Suggested books about bereavement and loss

Duck, Death and the Tulip by Wolf Erlbruch (EYFS/KS1)

Duck is a little unsettled when he first notices Death creeping along behind him, but over the course of time they become friends, even sharing a joke or two. When Duck finally does die, it is a peaceful and reconciled death, without fear but full of love and care. Erlbruch's illustrations are delightful – uncluttered yet packed full of acute observation, particularly in the facial expressions of Duck and Death.

Missing Mummy by Rebecca Cobb (EYFS, KS1)

Honest and straightforward, this touching story explores the many emotions a bereaved child may experience, from anger and guilt to sadness and bewilderment. Ultimately, Missing Mommy focuses on the positive—the recognition that the child is not alone but still part of a family that loves and supports him.

I Miss You: a First Look at Death by Pat Thomas (EYFS/KS1)

When a close friend or family member dies, it can be difficult for children to express their feelings. This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one's death. Titles in this sensitively presented series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Kids are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them. Written by psychotherapist and counselor Pat Thomas, these books promote positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers. The story lines are simple and direct--easily accessible to younger children. There are full-colour illustrations on every page.

I Miss My Sister by Sarah Courtauld (EYFS/KS1)

A young girl's sister has died and the impact on her and her family is sensitively illustrated with minimum text. Designed to be shared with an adult, it will help to start conversations, answer questions and allay any fears.

Goodbye Mousie by Robie H Harris (EYFS/KS1)

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 by Laurence Krasny Brown and Marc Brown (EYFS/KS1)

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? by Caroline Jay & Jenni Thomas (EYFS/KS1/KS2)

A Book for Young Children to Help Explain Death and Dying: What Does Dead Mean? is a beautifully illustrated book that guides children gently through 17 of the 'big' questions they often ask about death and dying. Questions such as 'Is being dead like sleeping?', 'Why do people have to die?' and 'Where do dead people go?' are answered simply, truthfully and clearly to help adults explain to children what happens when someone dies. Prompts encourage children to explore the concepts by talking about, drawing or painting what they think or feel about the questions and answers. 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.

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst (EYFS/KS1/KS2)

When Liza and Jeremy run to their mother during a scary storm, she comforts them by telling them about the Invisible String, which connects people who love each other no matter where they are and means that they are never alone.

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley (EYFS/KS1/KS2)

Providing comfort to children who have been bereaved. Explaining that grief can eventually give way to happy memories.

What Happened to Daddy's Body? by Elke and Alex Barber with Anna Jarvis (KS1/KS2)

This book gently, sensitively and honestly explains cremation and burial, and follows on from our first book "Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?", and we share what we did with Martin's ashes - and the kids were very much involved in this. Just as the first book, it is based on the actual conversations I had with my children, written in their own words. Once again, my children's questions pushed my explanations beyond what I might previously have thought of as 'acceptable', but I was guided by their curiosity and merely tried to make sense of the muddles in their heads. They weren't scared, but grateful to understand. It further reassures the reader that it is okay to be sad, but that it is okay to be happy, too.

Goodbye Mog by Judith Kerr (KS1/KS2)

Mog was tired. She was dead tired…Mog thought, 'I want to sleep for ever.' And so she did. But a little bit of her stayed awake to see what would happen next. Mog keeps watch over the upset Thomas family, who miss her terribly, and she wonders how they will ever manage without her.

A Place in My Heart by Annette Aubrey, Patrice Barton (KS1/KS2)

These charming illustrated storybooks in this series allow small children to get to grips with upsetting and bewildering situations that might be affecting them or people around them.

I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhelm (KS1/KS2)

In this gentle, moving story, Elfie, a dachshund, and her special boy progress happily through life together. One morning Elfie does not wake up. The family grieves and buries her. The watercolour illustrations, tender and warm in colour and mood, suit the simple text perfectly

The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside (KS1/KS2)

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

Remembering Mum by Ginny Perkins (KS2)

A simple photo journey of a real family whose Mum died. It shows how that family coped with the anniversary of Mum's death, and how they are living without her but still including her in their daily lives. Very real and one with which children will identify.

Sad Book by Michael Rosen (KS2)

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

What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? By Trevor Romain (KS2)

Child-friendly, accessible text, this short book deals with the many questions that bereaved children of this age have when someone dies.

What does dead mean? By Caroline Jay and Jenni Thomas. Available Jessica Kingsley www.jkp.com (KS2)
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.

When your mum or dad has cancer by Ann Couldrick (KS2)
This is a useful booklet for younger children (7+) to teenage children. It has an introduction for parents but then explains cancer in a simple way children can relate to. It also covers many questions children ask such as whether the person will die and what exactly happens, but tackles the answers with insight and honesty.

The secret C by Straight Talking About Cancer by Julie Stokes and Vicky Fullick (KS2)
This illustrated guide for children provides a sensitive introduction for a child when a parent, sibling or a person close to them is diagnosed with cancer. It is aimed at children aged 7 to 10 years and will work best when an adult is present to expand on the simple messages in the text.

When Your Grandparent Dies: A Child's Guide to Good Grief by Victoria Ryan

Losing a grandparent is often a child's first experience of grief—and, as such, it can be bewildering and painful. Let the elves in this book gently take the hand of your child to lead him or her through the grief experience. Explaining what happens from a child's-eye view, the book covers the difficult days before, after, and beyond a grandparent's death.

Fred by Posy Simmonds

A story of the double life of the laziest cat in the world. Fred is an adored family cat (now deceased) who slept all the time -- on the ironing board, on the laundry, on top of the fridge, on cars, and particularly on beds -- although he took a little time off to sit on laps and to eat. Only after his death do Sophie and Nick discover that, by night, he was the Elvis of the cat-world -- Famous Fred -- with hordes of devoted fans.