

Bereavement Books and Resources for Primary Schools

Books can help pupils experiencing bereavement to make some sense of confusing and sad emotions. Young people need simple and honest explanations of death, possibly repeated many times. Books can also help children to feel less alone. The following suggested book may help inform teachers and parents/carers as they support pupils on their grief journey.

Grief in Young Children – a Handbook for Adults

Atle Dyregrov

Dyregrov's book is recommended for its solid grounding in psychology and its reasoned, jargon – free advice. An extremely valuable resource for parents as well as professionals who work with children. It helps those working with children to think about the effects grief has on a child and helps us to understand how they are feeling and how to help them cope with the grief.

The Books below are more suited for general use within the classroom and for parents to read with their children. These books can help to introduce topics such as death, grief and the life cycle to pupils in Primary school.

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine

Diana Crossley

Published by Winston's Wish, this hardback activity book offers invaluable practical and sensitive support for bereaved younger children.

What Does Dead Mean?

Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas

A beautifully illustrated book that guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying. Suitable for children aged 4+, this is an ideal book for parents and carers to read with their children, as well as teachers, therapists and counsellors working with young children.

Mum's Jumper

Jayde Perkin

A simple and heartfelt book that looks sensitively at loss and grief through the story of a young girl losing her mother. This book can be used as a tool introduce children to the concept of death, even if they haven't experienced it.

The Invisible String

Patrice Karst

This accessible picture book offers a simple approach to coping with loss, loneliness or separation with an imaginative twist that children can easily understand. A great tool for beginning conversations about death and for children who are dealing with loss.

The Sunshine Cat

Miriam Moss

Sunny the cat is loved by all his human family, but one day there is a knock at the door - Sunny has been killed in an accident. A sensitive story which aims to help children come to terms with death.

The Huge Bag of Worries

Virginia Ironside

A lovely story with fun filled illustrations encourages children to talk about their worries.

Badger's Parting Gifts

Susan Varley

When old badger dies, his friends think they will be sad forever. Gradually they are able to remember Badger with joy and to treasure the gifts he left behind. Sensitive written, this book will help children identify and begin to understand feelings associated with the death of someone they love.

The Lonely Tree

Nicholas Halliday

A story based on the life cycle in the natural world. The young tree is sad when his old friend the Oak dies but Spring brings joy to the little tree.

Waterbugs and Dragonflies

D Stickney

Written from a Christian perspective, this book can be used to help explain the concept of death to young children. The story illustrates that death is inevitable, irreversible but natural. It is presented as something sometimes difficult to understand but a happy experience for the person who has died.

Lifetimes

Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

This sensitive book is a useful tool in explaining to children that death is part of life and that, eventually, all living things reach the end of their own special lifetimes. It clearly explains about life and death focussing on plants, animals and insects before moving on to people. It emphasises that death is part of the life cycle and is natural and normal whenever it occurs.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death

Laurence Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

The authors explain in simple language the feelings people may experience following the death of a loved one and the ways to honour the memory of someone who has died.

Always and Forever

Alan Durant

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

The Copper Tree

Hilary Robinson and Mandy Stanley

When Olivia's teacher dies, the children at her school are encouraged to think of everything that reminds them of her. Sprinkled with light-hearted moments, The Copper Tree approaches grief with sensitivity and sound judgement. A delightful and touching short story.

Her Mother's Face

Roddy Doyle

This book is a sensitive portrayal of a young girl's grieving as she struggles to come to terms with the death of her mother.

Luna's Red Hat

Emmi Smid

This beautifully illustrated storybook is designed as a tool to be read with children aged 6+ who have experienced the death of a loved one by suicide. The book includes a guide for parents and professional by bereavement expert Dr Riet Fiddelaers-Jasers.

Saying Goodbye to Daddy

Judith Vigna

Clare's Dad died in a car accident and this book looks at changes in the family, difficult feelings, funerals, and memories through the eyes of Clare. It would also be a good book to help parents understand the child's perspective. It gives good examples of how adults can answer children's questions, emphasising the need to be clear and honest.

Someone has died suddenly: Helping suddenly bereaved children

Mary Williams

Brake is a road safety charity working with communities and organisations across the UK to stop the tragedy of road deaths and injuries, make streets and communities safer for everyone and support people bereaved and seriously injured on roads. The Amy and Tom project is run by Brake and have produced a book, 'Someone has died suddenly' for adults caring for children who have been suddenly bereaved. The book has been developed in consultation with experts in sudden child bereavement and bereaved parents and children, and piloted with bereaved families to ensure they offer the best possible support.

References

Child Bereavement UK – www.childbereavementu.org

Barnardo's Northern Ireland - www.barnardos.org.uk/childbereavementservice

Winston's Wish - www.wintsonswish.org.uk