BOOKS FOR AGE 5 TO 8 YEARS

A Birthday Present for Daniel: A Child's Story of Loss — *By Juliet Rothman & illustrated by Louise Gish, 2001* *Prometheus Books, ISBN: 978-1573929462*

Told by a young girl whose brother, Daniel, has died, she talks about how things have changed in the family. She also talks about the things she does when she is sad and how these differ from other members of her family. This book has small black and white pictures with minimal text but it conveys some important issues. It would be particularly useful to broach the subject of birthdays as it describes how the family remembered Daniel on his birthday.

Always and Forever — *By Alan Durant & illustrated by Debi Gliori, 2003 (h'back)* *ISBN: 978-0552548779*

Otter, Mole and Hare miss Fox when he falls ill and dies. They stay at home and don't want to talk about him because it makes them sadder. Then Squirrel visits and reminds them of all the fun times they had together. They all find a way to remember Fox and get on with their lives. Colourful, detailed pictures in this book emphasise the importance of holding on to memories.

Badger's Parting Gifts — *By Susan Varley, 1992* *Picture Lions, ISBN: 978-0006643173*

Badger is old and knows he is going to die soon. When he does, the other animals think they will be sad forever, but they begin to talk about the memories they have of the things Badger taught them and learn to cope with his death. A lovely picture book that emphasises the importance of remembering the person who has died.

Drop Dead — *By Babette Cole, 1998* *Red Fox, ISBN: 978-0099659112*

A humorous book with comic-like pictures, two 'bald old wrinklies' tell their grandchildren about their life growing up and how one day they will just drop down dead. It is a light-hearted book about life that emphasises the normality and inevitability of dying. It is very direct and some readers may not like its style.

Flamingo Dream — *By Donna Jo Napoli & illustrated by Cathie Felstead, 2003* *Greenwillow Books, ISBN: 978-0688167967*

In this bright and colourful book, a young boy tells the story of his Dad who is seriously ill and dies soon after a trip to Florida to see the place where he grew up. The collage style illustrations capture the things the boy collects to remind him of his Dad. A sensitive but honest book which emphasises the importance of memories.

Fred — *By Posy Simmonds, 1998* *Red Fox, ISBN: 978-0099264125*

A light-hearted book with detailed illustrations about Fred, Nick and Sophie's lazy cat that dies. After burying him in the garden, they wake up at night to find all the cats in the area have come to say goodbye to Fred, the famous singer! This funny and touching story would be useful to introduce death to children.

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Granpa – The Book of the Film *Based on the story by John Burningham, 1991*
Ladybird Books Ltd, ISBN: 978-0721414768

This beautifully detailed picture book has very few words but tells the story of a little girl's relationship with her Granpa. It takes the reader through many happy times they spent together playing games, telling stories and on outings. On the last page, Granpa's chair is empty, signifying that he has died. Children may benefit from reading this book with an adult to talk about the pictures and to elaborate some of the messages it conveys.

Saying Goodbye: A Special Farewell to Mama Nkwelle *By Ifeoma Onyefulu, 2002*
Frances Lincoln,
ISBN: 978-0711217010

This book has large bright colourful photos and follows a little boy, Ikenna describing what happens at the ceremony after his great-grandmother's funeral. It gives ideas of different ways to remember someone and an insight into Nigerian culture. A lovely book that could be used in many different situations, including schools.

There's NO Such Thing as a Dragon *By Jack Kent Happy Cat Books*
ISBN: 978-1899248957

There's No Such Thing as a Dragon (1975) by Jack Kent, part of the Family Storytime series, relates the charming tale of Billy Bixbee, who awakens to find a dragon "about the size of a kitten" sitting on his bed. The dragon grows by leaps and bounds, until Billy dares to pet the attention-seeking creature and it shrinks back down into an adoring little lap dragon.

The Sunshine Cat *Written by Miriam Moss, Illustrated by Lisa Flather ISBN: 978-1841215679*
Orchard Picturebooks

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.

