

# A) Books and resources - Early years

Children under the age of five may not fully understand the concept of death but will be very aware that something important has happened. Books can be very helpful to share with a bereaved child to help develop their understanding of death. They need simple and honest explanations, possibly repeated many times.

For a list of books which may be useful to share with a bereaved child see Resources for children and young people on our website: [childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people](http://childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people)

The books below are more suited for general use within your setting. These books can help to introduce topics such as death, grief and the life cycle to young children.

## **I Miss You: A First Look at Death**

**Pat Thomas**

This helps children understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have. It briefly covers a range of issues such as why people die, how you may feel when someone dies and what happens afterwards. A good one to use to introduce the subject.

## **Goodbye Mousie**

**Robie H Harris**

The story of a young boy dealing with the death of his pet mouse is handled with the sure touch of an author familiar with children's tender emotions. Simply told by the boy, in a matter-of-fact tone with a dash of humour, he recounts his reactions to the death of his pet mouse.

## **When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death** Laurence Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

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

Call our Helpline

**0800 02 888 40**

### **Dogger**

**Shirley Hughes**

A sensitively written story, with which adults and children will identify. It is about a little boy who loses his favourite toy 'Dogger' and describes his feelings and responses as a result. Useful as a gentle introduction to the subject of loss.

### **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.

### **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.



© Child Bereavement UK 2020 41

### **Rabbityness**

**Jo Empson**

This is the story of a very special rabbit. He enjoys doing rabbit things, but he also loves – well, un-rabbity things. His boundless creative talent is a source of joy and inspiration to the other rabbits. When Rabbit suddenly disappears, no one knows where he has gone. His friends are desolate. But, as it turns out, Rabbit left behind some very special gifts for them, to help them discover their own un-rabbity talents!

### **No Matter What**

**Debi Gliori**

'I'll always love you no matter what...' 'No matter what?' Small asks. But what if he turns into a bug, or a crocodile, or even a grizzly bear? Small has all sorts of questions about love, and his mummy must reassure him that

her love will never, ever run out - no matter what.

### **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**

A beautifully illustrated book which aims to help explore the subjects of life and death.

42 © Child Bereavement UK 2020

Further resources for schools available from

**[childbereavementuk.org](http://childbereavementuk.org)**

## B) Books and resources - Primary

Books can help pupils experiencing loss to make some sense of confusing and sad emotions. Young people need simple and honest explanations of death, possibly repeated many times. They can also help children to feel less alone.

For a list of books which may be useful to share with a pupil who has been bereaved see Resources for children and young people on our website: [childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people](http://childbereavementuk.org/resources-for-children-and-young-people)

The books below are more suited for general use within the classroom. These books can help to introduce topics such as death, grief and the life cycle to pupils in primary school.

### **Badger's Parting Gifts**

**Susan Varley**

(also available in Urdu and Arabic)

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. Sensitively 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.

Call our Helpline

**0800 02 888 40**

### **Lifetimes**

**Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen**

A beautifully illustrated book which aims to help explore the subjects of life and death.

**When Dinosaurs Die:  
A Guide to Understanding Death** Laurence Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

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

### **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.



© Child Bereavement UK 2020 43

### **The Memory Tree**

**Britta Teckentrup**

Fox has lived a long and happy life in the forest. One day, he lies down in his favourite clearing, takes a deep breath, and falls asleep for ever. Before long, Fox's friends begin to gather in the clearing. One by one, they tell stories of the special moments that they shared with Fox. And, as they share their memories, a tree begins to grow, becoming bigger and stronger, sheltering and protecting all the animals in the forest, just as Fox did when he was alive. This gentle and comforting tale celebrates life and the memories that are left behind when a loved one dies.

### **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.

### **Rabbityness**

**Jo Empson**

This is the story of a very special rabbit. He enjoys doing rabbit things, but he also loves – well, un-rabbit things. His boundless creative talent is a source of joy and inspiration to the other rabbits. When Rabbit suddenly disappears, no one knows where he has gone. His friends are desolate. But, as it turns out, Rabbit left behind some very special gifts for them, to help them discover their own un-rabbit talents!

### **No Matter What**

### **Debi Gliori**

'I'll always love you no matter what...' 'No matter what?' Small asks. But what if he turns into a bug, or a crocodile, or even a grizzly bear? Small has all sorts of questions about love, and his mummy must reassure him that

her love will never, ever run out - no matter what.

### **The 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.

### **The Invisible String**

#### **Patrice Karst**

This heart-warming story delivers a very simple approach to overcoming the fear of loneliness or separation from parents. Specifically written to address children's fear of being apart from the ones they love, The Invisible String delivers a particularly compelling message in today's uncertain times, that although we may be separated from the ones we care for, whether through anger, or distance or even death, love is the unending connection that binds us all, and by extension, ultimately binds every person on the planet to everyone else.

### **The Tenth Good Thing About Barney**

#### **Judith Viorst**

A short story that by dealing with the death of a pet, takes a child through the rituals associated with any death, addressing the feelings children have when faced with loss. This book does not have religious overtones, so it

can be used by pupils with different sets of beliefs.

### **Sad Book**

#### **Michael Rosen**

Michael Rosen talks of his sadness after the death of his son. A personal story that speaks to adults and children. Minimal text with moving illustrations.

### **What on Earth do You do When Someone Dies?**

#### **Trevor Romain**

Written by Trevor Romain after his father died, this book suggests ways of coping with grief and offers answers to questions such as 'Why do people have to die?' and 'How can I say goodbye?' Friendly, accessible text and illustrations aimed at ages 8-14.

### **The Huge Bag of Worries**

#### **Virginia Ironside**

Bereaved children and those in families where someone is expected to die often have worries that they feel unable to share. This reassuring story will encourage them to voice their fears and concerns.

Further resources for schools available from

