MY MOMMY DIED, IS THERE A BOOK ABOUT ME?:
DEATH AND DYING IN CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS, 2000 - 2006

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ABSTRACT

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Death and dying are experiences that all children will face or are currently facing. Children bring the results of those experiences with them into the classroom. Teachers are then placed in a situation in which they must handle this issue. Therefore, a way to help these bereaved children in the classroom is needed for the best possible learning to occur. One way that teachers can help is through a process similar to that of bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy is an approach that uses children’s literature to help children come to positive resolutions by engaging in the same issues in which the characters in the book take part.

The purpose of this study was to analyze 35 children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006 to determine how death and dying were portrayed. After carefully reading and analyzing each book, a matrix of 10 characteristics was developed. Data were then gathered through a content analysis of each book. From this content analysis the main categories were determined within each characteristic.

From this study, it was concluded that the 35 books would be appropriate to use in a primary grade classroom. These books could be used by K-3 teachers in a bibliotherapy-like approach to help bereaved children in their classroom, or as tools to help children better understand death and dying. As a result of this study, a matrix of characteristics and book summaries were developed from the 35 books used.

The matrix of characteristics and the book summaries can be used as resources for teachers, parents, school personnel, children’s book authors and educational researchers who would like more information about the characteristics of children’s picture books about death and dying to use these books with children or for further research.
To my mother, Deborah Nowak
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout life I have had many first hand experiences with the power of books and unfortunately with the pain of losing loved ones. I have seen how books can bring tears to the eyes of those who rarely cry and new ideas to those who many would say don’t think much. Books can inspire, ease pain and evoke happiness. Therefore, bibliotherapy seemed like a natural idea for me explore. I am thankful for my experiences through which God has made me strong and given me passion for helping children.

I thank my thesis chair, Dr. Tim Murnen, for his insight, patience and persistence throughout the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Craig Mertler and Dr. Dodi Hodges for their suggestions and time towards this thesis.

I am ever grateful and thankful to my fiancée, Benjamin Geddis, for encouraging me to keep going, even when times are hard, and for his endless love and devotion to me and my dreams.

Above all, I thank Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, for saving me, redeeming me, and for giving me the strength to live my daily life. Without Him I would not be here today.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, death and dying are experiences that affect people of all ages, including children. An estimated 3.5% of youth in the United States under age 18 have experienced the death of a parent (Social Security Administration, 2000). The number of direct experiences with death would be much higher if the statistics included grandparents, siblings, friends, etc. Although death is an unavoidable experience of life, that does not mean that children should have to go through the experience alone. In fact, statistics show that death, especially parental death, places children at risk for multiple mental health and social adjustment problems (Sandler, Ayers, Wolchik, Tein, Kwok & Haine, 2003) when they do not have strong support systems in place for guidance and comfort. Children are not only affected by death when a loved one dies, but when they see death on television, in movies, through the stories of their friends, etc. These encounters with death also call for a support system to be in place.

Families are the most important system of support in the lives of children. However, teachers take on an important role in the emotional support circle for children in the classroom, especially for bereaved children, because they spend a great deal of time with their students. Teachers are also frequently the knowledgeable adults in the lives of children who are curious about death and are asking many difficult questions. Teachers may not know how to begin answering these questions or discuss these difficult issues with children. One possible solution to this problem may be the use of children’s picture books that deal with death and dying. This process of using books to educate young children about difficult issues while allowing them to express their feelings on the issue is grounded in the principles and methods of bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy, and similar book readings in the classroom setting, can lay the groundwork for helping children to better understand their ideas, death, dying and the grieving process.
Statement of the Problem

Bereavement in children varies depending on the family’s modeling and support of emotional expression, religious and cultural beliefs, and mourning rituals, as well as the child’s own cognitive expressive style (Cohen & Mannarino, 2004). When children do not have a good understanding of emotional expression or knowledge about death and dying before it occurs, they are at risk of developing mental health problems from unresolved traumatic experiences. Because children of primary and secondary school age (5-18 years) spend a large part of their day with individual teachers, school may begin to be viewed as a secure “second family” (Holland, 1993). Therefore, these “second family” teachers become partly responsible for the death education of each student in their classroom. To educate children correctly and appropriately, teachers need to know what resources are available and what is developmentally appropriate.

Research Question

Probably all primary grade teachers (K-3) will encounter various children throughout their career who have experienced the death of a loved one or have questions about death and dying. Therefore, teachers will need to know how to respond to questioning and help children through the grieving process. One way to do this is through reading picture books using methods grounded in the techniques of bibliotherapy. To use picture books effectively, teachers must select books that are appropriate for the students in their classrooms. Because teachers need this knowledge of books to effectively help children, the question addressed in this study was: How are death and dying portrayed in children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006? This study also addressed how these books can be used in the classroom by seeking to answer the question: How can teachers use books about death and dying in the classroom to address the
needs of children suffering from the loss of a loved one or answer questions that other children might have?

Justification

There are various reasons that a content analysis of children’s picture books about death and dying is a justifiable research study. The first reason is that death is inevitable. Children must learn that death is a natural phenomenon; every living thing eventually dies. Children who feel that significant individuals are immortal and would not die for any reason are likely to view death as a punishment from God or another higher power for the bad behavior of the deceased person or for their own behavior or thoughts. This feeling of punishment can lead to excessive guilt and shame that makes adjustment to the new life that the child must now live very difficult (Schonfeld, 1992). Determining what characteristics are present in these stories will help teachers choose books that will offer young children realistic depictions of death, dying and the grieving process that are suitable for their developmental level of understanding. It is important to find out what examples of loss and grief authors present to children and what suggestions they make about coping with loss and grief (Corr, 2004). Teachers most likely do not have the time to read every book they can find about death and dying to assess if the content is appropriate for their class of students. If used correctly, a list of children’s picture books about death and dying could be a very beneficial tool. This list would be especially beneficial for teachers who are new to using books to discuss difficult issues in the classroom because they may not know where to begin. Berns (2004) says that each book must be read and re-read by the adult (teacher) for appropriateness in content and theme before it is used with children. Teachers could begin their search for appropriate books to read by utilizing a list that presents the characteristics of various books in an easily readable format. This would allow teachers to spend more time planning the
lessons about death and dying and less time reading and re-reading several books that might not be suitable for the students in their classroom or a specific situation that is going to be discussed.

Definition of Terms

Terms that are valuable to the understanding of this study are defined in this section.

**Bereavement**: Bereavement refers to the state of having lost a loved one, regardless of the emotional reaction to that loss (Strobe, Hansson, Strobe, & Schut, 2001). Bereavement is the internal process of having lost a significant person (Steen, 1998).

**Grief**: Grief refers to the person’s reaction to the loss (Strobe, Hansson, Strobe, & Schut, 2001).

**Bibliotherapy**: Bibliotherapy is defined as a process or activity designed to help individuals solve problems or better understand themselves through their response to literature or media (Bodart, 1980).

**Catharsis**: Catharsis is purification or purgation of emotions primarily through art that may bring about renewal or release from tension or an elimination of a behavior by bringing it to consciousness (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2006).

**Content Analysis**: Content Analysis is a highly flexible research method that is a systematic, rigorous approach to analyzing documents obtained for research (White & Marsh, 2006). Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology section.

Limitations

Although this study looks at a substantial number of children’s picture books about death and dying, this group of books does not include every picture book about death and dying. The
books in this study were limited to those published between 2000 and 2006 and were only collected from two libraries in Bowling Green, Ohio. Furthermore, this study does not address whether or not teachers are actually already using picture books in the classroom to discuss death and dying. This research was done to gather information on the portrayal of death and dying in children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006 and to compile a chart, which teachers can use to help them select appropriate books for use in the classroom.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature containing information or statistics about the current use of children’s picture books about death and dying in the classroom was extremely limited. This topic has either not been vastly studied or picture books of this type are not being used by classroom teachers who are writing about their use, or perhaps both are true. Although data were limited about the actual use of picture books about death and dying, there is a vast array of literature about death and dying itself. This literature discusses the frequency of death and dying within children’s experiences, the grieving process, and techniques that may help a child grieve more productively. This chapter begins with a discussion of the relevance of death and dying in the lives of children today and to what extent they understand what death really is and how they grieve. The teacher’s role in helping children through the coping process and how books can be used to address this issue were examined. One of the techniques that can be modified for classroom use of picture books is bibliotherapy, which pertains to how children’s picture books can be utilized within the classroom to further understanding and provide a clear picture of death and to help children who are in the grieving process.

How Children Are Affected by Death and Dying

It seems that every day on the evening news there are reports of death. These deaths are probably not thought about by most viewers or by the news staff as affecting the lives of the children involved as greatly as they do. In reality people die each day leaving behind children who are rarely the subject of anyone’s attention. An estimated 3.5% of youth in the United States under age 18 have experienced the death of a parent (Social Security Administration, 2000). The number of direct experiences would be much higher if the statistics included grandparents, siblings, friends, etc. Bowen (1966) states that the death of a grandparent is likely to be one of
the first experiences, or even the first experience, a child has of a death in the family, and this experience will undoubtedly be followed by others.

The death of an important person in a child’s life is one of the most stressful events a child can experience (Preboth, 2000). Children do not sit idly by while adults experience the deaths in the world around them. Children experience grief, sadness, and despair following the death of a loved one, specifically the death of a parent (Dowdney, 2000). Black (1998) states that by the age of five, many children can understand the difference between a temporary separation and the death of a loved one. A study by Siegel, Mesagno, Karus, Christ, Banks and Moynihan (1992) reported that children (7 to 17 years) whose parents were in the terminal stages of illness displayed significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety than other children in the community. Death and dying affect children differently based on numerous factors including age, sex, mental health, and other family factors. One prominent factor affecting how children react to death is the age of the child when the death occurs, which has a differential impact from one situation to another. For example, a mother’s death will result in more extensive changes in care taking routines for younger children than for adolescents. Further, the child’s level of emotional and cognitive development will influence both his/her understanding of death and responses to death (Lansdown & Benjamin, 1985). The effects of death on young children can be extremely detrimental to their quality of living. Kranzler, Shaffer, Wasserman and Davis (1990) stated that young children are reported to show separation anxiety, dependency, night-time fears, and widespread disturbance after the death of a loved one.

Younger children may not be able to verbalize their feelings about the death in their family. They may hold back their feelings, and appear to be unaffected. It is more common for them to express their feelings through their behavior and play (Geis, Whittlesey, McDonald,
Smith, & Pfefferbaum, 1998). The clinical literature suggests that attending their parent’s (or another loved one’s) funeral can begin to facilitate an appropriate grieving process in the bereaved child (Raphael, 1982). However, this funeral attendance may not be enough in all cases, because children do not understand death well enough to grieve in a way that will lead to acceptance. This same literature, based on the same study, also suggests that if other members of the family are extremely disturbed during the mourning process then the funeral attendance will be less likely to have positive effects (Raphael). Other important factors must be engaged to enable children to reach healthy acceptance and the ability to use positive coping skills after the funeral has taken place. Therefore, adults must provide them with accurate information to further the grieving process in an appropriate way. Conversation and experiences seeing successful grieving processes were consistently the two best predictors of accurate death concepts in a study done by Cotton and Range (1990). The conversations in the study were the most beneficial to the children involved because they were able to ask questions, talk openly, express fears and receive answers from a caring adult. Conversations about the experience can begin with young children through the use of a high quality picture book about death and dying read to them by a caring adult whom they trust.