Heaven *Written and Illustrated by Nicholas Allan*
ISBN: 978-0099488149

Dill, the dog, knows his time is up, so he packs his case and tells Lily, his owner, that he's off "up there". "Can I come too?" asks Lily. "Er...not yet," replies Dill. While he is waiting for the angels to collect him, Dill explains to Lily what he thinks heaven is like: hundreds of lampposts to pee against, lots of whiffy things to smell and bones everywhere - with meat on them! But, Lily completely disagrees; she thinks heaven is quite different. Luckily, they agree to disagree just in time for a fond, and very poignant, last goodbye.

The Huge Bag of Worries *By Virginia Ironside & illustrated by Frank Rodgers, 1996*
Hodder Wayland, ISBN: 978-0340903179

Jenny begins to worry about lots of different things and these worries build up and get out of control. She just can't get rid of them, until she meets the old lady next door who helps her feel better. A lovely story with fun illustrations encourages children to talk about their worries.

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Saying Goodbye to Daddy *By Judith Vigna, 1991 (h'back)*
Albert Whitman & Company,
ISBN: 978-0807572535

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.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney *By Judith Viorst & illustrated by Erik Blegvad, 1987*
Prentice Hall & IBD,
ISBN: 978-0689712036

A young boy's cat dies and his parents suggest that he could think of ten good things about Barney to tell at the funeral. But he can only think of nine, until he talks to his Father about what happens to someone after they have died, and he discovers the tenth. A carefully written book with black and white pictures, that sensitively deals with death and lets the reader make his or her own decisions about what happens after the funeral.

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death *By Laurie Krasny & illustrated by Marc Brown, 1998*
Time Warner Trade Publishing,
ISBN: 978-0316119559

This factual picture book uses cartoon dinosaurs to illustrate the text and comment on what is said. It is a bright and colourful book that explains death in a simple and unthreatening way. It covers many issues including 'why does someone die?', 'feelings about death' and 'saying goodbye'. It would be an excellent resource for anyone caring for young children.

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BOOKS FOR AGE 9 –12 YEARS

Beginnings and Endings with Lifetimes in Between: *By Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen, 1997*
A beautiful way to explain life and death to children Belitha *Press, ISBN: 978-1855617605*

This thought provoking book has large pictures complemented with small sections of text. 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. A simple book with a powerful message.

Death: What's Happening? *By Karen Bryant–Mole, 1994*
Hodder Wayland, ISBN: 978-0750213790

This factual book has clear text and large photos. It uses stories of young people to discuss issues surrounding death such as feeling frightened, the funeral and the future. It includes advice on how to feel better and cope with difficult situations after someone has died. Using straightforward language, this book may reassure the reader there are other young people who have had someone important to them die and answer some of their questions and concerns.

The Cat Mummy *By Jacqueline Wilson & illustrated by Nick Sharratt, 2002*
Corgi Childrens, ISBN: 978-0440864165
(also on audiocassette)

Verity's Mum died the day she was born but she rarely talks about her. Verity doesn't want to upset her Dad or Grandparents. This humorous but sensitive story mainly focuses on Verity's missing cat Mabel but reveals some of the misunderstandings and anxieties children can have about death. It also shows it can be good to be open, honest and to talk about difficult issues.

The Ghost of Uncle Arvie *By Sharon Creech, 1997*
Macmillan Children's Books, ISBN: 978-0333656327

This fun and humorous book is about Danny, an ordinary nine-year-old boy. However, once or twice a year a ghost visits him. This time it is the ghost of his Uncle Arvie who follows him, persuading him to make his three wishes come true. As a result Danny and his dog get into adventures which make him think about his dad who has also died. This book has some important messages and talks about death in an open way, but is primarily fun and imaginative.

