002. After seeing a big office building crash to the ground or seeing kids shooting other kids at school, you might think the world is so scary that the only safe place is hiding under your bed. Written to help kids understand and cope with dangers in the world. Includes terrorism, kids killing kids, disasters (both natural and human caused), death through abuse, dangerous sports, diseases that kill, and more. Simple and easy to read. Ages 9–12.
- Barbara Snow Gilbert. *Stone Water*. Arden, N.C.: Front Street, 1996. After Grandpa Hughes suffers a stroke and lies unconscious in a nursing home bed, 14-year-old Grant is sure that his grandfather is ready to die and struggles with the decision to take matters into his own hands in this story of assisted suicide. Ages 10 and up.

 *Books for Older Children and Teens (continued)*

- Earl Grollman and Joy Johnson. *A Complete Book About Death for Kids*. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 2006. Comprehensive information to help explain death to older children. Complex concepts are clearly defined. Written in easy-to-understand language. Ages 9–12.
- Amy Hest. *Remembering Mrs. Rossi*. Illustrated by Heather Maione. Somerville, Mass: Candlewick Press, 2007. Annie Rossi is eight years old when her mother, a sixth-grade teacher, dies. Her father does his best to do all of the things that Annie's mother did, but no one can replace Annie's mother. Annie is helped when her mother's class creates a special memory book about her (included at the end of this novel). With few books addressing the death of a mother, this one is a standout. Ages 9–12.
- Gloria Horsley and Heidi Horsley. *Teen Grief Relief*. Highland City, Fla.: Rainbow Books, 2007. Information for teens and their parents about ways grieving teens can be helped. Easy to read. Includes vignettes from teens who have "been there," as well as activities teens can do to cope with feelings of sadness, anger, and guilt. Ages 12 and up.
- Lynne B. Hughes. *You Are Not Alone*. New York: Scholastic, 2005. Written by the founder of Comfort Zone Camp, the author discusses the death of both her parents by the time she was twelve years old. "My grief came out sideways and front ways and mostly in quiet ways." With the author, teens talk about life after the loss of a parent. Ages 12 and up.
- Carrie Stark Hugus. *Crossing 13: A Memoir of a Father's Suicide*. Denver: Affirm Publications, 2008. A teenage girl discovers her father dead from suicide. Young survivors will identify with and benefit from understanding that their confusing and often frightening grief responses are normal. Ages 12 and up.
- David Wills Hurwin. *A Time for Dancing*. New York: Puffin, 1997; reissued 2009. In this novel about how terminal illness affects the lives of friends and others around them, two teenage girls who have been best friends since childhood face mortality when one is diagnosed with histiocytic lymphoma, a deadly cancer. Ages 12 and up.
- Amy Goldman Koss. *Side Effects*. New Milford, Conn.: Roaring Brook Press, 2006. The story of teenage Izzy's bout with cancer. Excellently detailed view of Izzy's and her family's coping mechanisms. Teens will identify with her, whether they or someone they know has cancer or they are just curious about life-threatening illness. Ages 9–12.
- Jill Krentz. *How It Feels When a Parent Dies*. New York: Knopf, 1981. A photographic essay with children's descriptions of their experiences. Ages 10 and up.
- Erika Leeuwenburgh and Ellen Goldring. *Why Did You Die? Activities to Help Children Cope with Grief and Loss*. Oakland, Calif.: Instant Help Books, 2008. Offers detailed, helpful activities for children who have experienced a death. The first part of the book offers practical information for parents and other adults to help a grieving child. The second half of the book has activities to help grieving children. Ages 9 and up.
- Madeleine L'Engle. *A Ring of Endless Light*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980. A teenage girl copes with the experience of loss, grief, and terminal illness by discovering underlying spiritual and moral dimensions. Ages 10 and up.
- Wendy Mass. *Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Little, Brown, 2006. When Jeremy was eight, his father died in a car accident. A few months before he turned thirteen, he received a mysterious wooden box in the mail that his father had created for him before his death. According to Jeremy's father, this box contained the Meaning of Life. There is only one problem: No keys were included! Jeremy spends the summer finding the keys to unlock this precious gift from his beloved father. Ages 9–12.