Children’s Level of Understanding, Stages of Grief and Coping

It is important to discuss the stages that most children experience as they seek understanding after the death of a loved one because children who experience the death of a loved one go through a complex grieving process. It is also important to talk specifically how children grieve because their grieving process differs from that of an adult (Willis, 2002). The grief of children usually happens in a cyclical manner, and the stages of grief can overlap, while adult grief typically progresses from one stage to another over time. Although the adult stages of
grief are more linear, the stages may overlap. Children may revisit feelings and behaviors that they have previously experienced related to the death of a loved one. These feelings and behaviors are often unacceptable to the adults that are in the life of the bereaved child (McGlaufin, 1990). These unacceptable behaviors may include, but are not limited to, biting, bed wetting, hitting, and withdrawing from social interactions. Unacceptable feelings may include, wanting to be alone, being fearful, and many others. Children most likely do not have an internal support system, like adults have commonly developed, to gain some form of closure after the death takes place. This lack of internal support may also contribute to a revisiting of feeling and behaviors as they grow and develop (Christian, 1997).

Although many of the feelings and emotions that children and adults express after a loved one dies can be defined by the same stages of grief, these stages can be experienced differently by children because they are often repeated as the child develops and frequently overlap. The six stages of grief, as defined by Parkes (1986) in 1972, are alarm, searching, mitigation, anger, guilt, and a new identity. These stages can apply to both children and adults but in a different ways. Understanding Parkes’ six stages of grief can help those who work with the bereaved to better facilitate an effective grieving process (Carrington & Bogetz, 2004).

The first stage of grief as defined by Parkes (1986) is alarm. Alarm is characterized by the feeling of having lost a secure feeling or safe haven, and the security of the bereaved person seems threatened. In the stage of alarm, a bereaved person usually feels restless, scared, anxious, irritable and panicky. These feelings are often accompanied by the loss appetite, difficulty in sleeping, digestive disturbances, heart palpitations, headaches, muscular aches and other pains. During this stage of grief, children’s learning capacity falls off and individuals may find themselves unable to cope with the situation because they feel completely overwhelmed by it.
Children who are in the alarm stage of grief may panic and behave in a disorganized and fragmented manner. It is during this stage that children might say something like “Grandma is not dead” or “Why did grandma have to die?” or they may completely withdraw from the situation. For children to cope in the stage of alarm, caring adults must work to recreate a place where the child can feel safe, secure and loved.

The next stage of grief that Parkes (1986) discusses is searching. Searching is characterized by what Parkes calls “pangs” of grief. These “pangs” are episodes of severe anxiety and psychological pain. During this time the deceased person is greatly missed and the bereaved person sobs or cries aloud for them. During this searching, these “pangs” usually occur very frequently soon after the death and continue with less frequency over time that varies depending on how the bereaved person copes. During the searching stage the bereaved person may experience deep sighing, restless but aimless hyperactivity, difficulty in concentrating on anything but the loss, ruminations around the events leading up to and following the death, and loss of interest in people or things that they once cared for. During this stage the bereaved person is continually searching for the lost loved one while feeling lost themself. Children during this stage might do all they can to try to recover their lost loved one. This usually includes going to places that the deceased person used to frequently be found, calling for the lost loved one, and looking closely at objects that resemble the lost person. These activities are often accompanied by becoming hostile, withdrawing, rejecting other loved ones and crying. Nighttime can be a particularly difficult time during the searching stage because the bereaved child feels even more alone and the memories of the lost person preoccupy the mind and long periods of crying may take place (Parkes).
Mitigation is described by Parkes (1986) as a brief end to the searching for the deceased loved one. During this stage the bereaved person may feel that the deceased person is near or at hand without actually perceiving them. This stage may also be filled with vivid dreams of the deceased person. Parkes states that a certain “willing suspension of disbelief” is necessary in adults to allow such pretences to succeed, but children might not be able to willingly tell the difference between the real and the imagined. In some cases the bereaved person may experience hallucinations or illusions of the deceased loved one. Parkes explains that these “sighting” are a way that the bereaved person finds the one that they have been searching for. Another characteristic of the mitigation stage is the avoidance of the belief that the death occurred. This is commonly seen in children who do not yet understand the permanence of death. During this stage children might feel that they are in another life and in a different part of life the deceased loved one is alive and well. Mitigation can also include a more extreme response to the death of a loved one. This response includes avoiding all thoughts, activities and people that remind the bereaved person of the loved one. This is often done through filling his/her life with new activities, avoiding all people that might be sympathetic, hiding or getting rid of things that are reminders of the deceased, moving away, and keeping his/her mind constantly on other things. These attempts to hide from reality most often lead the person back to the overwhelming loss and beginning to grieve again. The mitigation stage can be described as an effort on the part of the bereaved person to keep the memory of the deceased person alive. Children and adults are both likely to experience mitigation in a similar way, but children are more likely to revisit this stage of grief.

Parkes (1986) describes anger and guilt together because anger is often times not only directed towards the deceased: the bereaved person is often angry at him or herself, leading to
guilt. The stage of anger is characterized by general irritability and bitterness that are associated with a feeling that the world has become an insecure or dangerous place. Anger is associated with restlessness, tension and feeling physically unwell. During the stage of anger, children are often aggressive because they do not usually suppress their anger as adults can. The bereaved child who is experiencing anger is easily upset and may act with hostility towards anyone who mentions the deceased loved one. Anger may also come from the feeling that no one else understands what they are going through. Anger towards the deceased person is common in both adults and children, but children may experience anger for a longer period of time. They are often upset because they were left alone or behind. God and doctors are often the object of angry criticism because they are both seen as having power over life and death. Seeking someone to blame is often associated with going over memories of the events leading up to the death. While thinking about these memories, the bereaved person often feels guilty for things left unsaid and undone. Regret at the failure to satisfy the expectations of the deceased person also lead to guilt. For example, children might think that if they would have cleaned their room more often their mother might not have left home angry and she would have never gotten into the car accident.

Anger and guilt are very common responses to death because they offer the bereaved person an opportunity to blame the loss on something rather than accepting that life is uncertain.

The last stage of grief that Parkes (1986) describes is new identity. Gaining a new identity is characterized by feeling that the deceased person has somehow become a part of the bereaved or shaped them in some way. Each characteristic of a person defines them as similar to or different from other human beings. Bereaved people begin to realize that they have taken on many of the characteristics of the deceased or that who they used to be is no longer who they have become because of the changes in how they view themselves as a result of their loss.
Bereaved children might feel that they must now live the life that the deceased person would want them to live and accomplish things that the deceased person would have liked to accomplish. A new identity comes when the bereaved person feels that he or she can go on living and overcoming obstacles without the person that they lost. A very difficult step in gaining a new identity is giving up the old. For example, a young girl visits her grandmother every Saturday. As they walk through the park the little girl helps her grandmother walk as the grandmother tells her stories about the past and interesting facts about the world around them. After the grandmother dies the girl feels that her one purpose was taken away. If the girl continues to see her identity as one who takes care of her grandmother, and now is useless, then she has not gained a new identity from her grieving experience. This new identity comes when the girl realizes that her grandmother would have wanted her to take care of herself and accomplish all the things that they had discussed on their walks. The girl’s new identity is one in which she wants to use the knowledge and wisdom that her grandmother instilled in her to her best ability. Bereaved people gain a new identity when they are willing to accept that they are no longer who they once were and move on in the life that they now have.

To what extent these stages are experienced differs from child to child and from situation to situation. Numerous factors affect what stages of grieving children will experience when a loved one dies. When children are left on their own to grieve, they will likely resort to negative coping strategies such as regression, repression, denial and displacement as described by Aldwin (1994). Children may not have the skills they need to progress through the stages of grief to find a new identity using positive coping skills. Bowlby (1980) suggests that children need to see positive coping strategies modeled before they can implement them in their own lives.
The abilities to effectively cope, adapt and grieve have been shown to be related to cognitive development and to differ with age (Krell & Sherman, 1997). Willis (2002) described the way that five-and-six-year-olds typically grieve. She noted that the understanding of a child at this age may still be one of a belief that the person will return because the child does not have a strong understanding of the permanence of death. At this age, children may begin to talk about life after death and what that might be like for their loved one. Five-and-six-year-olds may also respond to the questioning of others with untrue answers because they do not know how to discuss the topic. Children who are older than six years old (seven to nine years) are able to accept death as a permanent condition, but may still have a hard time understanding that death happens to all living things and will eventually happen to them. They may also struggle deeply with the question of why death had to happen to their love one, as Parkes (1986) describes in the alarm stage of grief.

Children from the ages of five to nine years may also experience extreme guilt when a sibling or parent dies, especially if they had ever wished for that person to go away, to die, or even if they had been upset with deceased person before he/she died. This guilt may also occur because of things left unsaid to the loved one (Kubler-Ross, 1983). If the children are never told that the death of their loved one was not caused by their thoughts or actions they could experience serious emotional problems and a regression in behavior (Willis, 2002). Children may express their anxiety, pain, and guilt through angry outbursts, becoming withdrawn or depressed, and they may even develop unpleasant physical reactions along with the emotional issues (Clements & Burgess, 2002). When children cope on their own they most often use coping strategies that negatively affect their lives and well being (Aldwin, 1994). These coping styles include regression, repression, denial, and displacement (Aldwin). Lacking personal maturity,
children often mirror the type of positive effective coping or communication styles modeled by adults who are close to them (Bowlby, 1980).

How the Classroom is Affected by Death and Dying

It seems that very few elementary school teachers deal with the subject of death and dying in any planned manner in their classes (Schonfeld, 1992). Frequently, well-meaning adults tend not to address the issues that arise as a result of the experiences with death that most children have had by the time they are school-aged. Death may not be dealt with in the classroom because (a) the topic is not specifically addressed in the school curriculum, (b) death education is not in a teacher’s job description, (c) or teachers may feel inadequately trained to attend to such an issue. Avoiding the subject in school and at home only creates more mystery and fear (Stuber, 2001). Rowling and Holland (2000) asserted that society has expectations of schools beyond those of academic achievement even if discussion of these topics is not explicitly listed in the academic content standards. The role of teachers in the classroom and community is no longer limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is now teachers’ responsibility to talk with and educate students about topics that they face on a daily basis.

Teachers can help prepare children for later losses and help those already grieving by teaching them accurate information about death and by fostering connections to their own lives (Schonfeld & Kappelman, 1992). An explanation regarding death from a schoolteacher is useful for children (Stuber, 2001). Teachers may not consider reading about and discussing death and dying as a part of their job, but this is something that must be done in the classroom because teachers are often one of the few adults who are in a position to discuss this important topic with children. When parents or guardians do discuss death with their children, these discussions often come at a time of tragedy when they may not be able to explain the situation or answer children’s
questions appropriately. Discussing death and dying before it takes place in the lives of children can help to prepare them for the losses that they will surely encounter and ensure that they will have some positive coping skills.