The Mountains of Tibet *By Mordicai Gerstein, 1989*
Barefoot Paperbacks, ISBN: 978-1898000549

Based on Tibetan teachings, this book tells of a small boy who grows up to be a woodcutter. When he dies, he discovers there is a chance to live again but first he must make a number of choices. A simple tale with deep meaning but the theme of reincarnation could be confusing.

Losing Uncle Tim *By Mary Kate Jordan & illustrated by Judith Friedman, 1999*
Albert Whitman & Company, ISBN: 978-0807547564

This picture book for slightly older children explains how a young boy finds out his Uncle Tim has AIDS and is going to die. It is a serious and sensitive book covering many of the issues, changes and difficult feelings that can occur when someone has a serious illness.

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Michael Rosen's SAD BOOK *By Michael Rosen & illustrated by Quentin Blake, 2004*
Walker Books, ISBN: 978-1406313161

This book has large illustrations and small snippets of text. It is wonderfully honest and will appeal to children and adults of all ages. We all have sad stuff, but what makes Michael Rosen most sad is thinking about his son who died. This book is a simple but emotive story. He talks about what sad is and how it affects him and what he does to cope with it. In true Michael Rosen style, this book manages to make you smile as well.

Milly's Bug Nut *By Jill Janey, 2002*
Winston's Wish, ISBN: 978-0-9539123-4-6

A short, simple story with black and white pictures, of a young girl who's Dad has died. It talks about the ups and downs of family life and how things slowly get easier as time goes. Milly misses her Dad and things are just not the same anymore. She knows when people die, they can't come back but she still keeps a wish to see her Dad one more time.

The Best Day of the Week *By Hannah Cole & illustrated by John Prater, 1997*
Walker Books, ISBN: 978-0744554670

This storybook tells of two young children who spend Saturdays with their Grandparents when Mum is at work. It has three chapters, with stories of three different Saturdays. The first is a happy day; the second is at the hospital and sad as Granny dies, the third at the theatre. It is a lovely story that gives an important message that it is still okay to have fun after someone dies.

Water Bugs and Dragonflies: Explaining death to children *By Doris Stickney & illustrated by Gloria Stickney, 1983*
Geoffrey Chapman; New Ed edition 1997
ISBN: 978-0264674414

This pocket size booklet with small black and white pictures is based on a fable, associating death with a water bug's transformation into a dragonfly. It portrays the mystery around death but may need an adult to explain the analogy and help a child relate it to their own experience. It uses Christian beliefs with a focus on life after death and also contains advice for parents.

What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies? *By Trevor Romain, 2003*
Free Spirit Publishing Inc,
ISBN: 978-1575420554

This book for older children is a factual guide, answering questions such as 'why do people have to die?', 'is it okay to cry?' and 'what is a funeral/memorial service?' It is written in a straightforward way, with practical tips, advice and information about different faiths and beliefs.

Ways to Live Forever *By Sally Nicholls, Marion Lloyd Books, 2008*
ISBN: 978-1407104997

If I grow up," 11-year-old Sam informs readers, "I'm going to be a scientist." He says "if" because he has acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and knows he probably won't. With the encouragement of his tutor, he starts to write a bit about himself, then more, until he is using his writing to sort out his death. Interspersed with Sam's lists, questions and odd bits of mortality facts on notebook paper, his narrative proceeds in short, candid chapters that reveal a boy who, though he's not ready to die, nevertheless can confront the reality with heartbreaking clarity. As his parents wrangle about treatment (he doesn't want it), his little sister grapples with the changes to the household and his best friend and fellow cancer-sufferer dies, Sam methodically works through the things he wants to do before he dies, from going up a down escalator to the more problematic ride in an airship and seeing the earth from space.

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BOOKS FOR AGE 13 – 16 YEARS

Double Act *By Jacqueline Wilson & illustrated by Nick Sharratt, 1996*
Corgi Children's, ISBN: 978-0440867593 (Also on audiocassette)

Ruby and Garnet are 10-year-old twins. They do everything together, especially since their mum died three years ago. When their dad finds a new partner and they move house, Ruby and Garnet find it hard and get into all sorts of trouble. Eventually, they settle down and learn to live with the changes. A lively and humorous book that deals sensitively with change.