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 *Books for Older Children and Teens (continued)*

- Sheryl McFarlane. *The Smell of Paint*. Brighton, Mass.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2006. The story of Jess, a high school freshman, whose mother is diagnosed with incurable bone cancer. Jess tries to deal with her mother's illness by herself, not wanting even her closest friends to know. Explores Jess's complicated relationship with her dying mother. Ages 12 and up.
- Emilio Parga. *Kids Can Cope*. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 2009. Activity book for children living with loss when someone they know has a critical or life-threatening illness. Offers children an opportunity to write about their feelings and explore the changes that are occurring around them. Besides activities, includes a glossary of illness-related terms that can be puzzling to children. Ages 9–12.
- Katherine Paterson. *Bridge to Terabithia*. Illustrations by Donna Diamond. New York: HarperTrophy, 1987; reissued HarperTeen, 2004. In this Newberry award-winner, fifth-grader Jess's rural world expands when he meets his new neighbor, a tomboy named Leslie. After a rocky start, they become best friends and create a secret kingdom in the woods named Terabithia, which can be reached only by swinging on a rope across a creek. When Leslie drowns trying to reach their special hideaway while alone, Jess's life is changed forever as he struggles with anger and grief in coping with the loss. (A guidebook for using this story in the classroom is available from Teacher Created Materials.) Ages 9–12.
- Lila Perl. *Dying To Know: About Death, Funeral Customs, and Final Resting Places*. Brookfield, Conn.: Twenty-First Century Books, 2001. This small book uses photographs and text to acquaint the reader with death customs and practices in the United States and other parts of the world. Organized into sections that address attitudes and practices from different religions and countries, as well as historical information. Ages 12–18.
- Sherri L. Smith. *Sparrow*. New York: Laurel-Leaf Books, 2006. Story of a young girl, Kendall, whose parents and brother die in a car accident. Four years old, she is the sole survivor. In a quest to find her only surviving relative, Kendall discovers she can make it on her own. Ages 12–15.
- Jordan Sonnenblick. *Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie*. New York: Scholastic, 2006. Jeffery is diagnosed with leukemia. Big brother protector Steven says, "So how come when I wasn't looking Jeffy got cancer?" Written in the voice of an older sibling, the story touches on many aspects of living with life-threatening illness. In the course of the book, Steven begins to come to terms with his brother's illness and the strain it is putting on his entire family. Ages 11–14.
- Staff of the New York Times. *A Nation Challenged: A Visual History of 9/11 and Its Aftermath (Young Reader's Edition)*. New York: Scholastic, 2002. Combines stories published in the newspaper and Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs to present an account of terrifying events in an age-appropriate fashion. Ages 9–14.
- Peter Lane Taylor and Nicola Christos. *The Secret of Priest's Grotto: A Holocaust Survival Story*. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2007. Remarkable story of the survival of Jewish families who lived in a gypsum cave called Popwa Yama in the Ukraine for 344 days to escape the Gestapo. Excerpts from the privately published memoir of Esther Stermer, *We Fight to Survive*, recount that dark epoch—the darkness being both literal and figurative. Ages 9–12.
- Terry Trueman. *Hurricane: A Novel*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008. José from La Rupa, Honduras, tells the story of surviving a hurricane. At first, there are no worries because a hurricane has never hit that part of the country. José narrates the story of his life before and after the storm affects his life. Teens will find his story both interesting and informative. Ages 9–12.
- Alan Wofelt. *Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens*. Boulder, Colo.: Companion Press, 2001. Offers tips and ideas for expression of grief. Activity oriented. Ages 12 and up.



- Kazumi Yumoto. *The Friends*. Translated by Cathy Hirano. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996; reissued 2005. In a story that is both universal and rooted in the country and culture from which it comes, three young boys' fascination with death leads them to form an unexpected friendship with an old man, through which they confront their fears and learn to accept the inevitable with a sense of joy in life. Ages 9 and up.
- Nan Zastrow. *Ask Me . . . 30 Things I Want You to Know: How to be a Friend to a Survivor of Suicide*. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 2007. Straightforward book about helping survivors of suicide. These tips will assist family members and friends of survivors when they are at a loss how to help. Tip #8: "Allow me to ask 'why' knowing you don't know either." Ages 16 and up.

Further Readings

- David E. Balk and Charles A. Corr, eds., *Adolescent Encounters with Death, Bereavement, and Coping*. New York: Springer, 2009.
- Kenneth J. Doka and Amy S. Tucci, eds. *Living with Grief: Children and Adolescents*. Washington, D.C.: Hospice Foundation of America, 2008.
- Marilyn J. Field and Richard E. Behrman, eds. *When Children Die: Improving Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Children and Their Families*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2003.
- Margo Requarth. *After a Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal*. Sebastopol, Calif.: Healing Hearts, 2006.
- Phyllis Silverman and Madelyn Kelly. *A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children: Rebuilding Your Family After the Death of a Loved One*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Carolyn Ambler Walter and Judith L. M. McCoyd. *Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan: A Biopsychosocial Perspective*. New York: Springer, 2009.
- Leigh A. Woznick and Carol D. Goodheart. *Living with Childhood Cancer: A Practical Guide to Help Families Cope*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2002.

Additional resources for this chapter can be found at www.mhhe.com/despelderge