A teacher may also be a very important adult in the lives of children who are beginning to grieve. If the death of a loved one is not discussed and the children are not supported, various negative effects can occur such as nightmares, and they can develop serious emotional problems such as depression (Kirwin & Hamrin, 2005). Coping mechanisms frequently used by young children include regression (gradual loss of memories and acquired skills), repression (distressing thoughts, memories, or impulses that may give rise to anxiety are excluded from consciousness), denial (refusal to admit the truth or reality), and displacement (the redirection of an emotion or impulse from its original object) (Aldwin, 1994). These emotional problems and negative coping skills not only affect the family function, but have an impact on the classroom. The classroom is impacted when peers treat bereaved children differently because their loss makes them different than the rest of the class and usually changes how they act in the classroom. These students can also develop school related problems resulting from a decrease in the ability to concentrate because they frequently focus on thoughts of the deceased (Geis et al., 1998).

Harvey and Chavis (2006) define loss as the absence of something or someone important within one’s universe creating fear, anxiety, and many other grief reactions. These fears, anxiety and reactions will undoubtedly affect the student’s performance in the classroom. Therefore, teachers are placed into a situation in which they must deal with behaviors, concentration problems and various other issues as a result of the student’s loss. These issues transform the classroom environment and the lives of the children within. Discussion of difficult issues,
including death and dying, should be seen as important to the success of all children by the classroom teacher.

**Six Strategies for Helping Children Effectively Cope with Death**

With the knowledge that death education is important for all young children, and knowing that death is a very common experience for children of all ages, teachers should seek out strategies to help them educated children about death and to help them through the grieving process. Children in the primary grades may still be very egocentric and unable to see things from another perspective or may still be developing this skill. Piaget would argue that they cannot yet contemplate or solve abstract problems, and that they are not yet able to consider all of the logically possible outcomes (Garmston & Wellman, 1994). Therefore, strategies to help children see death as it really is and understand the possible outcomes from the death situation are very important. Research presents numerous strategies for helping children grieve and effectively cope with death. Six of the various strategies found could be easily implemented in a classroom setting.

Johnson (1999) suggests six ways that parents and teachers can help children (ages 6-9) cope with and better understand death. The first thing a caring adult can do is ask the child what he/she understands already about death and secondly what questions he/she might have. Working from these questions, adults gain a better understanding of what information the child is seeking. Thirdly, being truthful with a child is very important because he/she will not find out later that a “caring adult” lied to him/her. Honesty includes using words like “dead” and “died”; “sleep” and other indistinct terms can make the death seem impermanent and more confusing. Fourth, explain that other children feel and have felt the same way. Fifth, adults should let the child know that he/she did not cause the death, and sixth adults should openly talk about fears that they
might have. These things might be hard to do in the typical classroom setting, but through the use of literature all of these points can be addressed in a safe and caring setting.

Teachers’ Role in Effective Coping and Grieving

Teachers have the opportunity to be a great resource to children on the topic of death and dying. Theoretical models of stress and resilience propose that individual and family resources may decrease the occurrence of numerous mental health problems in young children experiencing death (Sandler & Ayers, 2003). Parents are often times too emotionally affected by the death of a loved one to properly explain death to their children and help them grieve. Because families may not be in a position or state of mind to obtain and use appropriate resources about death and dying, the classroom teacher is often the only other caring adult in the child’s life that has access to these resources and knows how to and has experience using them.

The rationale for teaching about death and dying is simple: death is a part of life. The person who cannot grieve is crippled emotionally, unable to experience and benefit from the full range of human emotions (Plath, 1972). Therefore, teachers may play a very important part in the child’s grieving process and in his/her understanding of death itself. Roberts (1981) says that it is normal for children to show curiosity about death; it also seems natural for parents to ignore their questions to spare them from the pain. As children internalize their parents’ avoidance behaviors, they learn to “be strong” and deny their anguish. Unfortunately, these culturally acceptable responses are not healthy.

Talking about death, through the use of children’s picture books, can help children release emotions that they may be holding inside and it may help them to move on in the process of grieving towards reaching acceptance and remembering the deceased person in an appropriate way (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1984). Adults may not be able to answer every question, but they can
give children a foundation upon which to build their understanding of death and further the grieving process in a healthy way. Through discussing the relationships, struggles, coping skills and resolutions of the characters in children’s picture books about death and dying teachers can address these issues. These book readings and discussions can be implemented in a way that is similar to a process called bibliotherapy, which is most frequently used in clinical settings (Timmerman, Martin & Martin, 1989). By adapting this process, many of the steps can be used in a classroom setting.

Berns (2004) states that not to educate ourselves and our children about our relationship with death means not educating ourselves and our children about life. In fact, it is dangerous to fail to educate about life and death because death and loss profoundly affect the quality of our life right now, both before and after we have become bereaved. The best preparation for bereavement is death education. Teachers have taken the responsibility to educate young people about thousands of topics. Death and dying should be included if children are to be provided with the best education available.

Bibliotherapy Defined and Reasons to Base the Use of Books on its Principles

Bibliotherapy is an interactive process whose goal is the understanding and expressing of the self, utilizing the story as a vehicle to achieve that end because children may be more inclined to share through a third person or storybook character (Berns, 2004). This process can be adapted to use in a primary classroom setting. Many teachers already promote a similar process in their classroom about various topics, but these topics tend not to include something as sensitive as death and dying. Teachers often use books to discuss bullying behaviors on the playground, natural disasters that occur around the world and various other topics (Entenman, 2003). Feeling and emotions about these topics are explored in the classroom through question
and answer sessions during the reading of books, facilitating conversations that take place after
the book has been read, and implementing activities to help those affected by the topic read
about. Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) state that books can be a useful tool in treating behavioral
and emotional problems that children experience. These same strategies can be used to further
children’s understanding about death and dying and help emotional difficulties. Teachers have
the opportunity to be an advocate for children to express feelings about death so that they can
begin healing and have a sense of hope for the future. This process of understanding can often
begin through the use of books with grieving children or others because they will someday
grieve. Teachers can read these books with a small select group of students or with the entire
class. Books open a door to feelings that children may have never experienced before. Berns
states that this may be their first encounter with loss and grief, because they may not understand
what is happening as adults do, because they may not be able to communicate their questions and
reactions in ways that adults can easily grasp, and because their life experiences may not yet
have equipped them to cope with loss and grief in constructive ways. Bibliotherapy can be
defined as a process or activity designed to help individuals solve problems or better understand
themselves through their responses to literature or media (Bodart, 1980). Because children often
feel alone in the time of grief, stories can help them understand that others have experienced pain
similar to theirs and have been able to move on with life without forgetting their loved one.

Timmerman, Martin and Martin (1989) recognized that bibliotherapy-like methods are
helpful to children in three primary ways:

1. Through identification, the child comes to identify with a book’s characters and
events, whether they are real or fictional. The teacher should select a book with a
caracter that the majority of the children in the classroom can relate to. For
example, if the majority of the children in the class are of Native American decent
the teacher may want to choose a book that depicts characters with a similar
background because children will be more likely to relate to the lives of those
characters.

2. Through *catharsis*, the child becomes emotionally involved in the story and is
able to release pent-up emotions within a safe environment. As the characters in
the story go through the grieving process the children will be able to relate to
them because they have already found a connection to the life of the character or
characters. For example, if a young child has been worried about losing a
grandmother because of knowing that she is getting old, reading a book in which
a child discusses these same fears could help the child to release this anxiety. An
adult in the story who explains that all old things die and that it is a natural part of
life that everything must go through at some point may help the young child to
understand that death is normal and that life can be alright after the loss of a loved
one takes place.

3. Through *insight*, the child (with help from an adult guide) becomes aware that his
or her problems might be addressed or cleared up as the child identifies possible
solutions for both the book’s characters and for his or her own issues. For
example, the same young child who was worried about losing a grandmother
could take an idea from a book that was read to make memories with her
grandmother before she dies or commemorate her after her death.

Reassurances are found in the awareness that children in other places have encountered
parallel sorrows, and were able to live through their pain and heal (Berns, 2004). Children desire
this sense of belonging and need to know that they are cared for, loved and will be able to get past their immediate pain. Many children feel lost and alone because of the experience of death and dying in their life (Christian, 1997). Reading children’s picture books about death and dying and discussing the topic provides the teacher with opportunities to serve several children simultaneously, thereby making the best use of limited resources, such as time, while tapping the dynamics of the group process (Homeyer, 2000). The group format of reading and discussing with the entire class provides a sense of belonging, cohesion, and camaraderie (Jones, 2001) reinforcing the fact that they are not alone in their grieving process or in their curiosity about death and dying.

Picture books, used in a way similar to how they are used in the process of bibliotherapy, can help students appropriately deal with their emotions and work through numerous choices to find productive solutions in the coping and grieving processes (Olsen, 1975). These solutions might be easier to pull out of the book read and understand in a group setting because the children are able to discuss and brainstorm additional new ideas and learn from each other’s ideas, experiences and insights.

The Process of Bibliotherapy

The effectiveness of the bibliotherapeutic process, or a similar adaptation, involves a skilled adult who can use books to help children in many ways because they have taken time to find the right books and learned how to use them appropriately (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989).

Finding the right books can be a challenge if the person looking does not have a criterion to follow when deciding what books would be appropriate to use in their K-3 classroom. Jalongo (2004) suggests four steps and list criteria that the picture book should meet before it is selected for use with children. Her steps in selecting a picture book are:
1. Quickly look over the book to get a feel for the tone and approach
2. Read just the text, mentally blocking out the art
3. Read the story carefully while focusing on the harmony of words and pictures, backtracking and pausing when needed
4. Examine critically other details such as book design, paper, typeface, endpapers, dedications, etc.

After Jalongo (2004) lists her four steps for selecting a picture book for use with children she lists several evaluation questions to ask during the selection process. These questions are:

1. Does the book compare favorably with other picture books of its type?
2. Has the picture book received the endorsements of professionals?
3. Are the literary elements of plot, theme, character, style, and setting used effectively?
4. Do the pictures complement the story?
5. Is the story free from ethnic, racial, or sex-role stereotypes?
6. Is the picture book developmentally appropriate for the child or children?
7. Is the books treatment of the topic suitable for the child or children?
8. Does the picture book also appeal to the teacher?

After asking all of these questions and narrowing the collection of books about death and dying down to the group of books that meets most of these criteria the adult selecting the books must rely on good instincts (Hearne, 2000).

After the books to be used have been chosen the process of bibliotherapy can begin. Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) defined four aspects of the bibliotherapy process that are essential in order for it to be successful: identification, selection, presentation, and follow-up. These aspects
can be adapted to use in the classroom or to meet the needs of children at various developmental levels.

1. **Identification** of the child’s issues and emotions requires a need for particular sensitivity on the part of the bibliotherapist (or teacher).

2. **Selection** draws upon a knowledge of the appropriate materials and resources available in order to identify those that will best serve the child’s needs.

3. **Presentation** calls for skill in timing and in the introduction of the literary materials.

4. **Follow-up** involves some kind of follow-up activity, conversation, and/or emotional exploration of the materials that have been shared. Without follow-up the process is merely reading, without preserving any kind of therapeutic validity.

Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) suggest that bibliotherapy often works best when the teacher introduces a book or a poem that deals with characters participating in issues that are not as sensitive as death and dying. The students should be given the opportunity to practice relating to the character’s struggles and resolutions. This can be done by first reading about and discussing a topic that children have a better understanding of, such as teasing. This will enable the children to begin talking about themselves and what their feelings are about the topic. Mason (2000) stated that reading a book permits the reader and/or listeners to withdraw, to be private, to reflect, to feel that they are not alone because others have experienced and felt what they are going through.

Before any reading or discussion can take place, careful selection of books must be completed. When selecting a story to read for bibliotherapy, usually a fictional story, a teacher must make sure that the story has literary merit and is useful as a tool for self discovery,
communication, and change (Berns, 2004). Fiction is not true, but it contains elements of truth and insight inaccessible to us in our daily lives (Clark, 2005) because problems and resolutions are often not seen in a short enough period of time that teachers can use to teach about the way that the person overcame the problem. Fictional stories that are appropriate for the situation are often easier to find than non-fiction stories that meet the criteria the teacher is searching for. When selecting a book, readers must ask themselves questions about the children with whom they will be sharing. These questions could consist of: How old are the children? Who died or may die soon? How did that person die or how are they dying? Do these children have support systems at home? Cohen, Mannarino, Greenberg, Padlo, and Shipley (2002) address that children’s understanding of death varies according to developmental level, and therefore, the teacher should be careful during book selection. Then the teacher must read and reread the book before sharing it with children (Berns).

Berns (2004) suggests that the reader may want to begin by introducing the name of the book and ask some open-ended questions that the children can think about while being read to. Then the teacher should read the book from cover to cover, taking time and speaking clearly. After the book has been read, the teacher should facilitate a conversation about the issue in the book and the resolution that the characters came to. The children should be allowed to speak and make connections as they see them. The teacher should help the child to express his or her feelings by offering correct terminology. Reflecting on that unique response can then deepen the appreciation of the story and enrich its meaning for the child or children. Discussing stories in this way can also serve the critical function of providing children opportunities to discuss and express their own personal experiences (Schank, 1990). Children should be allowed to initiate some aspects of the discussion and do some of the questioning (Berns). After the discussion, the
teacher should summarize the main points and feelings of the children in the group. Then the children should have some say in the nature of how to remember the departed (if a student has lost a loved one), thus involving them in the management of the bereavement (Lowton & Higginson, 2003). Ultimately, the goal of bibliotherapy is to find resolutions for students’ concerns by educating them about death and dying (or another topic) and discussing ways to confront these challenges with caring adults (Stamps, 2003).

Summary

A process based on the principles of bibliotherapy can be an effective way to educate students in the classroom about death and dying before, or while they are experiencing it. Teachers need to take the time to gain knowledge about their students, resources that are available and seek an effective progression for the students in their classroom before a process similar to bibliotherapy can be effective. Children grieve and cope differently than adults do, and should therefore be treated differently than adults during periods of grief. Children do not have the cognitive ability to grieve and cope in positive effective ways without modeling from adults and experiences with the emotions associated with grief. Therefore, high quality picture books should be carefully selected when materials are being chosen to share this delicate subject with children. Children should be able to freely express their emotions in the classroom while the teacher facilitates a safe and caring environment. The teacher should help students make connections to the characters in the story to provide them with better coping skills and the ability to find resolutions that are appropriate to the situation. Through connections that are made to the characters in the books, children will be better able to understand death and grieve in a way that is healthy for themselves and those around them.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Death and dying, without proper understanding and grieving from bereaved children and those around them, can cause negative short and long-term effects in children. Because teachers are often one of the primary caring adults who children seek out for answering questions about death and dying, and for help with the grieving process, teachers need to know how to help these children in an appropriate manner. Therefore, the goal of this study was to determine how death and dying are portrayed in children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006. Knowing this information will help teachers to select books that can meet the needs of children in their classrooms.

Methods

Research Design

Qualitative data was collected through the content analysis of each book. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts (White & Marsh, 2006). After the content analysis was conducted the data were then quantified and used to report the findings of this study. The content analysis was a strategic way to look at each characteristic in all of the picture books.

Data Source

Children’s picture books were collected by searching the Bowling Green State University and Wood County Public Library online catalogues for children’s picture books about death and dying published between 2000 and 2006. Colleagues and librarians were also asked for any recommendations for books fitting the appropriate conditions. Books were then limited to those
published between 2000 and 2006 because the books should be able to be easily located by classroom teachers and purchased if desired. Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database (1997) was used to search for an approximate number of children’s picture books about death and dying that were published between 2000 and 2006. The following criterion were used when searching for the number of children’s picture books about death and dying published between 2000 and 2006: fiction and non-fiction books, published between 2000 and 2006, picture books, and the key term searched was death. Approximately 300 books were found to meet the criteria. Forty-six of these picture books about death and dying that fit the appropriate criteria of being published between 2000 and 2006 and contain a theme about death and/or dying were located and placed in Appendix A. After the 46 books had been collected, the following four steps were taken as recommended by Jalongo (2004):

1. Quickly look over the book to get a feel for the tone and approach
2. Read just the text, mentally blocking out the art
3. Read the story carefully while focusing on the harmony of words and pictures, backtracking and pausing when needed
4. Examine critically other details such as book design, paper, typeface, endpapers, dedications, etc.

After Jalongo’s (2004) steps to finding a good picture book were followed eight questions also created by Jalongo (2004) were asked about each book. These questions were:

1. Does the book compare favorably with other picture books of its type?
2. Has the picture book received the endorsements of professionals?
3. Are the literary elements of plot, theme, character, style, and setting used effectively?
4. Do the pictures complement the story?

5. Is the story free from ethnic, racial, or sex-role stereotypes?

6. Is the picture book developmentally appropriate for the child or children?

7. Is the book’s treatment of the topic suitable for the child or children?

8. Does the picture book also appeal to the teacher?

A final list of 35 books was compiled, all dealing with death and dying, published between 2000 and 2006, appropriate for K-3 children, and meeting Jalongo’s guidelines for evaluating picture books.

Procedures

To collect and analyze the necessary data for the body of this study, the following steps were used for the content analysis of the 35 picture books:

1. A matrix was developed (see Appendix C) by listing characteristics that pertain to the theme of death and dying across the top of a table and listing the names of the books for analysis down the left side of the table in alphabetical order. The characteristics listed across the top were:

   a. Deceased or Dying Character’s Age
   b. Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender
   c. Deceased or Dying Character’s Race/Ethnicity
   d. Deceased or Dying Character’s Role in Relation to the Main Character
   e. Cause of Death
   f. Main Character’s Age
   g. Family/Friend Immediate Reaction to the Death
   h. Types of Grief Present
i. Coping Strategies of Family/Friends

j. Success of Coping Strategies

2. Each book was read three times as the categories in the matrix were filled in with a term specific to the category it was describing. These terms were chosen when the books were being read because of patterns across the texts. Some of the categories were filled in during the first reading and others filled in during a second or third reading. More than one category was filled in on the matrix during one of the three readings. The categories that are listed across the top of the matrix were broken up into groups based on the characteristics seen in the books:

a. The deceased or dying character’s age was approximated into three groups: child, middle-aged, and elderly. The ages were approximated because a specific age was not seen in any of the books. The age group was determined based on the pictures and descriptions given about the characters. These age groups were appropriately entered into the matrix under the category of age and in the row for each book.

b. The deceased or dying character’s gender was determined by examining the pictures and the words used when talking about the character. Three groups were determined to exist in the books: male, female, and unknown. A character was labeled as unknown if it was called only by a name that is not gender specific (never he or she) and if the pictures were unclear about gender. The gender was entered into the matrix.

c. The deceased or dying character’s race/ethnicity was determined by examining the pictures in the book and any language specifically referring
to one race/ethnicity or another. Three groups were identified in the books analyzed. These groups were: Caucasian, African American, and unknown. A character was classified as unknown if it was an animal or plant. The races/ethnicities were entered into the matrix for each book.

d. The deceased or dying character’s role in relation to the main character was determined by the words used when the character was being described in relation to the main character. Ten roles were identified in relation to the main character. These groups were: grandpa, grandma, pet, mother, friend, sister, cousin, father, teacher, and brother. The roles were entered into the matrix for each book.

e. The cause of death was determined by looking at specific words in the text and implications made by other characters. Six causes of death were identified in the books: old age, cancer, illness, accident, killing, and an unknown cause. The causes of death were entered into the matrix for each book.

f. The main character’s age group was determined by evaluating the picture and by the words used to describe the character. Three groups were determined to be depicted in the texts: child, elderly, and unknown. Unknown was used to label the main characters that were depicted as animals in a friendship role. The age group of each main character was entered into the matrix for each book.

g. The family/friend immediate reaction to the death was determined by the actions and emotions that the main characters displayed upon finding out
about the death of their loved ones. More than one reaction could be seen for each character. The reactions entered into the matrix were: crying, feeling lost, spending time alone, unknown, silence, confusion, anger, saying goodbye, continuing on with life, denial, and being scared. The unknown response was used when the story did not indicate what happened immediately after the death.

h. The types of grief present in each book were determined by the characteristics of the stages of grief described by Parkes (1986). The stages of grief found in each book were entered into the matrix. These included: alarm, searching, mitigation, anger, guilt, and new identity.

i. The coping strategies of family/friends were determined according to the characteristics of coping strategies as described by Aldwin’s (1994) and Bowlby (1980) which included: regression, repression, denial, displacement, and mirroring the model of an adult. These coping strategies were entered into the matrix according to which strategies were seen in each book.

j. The success of the coping strategies was determined based on the indication that the coping strategy helped the character move through the stages of grief to gain a new identity as described by Parkes (1986). The term “successful” or “unsuccessful” was entered into the matrix for each coping strategy.

3. After the matrix was completed for each book in each category, the numbers of responses belonging to each group seen were color-coded. For example, under the
category of deceased or dying character’s age \textit{child} was marked with yellow; \textit{elderly} was marked with red; \textit{middle-aged} was marked with green, and \textit{unknown} was marked with blue. This process of color coding was done for each category.

4. After all of the categories were color-coded they were counted. For example, under the category of deceased or dying character’s age the yellow marks were counted, and it was noted that four books contained a child as the deceased or dying character. This counting was done for all of the colors in each category, and the results were noted for each characteristic.

5. When the noting of the number of times each characteristic occurred in each category was completed the percentages were calculated for each category being analyzed. For example, the percentage of times a child was seen as the deceased or dying character was calculated by dividing the number of times \textit{child} was seen (4) by the total number of book analyzed (35). The percentages (11.43\% in this example) were then added to a list that displayed each possible characteristic under each category. When the percentages were calculated for the family/friend immediate reaction to the death, types of grief present, and the coping strategies of family/friends the total percentages for the categories added up to more than 100\% because more than one characteristic was seen in many of the books.