Dustbin Baby *By Jacqueline Wilson, 2002*
Corgi Children's, ISBN: 978-0552547963 (Also on audiocassette)

April was abandoned in a dustbin as a baby on the 1st April. Having spent all her life in a children's home and with different foster parents (one of whom committed suicide), things haven't been easy and April is struggling. Now she's fourteen and on her birthday, determined to find out more about her past, sets off to find some important people. This is an emotive book with a great storyline in usual Jacqueline Wilson style. It is open and honest.

Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love *By Earl A. Grollman, 1999 Sagebrush Ed Resources, ISBN: 978-0807025017*

This book was written after the author spoke to thousands of teenagers and found they often felt forgotten after someone has died. Written in short, clear sentences that are easy to read, it covers feelings, different types of death and the future. This book gives the reader many options of what can happen, how s/he may feel, giving advice and reassuring readers grief is normal.

The Charlie Barber Treatment *By Carole Lloyd, 1997* Walker Books Ltd; New Edition, *ISBN: 978-0744554571*

Simon's Mum died suddenly from a brain haemorrhage and he came home from school to find she had died. With his GCSE coursework piling up and having to help around the house, Simon finds it hard and doesn't go out much with his friends. He then meets Charlie, who is visiting her Grandma, and believes their meeting was fate. Simon starts to enjoy life again and to re-build relationships with his family and friends. A sensitive and realistic book that conveys some of the thoughts and emotions of a teenage boy.

The Lost Boys' Appreciation Society *By Alan Gibbons, 2004 Orion Children's Books, ISBN: 978-1842550953*

Teenage life is difficult enough for Gary and John, but when their Mum dies in a car accident, things get steadily worse. John struggles to keep the peace as Gary goes off the rails, saying his new mates are now his family. With GCSE exams looming and his Dad going out on dates, things become unbearable for John. A gripping book exploring relationships and how different people react to life events.

The Man who didn't want to die: From The Barefoot Book of Buddhist Tales *Retold by Sherab Chodzin & Alexandra Kohn Illustrated by Marie Cameron, 1999 Barefoot Books, ISBN: 1841480096*

This short story is based on a Japanese folk tale and approaches death from an unusual angle. When a man decides he doesn't want to die, he is sent to the Land of Never-ending Life and expects to meet the happiest people in the world. However, the realities of living forever are not as attractive as he thought and he consequently learns an important lesson. This story is very thought provoking and could lead to some interesting discussions.

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Before I Die

By Jenny Downham David Fickling Books
ISBN: 978-0385613460

With only months left to live, 16-year-old Tessa makes a list of things she must experience: sex, petty crime, fame, drugs and true love. Downham's wrenching work features a girl desperate for a few thrilling moments before leukaemia takes her away. Although Tessa remains ardently committed to her list, both she and the reader find comfort in the quiet resonance of the natural world. Tessa's soul mate, Adam, gardens next door; a bird benignly rots in grass; psychedelic mushrooms provide escape; an apple tree brings comfort; and her best friend, Zoey, ripens in the final months of pregnancy.

The Spying Game

By Pat Moon, 2003 Politico's Publishing Ltd; Rev. Ed Edition, ISBN: 978-1842750049

Joe's dad died in a car accident and he feels really angry towards the man who killed his father. He decides to set up a secret 'Nightmare Plan' to vent his anger and begins to persecute the man and his family by scratching his car and sending hate mail. This powerful book reveals the difficult emotions Joe faces both at home and at school. A very readable and fast paced book that would appeal to many young people.