6. From the percentages and examples from the books, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

\textbf{Summary}

Children’s picture books appropriate for a kindergarten through third grade classroom, containing a theme about death and/or dying and published between 2000 and 2006, were
gathered through informal questioning of colleagues and librarians and online library catalogues. These books were read and evaluated using Jalongo’s (2004) criteria. The 35 books that met the criteria were analyzed in the 10 areas specified in Appendix C that were developed to analyze each book in this study. These 10 areas were determined through reading numerous children’s picture books about death and dying and identifying the areas that were similar in most of the books. The areas were also determined by reading literature about death, dying and the use of picture books in the classroom. The picture books were listed by the title of the book, author’s last name, and the year published down the left side of the matrix. Characteristic categories related to the theme of death and dying were listed across the top of the matrix. Once the characteristics were identified through a content analysis of each book as related to death and dying they were entered into the matrix (see Appendix C). Percentages were calculated and conclusions were then drawn based on the results in the matrix to answer the research question: How are death and dying portrayed in children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006?
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to analyze children’s picture books about death and dying, published between 2000 and 2006 that adhered to Jalongo’s (2004) criteria for quality picture books. Chapter IV contains the results of the content analysis of 35 books selected. The chapter includes both qualitative and quantitative data while presenting the characteristics of the selected books. The characteristics included in the discussion are: (a) deceased or dying character’s age, (b) deceased or dying character’s gender, (c) deceased or dying character’s race/ethnicity, (d) deceased or dying character’s role in relation to the main character, (e) cause of death, (f) main character’s age, (g) family/friend immediate reaction to the death, (h) types of grief present, (i) coping strategies of family/friends, and (j) success of coping strategies.

Data Analysis

As a result of the content analysis conducted on each selection, the data were organized into categories within each of the 10 characteristics. The categories were based on the characteristic found in the books analyzed. Due to the picture books fitting into more than one category under some of the characteristics, the percentages may add up to more than 100% in these areas.

Deceased or Dying Character’s Age

Based on the data collected about the deceased or dying character’s age, four categories emerged. The four categories in the characteristic of age included child, middle-aged, elderly, and unknown. Of the 35 children’s picture book selections analyzed, the elderly category was the most predominant age group depicted in the selections because most of the deceased or dying characters were depicted as grandparents. For example, in *Thank You, Grandpa* by Lynn Plourde the dying character was portrayed as an elderly grandfather. The deceased or dying character was
portrayed as elderly in 24 (68.57%) of the books. The age group categorized as middle-aged was portrayed in six (17.14%) of the books. A child was depicted as the deceased or dying character in four (11.43%) of the stories. The age of the deceased or dying character was unknown in one (2.86%) book.

Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender

The three main categories that emerged in the children’s picture books about the gender of the deceased or dying character’s gender were male, female, and unknown. Males and female were seen an equal amount of times in the 35 picture books analyzed (45.71%). Both males and females were the deceased or dying character in 16 of the selections. The gender of the deceased or dying character was unknown in three (8.58%) of the stories because the character was an animal that was not identified as male or female in anyway. Gender is an important characteristic to analyze because gender affects the relationship of the characters. For example, in *Jubela*, by Cristina Kessler, a young rhino’s mother is killed leaving the young rhino to fend for itself because its mother was the primary caregiver.

Deceased or Dying Character’s Race/Ethnicity

Of the 35 selections included in the content analysis, three categories of race/ethnicity were present. The most prominent category was Caucasian, found in 19 (54.29%) of the books. For example, The *Christmas Thingamajig*, by Lynn Manuel, portrayed a young Caucasian girl celebrating Christmas. The race/ethnicity or the deceased or dying character was unknown in 10 (28.57%) of the selections because the character was depicted as a plant or an animal as seen in *One More Wednesday* by Malika Doray, where the characters all appeared to be some sort of rabbit-like animal. African American was the third race/ethnicity present in six (17.14%) of the books such as *Blackberry Stew* by Isabell Monk.
Deceased or Dying Character’s Role in Relation to the Main Character

Ten roles of the deceased or dying character in relation to the main character emerged from the analysis of the selections. The deceased or dying character was portrayed in the role of a grandpa in 10 (28.57%) of the books. For example, in the book *Anna’s Corn* by Barbara Santucci, a young girl’s grandpa is the dying character. A grandma was the deceased or dying character in seven (20%) of the selections, one of them being *Bluebird Summer* by Deborah Hopkinson. The grandparents depicted in these stories are all involved in the lives of the grandchildren that they leave behind, and therefore have a great impact on the children when they die. Pets were portrayed as the deceased or dying in five (14.29%) of the books analyzed. For example, a dog was the dying character in the book *Jasper’s Day* by Marjorie Blain. Mothers were presented as the deceased or dying character in four (11.43%) of the 35 children’s books, as seen in *Jubela* by Cristina Kessler. The character who was deceased or dying was portrayed as a friend to the main character also in four (11.43%) of the books. Sister, cousin, father, teacher, and brother were all characterized as the deceased or dying in one (2.86%) of the books analyzed.

Cause of Death

Through the content analysis of the 35 children’s picture book selections six causes of death were portrayed. Old age was portrayed as the cause of death in 22 (62.86%) of the picture books likely due to the predominant age group being elderly and the roles portrayed being grandparents. In five (14.29%) of the 35 selections cancer was depicted as the cause of death. For example, in the book *That Summer* by Tony Johnston, a young boy is depicted as dying of cancer. Illness was found to be the cause of death in four (11.43%) of the books. The illnesses described were not identified. In two (5.71%) of the books an accident was said to be the cause
of death as in *I Remember Miss Perry*, by Pat Brisson. In this story a teacher dies in a car accident and her students are left questioning why this had to happen. Both killing and an unknown cause of death were each portrayed in one (2.86%) of the children’s picture books analyzed.

Main Character’s Age

The main character in the 32 (91.43%) of the books was depicted as a child. It is important to note that the child as a main character was never the dying or deceased character. For example, *Hugs and Kisses from Brittany*, by Cristine Thomas, portrays a sister coping with the loss of her younger sister. The girl in the story struggles with the fact that a child so young can die, and she has a lot of guilt about the times when she was not very nice to her sister. The teacher in the story helps the bereaved girl to remember the times when she and her sister had fun and the love that they shared. The age of the main character was unknown in two (5.71%) of the selections. The main character was depicted as elderly in one (2.86%) of the books and was also the deceased or dying character.

Family/Friend Immediate Reaction to the Death

Eleven types of reactions of family and friend to the death of a loved one were found in the 35 children’s picture books when the content analysis was conducted. These reactions were crying, feeling lost, spending time alone, unknown, silence, confusion, anger, saying goodbye, continuing on with life, denial, and being scared. In most of the picture books analyzed, the family and friends had more than one immediate reaction to the death of their loved one. For example, the animals in *Always and Forever*, by Alan Durant, cry and are then very silent for a long period of time after the death of their good friend. When the group of friends begins to talk about how they miss their deceased friend, they are able to also remember what they loved about
him. Crying was an immediate reaction to the death in 18 (51.43%) of the books. Feeling lost was the reaction that the characters in 10 (28.57%) of the selections first experienced. Spending time alone was seen in seven (20%) of the books as was an unknown reaction. Silence was observed in six (17.14%) of the texts. The family and friends experienced confusion in five (14.29%) out of the 35 books read. Anger was the initial reaction of family and friends of the deceased in four (11.43%) of the books. Saying goodbye immediately after the death of a loved one was seen in three (8.58%) of the texts. Family and friends in one (2.86%) of the books chose to continue on with life as soon as their loved one passed away. Denial and being scared were also seen in one (2.86%) of the selections.

Types of Grief Present

The types of grief present were analyzed based on Parkes (1986) six stages of grief. These stages are: *alarm*, *searching*, *mitigation*, *anger*, *guilt*, and *new identity*. *Alarm* was a stage of grief present in 17 (48.57%) of the 35 children’s books analyzed. *Searching* was found in 21 (60%) of the texts. In 24 (68.57%) *mitigation* was present as a stage of grieving. *Anger* was in nine (25.71%) of the selections analyzed. *Guilt* was a stage of grief in 11 (31.43%) of the texts, and gaining a *new identity* was seen in 35 (100%) of the 35 children’s books analyzed. More than one stage was seen in most of the books.

*Alarm* was portrayed in *Janna and the Kings*, by Patricia Smith, when the young girl lost her grandfather and believed that the world she lived in was no longer safe and secure. She was completely overwhelmed by her grandfather’s death and became withdrawn from the world around her. The young girl moved into the searching stage of grief when she began to frantically run to the places where she and her grandfather used to spend time together. In *The Giant*, by Claire Ewart, a girl lives on a corn farm with her father who expresses little emotion. The girl’s
mother is now deceased, but before she died, the mother told the young girl that she would be alright because there will always be a giant watching over her. The young girl constantly searches for the giant, and for a long time doesn’t understand what her mother was saying. After realizing that her mother had been describing her father as the giant, she is able to feel that her mother is also nearer to her than she had first thought. Nan Gregory describes the anger of a young girl when her grandmother dies in the book *Wild Girl and Gran*. The young girl feels angry at herself because she thinks that there must have been a way to save her grandmother and that she failed in that endeavor. *Flamingo Dream*, by Donna Jo Napoli, portrays a young boy who becomes very guilty after his father dies and he is no longer able to spend time with him. The boy wishes that he could have done more with his father while he was living. In each of the books discussed, the characters moved through many stages of grief and experienced some simultaneously, eventually reaching a new identity. For example in *The Memory String*, by Eve Bunting, a young girl is eventually able to make a decision to try and love her step-mother because she realizes that people other than her mother love her and her step-mom is now someone very important in her new life. Rather than living in anger and resentment, the girl can now experience happiness again with her new identity.

Coping Strategies of Family/Friends

The coping strategies analyzed were based upon Aldwin’s (1994) children’s coping strategies which are: regression, repression, denial, and displacement. Bowlby’s (1980) coping strategy of mirroring adults was also included. Mirroring adults was seen in 34 (97.14%) of the 35 children’s books examined. Mirroring adults was depicted in *Saying Goodbye to Lulu*, by Corinne Demas, when a young girl’s parents suggest that they bury their recently deceased dog, Lulu, in the backyard. The parents suggest they first place a few of Lulu’s favorite items in the
grave with her. The parents show the girl how to place the items with Lulu, and the young girl follows their actions. These simple ideas help comfort the little girl and eventually help her to say goodbye to Lulu because she can visit her grave and remember the good times that they had together. Displacement was in seven (20%) of the texts. Regression was used as a way to cope in two (5.71%) of the books. Denial was in two (5.71%) of the selections. Repression was seen in two (5.71%) of the 35 books analyzed. For example, in the book *Grandma's Purple Flowers*, by Adjoa Burrowes, a young girl experiences repression when she tries very hard to not think about her recently deceased grandmother because those thoughts makes her miss her grandmother and cry very hard. Although these negative coping strategies were seen, they were seen much less frequently than mirroring adult behavior. An unknown coping strategy was used in one (2.86%) of the books. This book did not show the bereaved characters engaged in any type of coping strategies because the deceased character was depicted as an old tree that provided the animals with needed resources in life and in death. The bereaved animals continued on with life as normal because the death of trees and other living things was portrayed as a very common and expected experience in their lives. No positive or effective coping strategies created by the bereaved characters (children) themselves were seen in any of the 35 books analyzed.

Success of Coping Strategies

Mirroring an adult’s response to the death was successful at helping the bereaved person 100% of the time. Displacement, regression, denial, repression, and an unknown reaction were unsuccessful in helping the bereaved person grieve 100% of the time because these were the coping strategies that the children enacted without the guidance of adults. For example, in the book *The Best Cat in the World*, by Leslea Newman, a young boy’s mother helps him bury his cat, Charlie, after he dies. The mother helps the boy by bringing up happy memories of the cat,
creating a special grave for the cat and making a grave stone so that the boy will never forget his first “best cat in the world.” The boy’s mother also helps him to see that he can love a cat again when, after a while, she gives him he new kitten to take care of. The boy in the story realizes that although the new cat is not like his first cat, he can remember Charlie and love his new kitten at the same time. The burial of the cat alone would not have been very helpful to the boy, but through his mother’s modeling he was able to recall memories and create a place of remembrance.

Discussion Of Results

The research question for this study was: How are death and dying portrayed in children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006? Results from the content analysis show that the deceased or dying character was most frequently depicted as being elderly. The deceased or dying characters in the books were most often Caucasian, a grandpa, and died of old age. Male and female characters were depicted in an equal percentage of the books. The most common immediate reaction of the friends and family to the death in the books was crying. In all of the books that were analyzed the main character gained a new identity, a successful stage in the grieving process. The most frequent, and only successful, coping strategy seen in the books was mirroring an adult’s coping behaviors.

Summary

Thirty-five children’s picture books about death and dying published between 2000 and 2006 were analyzed and the data were presented in this chapter. The characteristics included in the analysis were: (a) deceased or dying character’s age, (b) deceased or dying character’s gender, (c) deceased or dying character’s race/ethnicity, (d) deceased or dying character’s role in relation to the main character, (e) cause of death, (f) main character’s age, (g) family/friend
immediate reaction to the death, (h) types of grief present, (i) coping strategies of family/friends, and (j) success of coping strategies.

Results from the content analysis show that the deceased or dying character was most frequently depicted as elderly. The deceased or dying characters in the books were most often Caucasian, a grandpa, and died of old age. Male and female characters were depicted equally in the books. The most common immediate reaction of the friends and family to the death was crying. In all of the books, the main character gained a new identity. The most frequent, and only successful, coping strategy identified was mirroring an adult’s coping behaviors.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Children all over the world have first hand experiences with the death of loved ones. Children are also exposed to death and dying through the media, which often causes questions about the topic. As children enter school they bring these experiences and questions with them into the classroom. This presents teachers with a situation in which they could either address the issue or ignore it. One possible way to address the issue of death and dying in primary grade classrooms is through an adapted form of bibliotherapy. The research question for this study was: How are death and dying portrayed in children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006? The study focused on analyzing the characteristics of death and dying to address which books are appropriate for use in varying primary grade classrooms. Chapter V summarizes the study, draws conclusions from the data collected, and provides recommendations for different groups based on the findings of the study.

Summary

This study analyzed children’s (K-3) picture books published between 2000 and 2006 to determine how death and dying were portrayed. The books were gathered from two libraries based on the results of colleague, librarian, and internet search recommendations (see Appendix A). The literature was read carefully as suggested by Jalongo (2004) and Jalongo’s questions for determining if a picture book is of high quality were asked of each selection. A list of 35 picture books that met all of the criteria was developed and each book was summarized (see Appendix B). A matrix (see Appendix C) was then developed to compare the 10 characteristics of death and dying analyzed in the study. These characteristics include: (a) deceased or dying character’s age, (b) deceased or dying character’s gender, (c) deceased or dying character’s race/ethnicity, (d) deceased or dying character’s role in relation to the main character, (e) cause of death, (f)
main character’s age (g) family/friend immediate reaction to the death, (h) types of grief present, (i) coping strategies of family/friends, and (j) success of coping strategies. The books were analyzed and the data were entered into the matrix (see Appendix C).

Conclusions

Based on the content analysis, it can be concluded that the characteristics of death and dying in the 35 children’s picture books analyzed accurately portray the gender of the deceased or dying character, the reactions that friends and family members have to death, the stages of grief, coping strategies and the success of those strategies. The picture books were written for children; therefore, they accurately portrayed the main character as a child for the reader to relate. The content analysis also showed that the books were limited in the portrayal of the age of the deceased or dying characters, the race/ethnicity of the deceased or dying character, the role that the deceased or dying character’s play in the lives of the main characters, and the cause of death.

Deceased or Dying Character’s Age

_Elderly_ was the predominant age of the deceased or dying person found in 68.57% of the texts. According to Bowen (1966) the death of an elderly grandparent will most likely be the first experience with death that children have. Bowen also states that numerous family deaths will likely follow the child’s first experience. Middle-aged characters and children were depicted much less frequently as the deceased or dying character in the selections analyzed. Therefore, it will likely be more difficult to locate high quality picture books about death and dying that portray a child or middle-aged character as the dying person. These deaths may be more traumatic for children because they are experienced less frequently, and children are likely to feel a great sense of uncertainty and worry when a child dies because they might fear that they
will be the next one to die. It is very important that these issues are discussed and their fears are talked about openly. More picture books that portray children and middle-aged characters as deceased or dying are required so that the needs of children can be met through readings and discussions.

**Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender**

The content analysis showed that male and female characters were portrayed in an equal amount of the selections (45.71%). Preboth (2000) states that the death of an important person in a child’s life is one of the most stressful events a child can experience. Both males and female have roles that are very important in the lives of children and are therefore important to portray. However, the death of a loved one will affect children differently depending on the gender of the person that they lost because males and females often play differing roles in the lives of children. If a child’s primary caregiver is his/her mother, then the death of that female will likely affect the child more significantly than the death of a male who is less involved in the daily routine of the child. Although males and females were depicted equally as the deceased or dying character, these characters could be placed in less stereotypic roles of gender. Gender is an important characteristic to consider when choosing a book to share with children about death and dying because children may be able to better relate to one gender over the other.

**Deceased or Dying Character’s Race/Ethnicity**

Timmerman (1989) states that through *identification*, the child comes to identify with a book’s characters and events, whether they are real or fictional. The teacher should select a book with a character to which the majority of the children in the classroom can relate. This becomes problematic if the majority of the students are not Caucasian. The deceased or dying characters were portrayed as Caucasian in 54.29% of the books. African American characters were present
in 17.14% of the books. The deceased or dying characters race/ethnicity was unknown in 28.57% of the books because the deaths of animals were included. Characters of other races/ethnicities were completely omitted from the books analyzed. Young children may assume that only Caucasian people die frequently because this is the race that is most common in the books to which they are exposed. Children may more likely assume that Caucasian characters are seen as more important and therefore deserve to be written about more frequently. Children may also get the idea that people of all races participate in the same mourning rituals because of the lack of diversity present in the books. Books about death and dying that portray a variety of races/ethnicities are needed so that children can gain an understanding that people of all kinds experience death, grieve, and are able to move on with life after the death of a loved one.

Deceased or Dying Character’s Role in Relation to the Main Character

Although many roles in relation to the main characters were depicted in the selections as a whole, the amount of portrayals was extremely limited to two groups. Grandpas (28.57%) and grandmas (20%) were depicted as the deceased or dying character most frequently. The depiction of the deceased or dying character as a grandparent is an accurate portrayal of the deaths that most children experience. The grandparents depicted in these stories are all involved in the lives of the grandchildren that they leave behind, and therefore have a great impact on the children when they die. Although the experience of losing a grandparent is extremely common, and these books are needed, books that depict characters in other roles are also needed. Children are frequently confronted with classmates and friends who have had grandparents die. The death of other loved ones such as a parent, sibling or friend are not experienced as frequently in the lives of children, and therefore require more of an explanation and guidance in the grieving process. Books to help guide these discussion are more difficult to locate because of the lack of portrayal
of characters in these roles. The death of an important person in a child’s life is one of the most stressful events a child can experience (Preboth, 2000). Therefore, finding an appropriate book to discuss the topic is significant and the deceased or dying character needs to be portrayed in more of a variety of roles especially because the deaths of loved ones, other than grandparents, may be more traumatic because they are less common.

Cause of Death

The most frequently portrayed cause of death was old age, found in 62.86% of the selections. The death of an elderly grandparent will most likely be the first experience with death that children have (Bowen, 1966). Therefore, old age is probably a likely cause of death. Bowen also states that numerous family deaths will likely follow the child’s first experience. These deaths could be anyone in various roles in their lives who could die from an endless number of reasons. The selections are limited when it comes to choosing a book that portrays a cause of death other than old age. Realistically, children will likely experience the death of a loved one that dies from something other than old age at some point in their lives. Children need to be aware that all people don’t live a long life and die of old age. Books that portray death from numerous other factors need to be written for children in varying life situations so they can relate to the text and therefore, be helped through the reading and discussion that should take place when these books are used with children.

Main Character’s Age

The main character was portrayed as a child in 91.43% of the books analyzed. This is important because the child should identify with the books characters (Timmerman 1989). Krell and Sherman (1997) state that the abilities to effectively cope, adapt and grieve have been shown to be related to cognitive development and to differ with age. Therefore the children listening to
the story will be able to better relate to the main character because they are at approximately the same developmental level as the character in the book and have likely had some similar life experiences. Children will better understand they are not alone in the feelings that they are experiencing when they witness another child going through a similar experience. The portrayals of similar experiences are especially important in picture books when a parent or sibling dies because the child is not likely to know anyone else who has had the same experience, and it may be harder for children to understand that young children can and do die. Therefore, these books may be the only way that they can feel that they are not alone in their experience and see that other children have been able to continue on in life when a death like this takes place. The adult who is sharing the book with children should ask questions to stimulate the connection between the children who are listening and the child or children in the story. Questions could be related to the experiences and emotions that the character is having. Through this connection children can experience emotions and solutions that they may not have explored otherwise. The solutions from the book can then be connected to real life situations to foster resolutions and healing in the lives of children.

Family/Friend Immediate Reaction to the Death

Ten immediate reactions were seen in the books analyzed, and the reaction was unknown in seven of the books. Crying was portrayed in 51.43% of the books as an immediate reaction. Parkes (1986) states that night time can be a particularly difficult time during the searching stage because the bereaved child feels even more alone and the memories of the lost person preoccupy the mind and long periods of crying may take place. Seeing characters in a book express their emotions through tears might help children understand that it is alright to cry and be upset after the death of a loved one. These books could also help children move from crying to verbalizing
their feelings. Feeling lost was seen in 28.57% of the books. This finding was supported by Christian (1997), who argues that many children feel lost and alone because of the experience of death and dying in their life. Numerous other reactions to the death of a loved one were also depicted in the selections analyzed. As the books are read with children, the caring adult needs to reassure children that these reactions are alright to have, but the children also need to be encouraged to make the connection to the fact that crying alone will not help the bereaved character get better. Discussion of the main character’s reactions to the death should lead to discussing what actually helped that character move on with life while not forgetting about their loved one.