Two Weeks with the Queen

By Morris Gleitzman & illustrated by Andy Bacha, 1999
Puffin Books, ISBN: 978-0141303000

Twelve-year-old Colin, an Australian boy, is sent to stay with relatives in England when his brother becomes ill with cancer. He is determined to find a way of curing his brother, which leads him into all sorts of adventures including trying to visit the Queen! Colin finds a friend in an older man named Ted who helps him express his feelings and understand what he has to do. (Also on audiocassette.)

Up on Cloud Nine

By Anne Fine, 2006
Corgi Children's, ISBN: 978-0552554657

Stol falls out of a top floor window and ends up unconscious in hospital with lots of broken bones and no-one knows whether it was attempted suicide or an accident. This book is written from the perspective of his best friend Ian whilst he is sitting by his bedside. He recalls all the fun times they have had together as well as acknowledging the slightly different way Stol sees the world. Ian captures the emotions of his own adoptive parents as well as Stol's family and the hospital staff in an amusing yet moving way illustrating how Stol has had an inspirational effect on everyone. (Also available in audiocassette)

Vicky Angel

By Jacqueline Wilson & illustrated by Nick Sharratt, 2001
Corgi Children's, ISBN: 978-0440865896

When Jade's best friend Vicky, is run over by a car and dies in hospital everyone at home and school starts treating her differently. 'Vicky Angel' then starts following Jade around, distracting her and getting her into trouble. This moving but amusing story illustrates how hard it is to carry on with every day life after a tragic accident. (Also available in audiocassette)

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Ostrich Boys *By Keith Gray*
Definitions 2008, ISBN: 978-0099456575

It's not really kidnapping, is it? He'd have to be alive for it to be proper kidnapping.' Kenny, Sim and Blake are about to embark on a remarkable journey of friendship. Stealing the urn containing the ashes of their best friend Ross, they set out from Cleethorpes on the east coast to travel the 261 miles to the tiny hamlet of Ross in Dumfries and Galloway. After a depressing and dispiriting funeral they feel taking Ross to Ross will be a fitting memorial for a 15 year-old boy who changed all their lives through his friendship. Little do they realise just how much Ross can still affect life for them even though he's now dead. Drawing on personal experience Keith Gray has written an extraordinary novel about friendship, loss and suicide, and about the good things that may be waiting just out of sight around the corner...

Broken Soup *By Jenny Valentine HarperCollins Children's Books 2008*
ISBN: 978-0007229659

When the good-looking boy with the American accent presses the dropped negative into Rowan's hand, she's sure it's all a big mistake. But next moment he's gone, lost in the crowd of bustling shoppers. And she can't afford to lose her place in the checkout queue -- after all, if she doesn't take the groceries home, nobody else will. Rowan has more responsibilities than most girls her age. These days, she pretty much looks after her little sister single-handedly -- which doesn't leave much time for friends or fun. So when she finds out that Bee from school saw the whole thing, it piques her curiosity. Who was the boy? Why was he so insistent that the negative belonged to Rowan?

OTHER HELPFUL BOOKS (NOT DIRECTLY ABOUT DEATH)

There are a number of books that do not directly deal with death or bereavement but may help the reader face difficult feelings.

Angry Arthur *By Hiawyn Oram & illustrated by Satoshi Kitamura, 1993*
Red Fox, ISBN: 978-0099196617

Its time for bed but Arthur wants to stay up so he gets really angry. Every time someone tells him 'that's enough' his anger gets bigger and bigger and takes over the world until he wonders why he was so angry in the first place. A wonderful imaginative story that many children (and adults) will be able to relate to.

No Matter What *By Debi Gliori, 2003 New Edition (Paperback)*
Bloomsbury Children's Books, ISBN: 978-0747563310

A rhyming story with large, bright pictures about Small, a young fox who is feeling cross because no one loves him. Large, then reassures him that she'll love him no matter what. A fun and imaginative book that only briefly talks about death but would be a useful story to help support a young child through difficult times.