Types of Grief Present

All six of Parkes (1986) stages of grief were portrayed in the books analyzed. Finding a new identity was seen in all of the 35 books included in the study. Olsen (1975) said that picture books can help students appropriately deal with their emotions and work through numerous choices to find productive solutions in the coping and grieving processes. Eventually coming to a new identity is defined as a positive experience by Parkes (1986). A new identity comes when the bereaved person believes that he/she can go on living and overcoming obstacles without the person whom they lost (Parkes, 1986). The data imply that although the characters in the books analyzed passed through difficult stages of grief including alarm, searching, mitigation, anger, and guilt, they were all eventually able to gain a new identity and continue on with life in a positive way. This is an important fact to share with children when reading books about death and dying. Children should be helped to see that although the character is very upset in the beginning, that through the guidance of a caring adult, he/she was able to feel whole again and
continue on in life without forgetting his/her loved one but also without crying (or other reaction) continually.

Coping Strategies of Family/Friends

Although the negative coping strategies as defined by Aldwin (1994) were seen in several of the books analyzed, the positive coping strategy of mirroring positive coping from an adult as defined by Bowlby (1980) was portrayed 97.14% of the time. The data are supported by Bowlby who stated that because children are lacking in personal maturity, they often mirror the type of positive effective coping or communication styles modeled by adults close to them. Although children would likely mirror negative coping from adults, this was not seen in the books analyzed. The negative coping strategies seen in the books include repression, regression, displacement, and denial. Conversation and experiences with caring adult guidance were consistently the two best predictors of accurate death concepts in a study done by Cotton and Range (1990). The strategies that the children in the stories mirrored included attending a burial or funeral, planting a tree or bush in remembrance of the deceased loved one, making a memory book or quilt, and numerous others. These strategies were all modeled for the bereaved children in the stories and then the children were also helped to complete the strategy in a way that they could understand.

Success of Coping Strategies

Mirroring the coping strategies of an adult was the only coping strategy found to be successful in the books in this study. Bowlby (1980) suggests that children need to see positive coping strategies modeled before they can implement them in their own lives. Children grieve differently than adults in that they will likely repeat stages of grieving continually without coming to a conclusion or new identity. When a caring adult intervenes and demonstrates how
children could direct their emotions in a way that leads them to believe that they can continue to live life without forgetting their loved one but also without standing still to remember them, children can then begin to feel that they are able to heal and go on.

Recommendations

Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) argue that books can be a useful tool in treating behavioral and emotional problems in children. The approach to treatment through books is called bibliotherapy (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1984). The approach of bibliotherapy can be adapted for use in primary grade classrooms and used as an effective tool to provide children with accurate information about death and dying. Books open a door to feelings that children may have never experienced before. Berns (2004) states that this may be the first encounter children have with loss and grief, and children may not understand what is happening as adults do. They may not be able to communicate their questions and reactions in ways that adults can easily grasp, and their life experiences may not yet have equipped them to cope with loss and grief in constructive ways. Accurate information about death and a fostered connection to their own lives can help prepare children for later losses and help those already grieving (Schonfeld & Kappelman, 1992). Therefore, family members, teachers, guidance counselors, school administrators, children’s book authors, and educational researchers need to be aware of the literature currently available that focuses on death and dying and how these books can be effectively utilized in a primary grade classroom as a tool for helping children grieve and answering the questions that they may have. This study, therefore, offers a series of recommendations to various educators and caregivers regarding the use of an adapted form of bibliotherapy as a means of effectively dealing with the issue of death and dying in the lives of children.
*Family Members*

Family members may find the short summaries (Appendix B) and the matrix used for evaluation (Appendix C) of the 35 picture books analyzed in this study useful when selecting texts to use with the children in their family who are dealing with the death of a loved one or have questions about death. The matrix is best used when a book of interest is selected from left column. Then a topic can be chosen from the top row and the characteristic located by moving down to the row of the book of interest. Sandler and Ayers (2003) state that family resources, such as caring adults discussing death with children, may decrease the occurrence of problems in young children who are experiencing the death of a loved one. Through carefully reading the text in a safe caring environment and discussing how the characters in the book react to the death of their loved one, families can help children through the grieving process and help them cope in positive ways.

*Teachers*

Teachers will be faced at some point with a child in their classroom who is experiencing the death of a loved one. Trying to ignore the issue will not help the child or benefit the other students in the classroom because children’s learning capacity falls off during the grieving process (Parkes, 1986). It is a teacher’s job to make appropriate adaptations in his/her classroom so that all students can learn. Through the use of an adapted form of bibliotherapy, teachers are able to discuss this serious issue in the classroom in an insightful way. The summary list of children’s picture books (Appendix B) and the matrix that was used to evaluate the characteristics of the picture books (Appendix C) are useful resources for teachers in selecting books to be used in a primary grade classroom. An adapted form of bibliotherapy could be defined in five steps: (a) select an appropriate book to which the majority of the children in the
classroom can relate (this is where the teacher must pay close attention to the characteristics of
death and dying in the books (Appendix C); (b) activate background knowledge related to the
characters in a book (this could be done by reading a familiar short story about a topic that has
been previously discussed); (c) activate background knowledge about the topic to help them
identify with the characters in the story; (d) read the book, stopping to ask questions about what
the characters are feeling why they might be feeling that way and then respond to students
answers by elaborating and pointing things out if needed; (e) follow up the reading by reviewing
concepts, answering questions, and engaging students in an activity (this activity could be
brainstorming ways that they could celebrate the life that a deceased loved one lived).

Teachers may also find Johnson’s (1999) six strategies for helping children effectively
cope with death useful: (a) ask the child what he/she understands already about death; (b) ask
what questions he/she might have; (c) be truthful with children; (d) explain that other children
feel and have felt the same way (this can be where the adapted form of bibliotherapy takes
place); (e) let the child know that he/she did not cause the death; (f) openly talk about fears that
they might have. When used in a manner as discussed above, children’s picture books and
discussions about the books can be valuable tools for helping children understand death and
grieve in a healthy way.

School Personnel

School personnel including counselors, principals, reading teachers and psychologists can
also use the principles of bibliotherapy to help children understand death and dying and to foster
a healthy grieving process in the children who attend their school. These personnel can work
with children in groups or in a one-on-one setting. It may also be valuable for administrators to
present the rest of their staff with an in-service meeting dealing with death and dying and how to handle it appropriately in the school setting.

*Children’s Book Authors*

Children’s book authors should be aware of what books are currently available on the topic of death and dying and what characteristics are lacking in these books (Appendix C). Authors should consider the importance of this topic and work on creating new books about death and dying that portray a wider variety of characteristics. The characteristics that need to be included in future books are: a variety of races, death from causes other than old age, roles such as sister, brother, friend, aunt, uncle, neighbor etc., and dying characters of younger ages. When these characteristics are included in children’s picture books caring adults will be able to use books that more directly meet the needs of the children they are trying to help.

*Recommendations for Future Research*

Educational researchers should consider researching the impact that sessions of bibliotherapy in primary classrooms have on the grieving process and the coping strategies of children. Children could be asked questions on what they know about death and dying before the sessions take place, and then they could be reassessed after the reading and discussion. This research identified 10 characteristics that were present in the 35 picture books analyzed. A larger study that included a wider variety of books and looked at more characteristics could be valuable and appropriate for future research. More characteristics could be setting, family make up, picture quality, and various others.

*Summary*

Research supports the concept that children experience death and dying, grief, positive and negative coping strategies, and that seek an understanding of death. Teachers play an
important part in the lives of children who are bereaved and need to work with families, school personnel and other professionals to ensure that children have an appropriate understanding of death and dying and are able to grieve and cope in positive ways. Children’s picture books can be a wonderful tool to help teachers not only foster a deeper understanding of death, but discuss other life issues as well. This study has assembled a list of 35 children’s picture books published between 2000 and 2006 that portray death and dying. Another study could be beneficial to compile a larger list of books about death and dying and their characteristics for use with children of varying ages. Adults need to make themselves more familiar with the issues that children are facing in their daily lives, become comfortable searching for appropriate books that deal with these issues, and work on meeting the needs of children through the use of an adapted form of bibliotherapy. When teachers, parents, school personnel, and other adults take on this challenge, children will be able to grieve and cope more effectively when presented with the death of a loved one or another one of life’s difficult issues.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A.

LIST OF PICTURE BOOKS PORTRAYING DEATH AND DYING
1. A Butterfly for Brittany / Cristine Thomas / 2005
2. A Christmas Gift for Mama / Lauren Thompson / 2003
3. A Grand Old Tree / Mary Newell DePalma / 2005
5. Always and Forever / Alan Durant / 2004
6. Anna's Corn / Barbara Santucci / 2002
8. Blackberry Stew / Isabell Monk / 2005
12. Goodbye, Mousie / Robie H. Harris / 2002
16. Hugs and Kisses from Brittany / Cristine Thomas / 2005
17. I Remember Miss Perry / Pat Brisson / 2006
18. If Nathan Were Here / Mary Bahr Fritts / 2000
19. In the Piney Woods / Roni Schotter / 2003
20. Janna and the Kings / Patricia Smith / 2003
22. Jubela / Marjorie Blain Parker / 2002
27. One More Wednesday / Malika Doray / 2001
29. Saying Goodbye to Lulu / Corinne Demas / 2004
30. Seven For A Secret / Laurence Anholt / 2006
31. Someone Special Died / Joan Singleton Prestine / 2002
32. Sweet, Sweet Memory / Jacqueline Woodson / 2000
33. Thank you, Grandpa / Lynn Plourde / 2003
34. That Summer / Tony Johnston / 2002
35. The Best Cat in the World / Leslea Newman / 2004
36. The Blue Roses / Linda Boyden / 2002
37. The Bug Cemetery / Frances Hill / 2002
38. The Christmas Thingamajig / Lynn Manuel / 2002
39. The Giant / Claire Ewart / 2003
40. The Grandad Tree / Trish Cooke / 2000
41. The Hickory Chair / Lisa Rowe Fraustino / 2000
42. The Memory String / Eve Bunting / 2000
43. What is Heaven Like? / Beverly Lewis / 2006
44. Where Do People go When They Die? / Mindy Avra Portnoy / 2004
45. Wild Girl and Gran / Nan Gregory / 2000
46. Wishes for One More Day / Melanie Joy Pastor / 2006
APPENDIX B.

SUMMARY OF PICTURE BOOKS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS
A Butterfly for Brittany / Cristine Thomas / 2005

Megan helps her cousin Brittany on the day Brittany goes to heaven after dying of cancer. Megan paints a pretty butterfly with beautiful wings, which Brittany will wear when the angels take her to Heaven.

A Grand Old Tree / Mary Newell DePalma / 2005

For many years a tree flourishes. It shelters birds, squirrels, and insects while flowering, bearing fruit, shedding leaves, and providing seeds that grow into many new trees. After the old tree dies, it still provides a home to animals and insects as it slowly decomposes. Meanwhile, its offspring grow and flourish, "home to many creatures, just like the grand old tree."


Hippo and Monkey have a lot of fun together. Hippo is very old and tells Monkey that she will soon die because all things must die sometime. Monkey promised to remember Hippo as Hippo went away to die. Monkey cried and missed Hippo. He told Hippo’s stories to keep her memory alive.