Nothing *By Mick Inkpen, New Edition 2006*
Hodder Children's Books, ISBN: 978-0340918166

A 'little thing' has been stuck in the attic for so long, he has even forgotten its name. When the owners move house and leave him behind, he sets off on an adventure to discover who he really is. A lovely book about families and the feeling that you belong. It could be used in many situations, particularly with a child who is feeling unsettled.

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Nothing Scares Us — *By Frieda Wishinsky & illustrated by Neal Layton, 2001*
Bloomsbury Children's Books, ISBN: 978-0747550433

Lucy and Lenny are the 'fearless two', best friends who have all sorts of adventures. Lenny then starts watching a scary programme on TV, which gives Lucy nightmares and she dare not tell Lenny in case he laughs at her. With bright colourful pictures, this fun book is a comforting story about friendship and adventure.

Something Else — *By Kathryn Cave & illustrated by Chris Riddell, 1995*
Puffin Books, ISBN: 978-0140549072

Something Else doesn't belong and has no one to be friends with, until one day Nothing knocks at his door and although they seem very different, they get along and become friends. These unusual looking characters capture the feelings of young people in a sensitive and fun way. A lovely book that could reassure children who feel unsettled within their peer group.

Supposing — *By Frances Thomas & illustrated by Ross Collins, 1999*
Bloomsbury Children's Books, ISBN: 978-0747541738

Little Monster starts telling his mother a wonderfully imaginative but scary story about what might happen tomorrow. Mother then gives him an alternative, happier story and takes away his fears. This story is reassuring as well as fun and imaginative.

The Huge Bag of Worries — *By Virginia Ironside & illustrated by Frank Rodgers, 1996*
Hodder Wayland, ISBN: 978-0340903179

Jenny begins to worry about lots of different things and these worries build up and get out of control. She just can't get rid of them, until she meets the old lady next door who helps her feel better. A lovely story with fun illustrations encourages children to talk about their worries.

Five Minutes' Peace (The Large Family) — *By Jill Murphy, 2001 New Edition*
Walker Books, ISBN: 978-0744581195

This humorous book with lovely detailed pictures tells the story of Mrs Large who is desperate for five minutes peace from her three children, but it is harder to find than she expects! A lovely book that can be enjoyed by both adults and children and may help to explain that every so often, grown-ups need time to themselves.

There's No Such Thing as a Dragon — *By Jack Kent Happy Cat Books*
ISBN: 978-1899248957

Billy wakes up to find a tiny dragon in his bedroom. His mother insists that there is no such thing as a dragon but the dragon gets bigger and bigger until it fills the whole house. When the family finally acknowledge that the dragon exists, it returns to its normal size. This colourful picture book is a useful tool to use with children to talk about difficult feelings and other issues that can increase when they are ignored.

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There are also many books where death is not the main focus of the story but features bereavement or the main character has been bereaved. These include:

A Little Princess	*By Frances Hodgson Burnett & illustrated by Tasha Wordsworth Editions Ltd; New Edition ISBN: 978-1853261367*
Bambi	*By Felix Salten,* Aladdin Paperbacks; Reprint Edition (Jul 1988) *ISBN: 978-0671666071*
Charlotte's Web	*By E. B. White & illustrated by Garth Williams Puffin Books (2003), ISBN: 978-0141317342*
Danny the Champion of the World	*By Roald Dahl & illustrated by Quentin Blake Puffin Books (2007), ISBN: 978-0141322674*
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	*By J. K. Rowling Bloomsbury Children's Books ISBN: 978-0747532743*
James and the Giant Peach	*By Roald Dahl & illustrated by Quentin Blake Puffin Books (2001), ISBN: 978-0141311357*
Little Women	*By Louisa May Alcott,* CRW Publishing Limited; New edition (2004) *ISBN: 978-1587261329*
Oliver Twist	*By Charles Dickens, Penguin Books (2003), ISBN: 978-0141439747*
The Secret Garden	*By Frances Hodgson Burnett,* Wordsworth Editions Ltd *(1993), ISBN: 978-1853261046*

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