Always and Forever / Alan Durant / 2004

Otter, Mole, Hare and Fox live together in a house. They were a happy family and loved each other. Fox got sick one winter and went to the woods and didn’t come back. His family found him and carried him home sad. They buried Fox at night under his favorite willow tree. They cried and said goodbye. They felt lost with out him and talked about why they loved him so much. This made them miss him more so they were silent. They were sad for a long time. Squirrel came to visit to ask where they have been. She said that the other animals miss Fox too but life must go on. They all cried but invited Squirrel to stay. They ate and laughed about funny things they remembered about Fox. They all decided to make something special in memory of Fox. As they laughed they felt that they could hear Fox laugh too. In their hearts, memories and laughter Fox was still there, a friend and family forever.

Anna's Corn / Barbara Santucci / 2002

Anna and her grandfather share a very close relationship. They especially enjoy taking long walks in the cornfield, where Grandpa teaches Anna to listen to the corn’s music as the wind rustles through the withering stalks. The winter comes and Grandpa dies. When spring returns, Anna hesitates to sow the seed corn Grandpa left for her because she worries she may lose her last link with him. Eventually Mama persuades her to plant, and in the fall Anna once again hears the music of the corn.
Blackberry Stew / Isabell Monk / 2005

Grandpa has passed away, and Hope is sad. In her first-person narrative, she tells what it's like when relatives, especially Grandpa's sister Aunt Poogee, gather to remember. When Hope confides she's despondent that she'll never see Grandpa again, Aunt Poogee reminds her of all the good times they had with Jack. Then she closes her eyes and sees him holding Hope, fishing, and picking blackberries. Soon Hope can see him, too, and recalls a blackberry-picking excursion that started before dawn and was almost spoiled by a garter snake before ending with an enticing blackberry stew.

Bluebird Summer / Deborah Hopkinson / 2001

Two children create a living memorial for their grandmother who loved gardens and bluebirds. When Mags, summering with her still-grieving Gramps, notices that the bluebirds no longer come to perch on the farmhouse fence, she ventures out to restore order to Grandma's overgrown garden patch, hoping to lure them back. Gramps finds new energy in the project, and even little Cody, Mag's brother, discovers a way to help.

Flamingo Dream / Donna Jo Napoli / 2002

A father and son go on a trip to place that the dad loved when he was young. They made special memories on their trip. Daddy dies from cancer. The little boy didn't understand that he wouldn't wake up. He got very mad, cried and cried, and felt that he should have done more with his father when he was living. The little boy and his mother spread the dad's ashes on the lawn so he will be with them. The boy then writes a book about the last year with his father with is mother’s guidance.

Goodbye, Mousie / Robie H. Harris / 2002

A little boy wakes up one morning and tickles his pet mouse's tummy, but Mousie doesn't move. So begins this story for the very youngest about the death of a pet. Daddy tells the boy that Mousie is dead, but the child prefers to think that Mousie is just very, very tired. Slowly, after lots of tears and many questions, the boy comes to terms with the fact that his pet is gone. He plans for the funeral by painting a picture of himself to put inside the shoebox that will hold Mousie. He will get another pet, but not right away.

Grandma's Purple Flowers / Adjoa Burrowes / 2000

A young girl describes how she visits her grandma and picks flowers for her. The girl asks about why leaves die in autumn and grandma tells her that everything has its time to die. Grandma starts getting too tired to do the things that they used to do. Grandma passed away in the winter and the young girl tries not to think about her because when she does she cries and cries while she waits for spring. In the spring the purple flowers still grow and the girl is glad. Whenever she sees purple flowers she thinks of her grandma.
Hugs and Kisses from Brittany / Cristine Thomas / 2005

Shelby is older and likes to have her space, but when Brittany gets sick with cancer, Shelby realizes how precious her sister is to her. Like most kids ages 8-12, Shelby wanted to do big kid stuff and not let Brittany who is younger, hang around her or give her hugs and kisses. The main message of this book is that Shelby now loves to give and receive hugs and kisses from her family, because her sister Brittany taught her that even in death every time she gives hugs and kisses on earth, she is giving Brittany hugs and kisses in heaven too!

I Remember Miss Perry / Pat Brisson / 2006

Stevie's first day at school gives him a stomachache. But his teacher, Miss Perry, whose eyes disappear when she smiles, gets him through by telling him that her fondest wish is that they have lunch together. In fact, Miss Perry has a new fondest wish every day, and her upbeat charm makes for a happy class. Then one day, she isn't in school. After lunch, the kids are surprised to find their parents in their classroom. Principal O'Brien has something so sad to tell them that they may need their moms and dads: Miss Perry has been killed in a car accident. A grief counselor helps the students cope by asking for memories, and recalling their teacher's fondest wishes eases the children's pain.

If Nathan Were Here / Mary Bahr Fritts / 2000

A boy spends his time recapturing his days with Nathan (who, we eventually learn, has died) by imagining all the things he would (and did) do with his friend: pick out hats from the "Baseball Hat Hall of Fame" in their tree fort; splash through puddles; rehearse show-and-tell speeches; listen as Nathan made the class laugh. A small shoe box is step up and stuffed with grieving classmates' notes for Nathan. The story offers no easy solution as it moves through the boy's anger and isolation to his rejoining life in gradual, unforced steps.

In the Piney Woods / Roni Schotter / 2003

A young girl lives with her family and her grandpa in the house that he built many years ago. The girl and her grandpa send a lot of time together. Grandpa tells her that everything has its time to live and die when they are planting a tree. There is a fire in the woods by their house. The woods are all burned but there is now room for new trees to grow. Grandpa dies one day in fall and they bury him by the woods. The girl plants a seed on his grave. New trees grow in the forest, her sister has a baby, and life goes on.
Janna and the Kings / Patricia Smith / 2003

A young girl spends Saturdays with her granddaddy, who is her best friend in the world. Each Saturday she goes with her granddaddy to get a hair cut and talked with three other elderly mean as they made her feel like princess. One day, her mother came in and told her that the king’s heart had gone to sleep and he had left his princess. The little girl feels like time moves by but she is not a part of it. The girl goes back to the places her granddaddy had taken her. At the barbershop the other men still treated her like a princess. She felt her granddaddy’s presence in the barbershop, although he was not really there.

Jasper's Day / Marjorie Blain Parker / 2002

At first, it's not clear exactly what is happening, and that is intentional. Children only know that it's Jasper's day, and everything the family has planned is in honor of the sweet Golden retriever. When Riley, the young narrator, explains, "Jasper's cancer has returned," things become clearer. Jasper is spending his last day doing all the things he loves: eating bacon and eggs (with pain pills hidden in his food); going for a ride to a favorite stream; taking a trip to Grandma's house with a stop for ice cream along the way. The family brings a camera to record all the happy moments. Then it's time to go to the clinic. Parker does not sugarcoat the fact that Jasper is being put down: “the shot” will be quick and gentle. “For Jasper, it will be just like going to sleep. He won't be asleep, though. Jasper will be dead.”

Jubela / Cristina Kessler / 2001

The baby rhino sees his mother collapse and die after they run from shots in the night. For days he survives, hot and very hungry, alone and afraid, running from the smell of humans. Passing elephants ignore him. Galloping zebra leave him behind. Then he smells something familiar, and he finds an old mother rhino. She adopts him and teaches him to graze and to run from the scent of humans.

Lighthouse: A Story of Remembrance / Robert Munsch / 2003

One night, Sarah wakes up her father and asks for him to take her to the lighthouse, like his father used to take him. On the way, they stop to buy doughnuts, because, even though there were no doughnut shops when Grandpa took Sarah's dad to the lighthouse, Grandpa "would have stopped if there had been doughnut shops." Once Sarah and her father reach the lighthouse, they try the door, which was never open for Grandpa. This time, the door is open and they go to the top of the lighthouse. Sarah calls for her Grandpa, but her father tells her that he isn't going to answer. Sarah then throws a flower she's kept since her Grandpa's funeral into the ocean. She and her father then return home, where Sarah falls asleep next to a picture of her Grandpa and her father.
Mama / Eleanor Schick / 2000

The girl remembers her mother's announcement of the illness, the introduction of a loving caretaker, the mother's death and its aftermath, and the girl's own eventual acceptance, not of the death, but of her mother's continuing presence through memories. The central image of hope is the moon, which lights the way for the daughter's reintegrating her mother in her life through a new identity.

Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs / Tomie DePaola / 2006

Every Sunday four-year-old Tommy's family goes to visit his grandparents. His grandmother is always busy downstairs, but his great-grandmother is always to be found in bed upstairs, because she is 94 years old. Tommy loves both of his nanas and the time he spends with them. He is desolate when his upstairs nana dies, but his mother comforts him by explaining that "she will come back in your memory whenever you think about her."

One More Wednesday / Malika Doray / 2001

A small animal has good times with his grandmother. Then Grandmother dies. He goes to the funeral, but he doesn't understand what's going on. He talks to Mama, and she helps him see that Granny will always be here "because you love her so much." At first, thinking of Granny makes him cry, but then it's just nice to remember.

Saying Goodbye to Lulu / Corinne Demas / 2004

A girl cares tenderly for her old dog, Lulu, whose vision, hearing, and general health are declining. Though she wishes that they could play together as they used to, she knows that her dog will not get well. Lulu dies and is buried in the backyard after her parents suggest that this is best, but it takes some months before the girl can say goodbye. As the story ends, she meets her new puppy and finds that her heart has room for Lulu and her new dog too.

Sweet, Sweet Memory / Jacqueline Woodson / 2000

The young female narrator is wearing a white dress, and there is no one to help her comb her hair. Children slowly come to realize the reason the house is hushed is because Grandpa has died. As the narrative unfolds, relatives gather and tell stories, but the little girl's story is stuck in her throat. Finally, she is able to repeat Grandpa's words, "Everything and everyone goes on and on." Afterward, the girl does as her grandfather advised: she watches the world. She watches for Grandpa's collards, cabbage, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes to be harvested; everything is a sweet memory.
Thank you, Grandpa / Lynn Plourde / 2003

Through seasons and years, a young girl's nature walks with her Grandpa always bring new surprises and delights—dandelions, dew-laden spider webs, a snake "playing hide-and-seek." There is sadness, too, when they discover the still body of a grasshopper. But Grandpa helps the child remember the pleasure nature has brought them and explains how to say, "Thank you and goodbye." Then one day, the girl says, "Thank you and good-bye" to Grandpa, missing him but remembering how he had enriched her life.

That Summer / Tony Johnston / 2002

Two brothers run and play like each summer before. One boy gets sick and is in bed the rest of the summer while the family moves in a daze. The dying boy’s brother asks what to do when your heart hurts. The two brothers cry together. The brother who is not sick feels guilty because he is well. The dying boy learns how to make a quilt from his grandma and sews together all the things he loves as his brother watches him fade away. The boy’s grandma tells them that God will care for him when he dies. All of the boy’s hair falls out and he cries and then his brother shaves his head too. When he passed away the brother finished the quilt and said goodbye.

The Best Cat in the World / Leslea Newman / 2004

Victor always told his cat Charlie that he was "the best cat in the world," and when Charlie dies, Victor doesn't want another pet. But after he participates in the burial of Charlie and has a chance to say goodbye Victor tells his mother he'll give a new cat, Shelley a chance. At first Victor is upset that Shelley is so different from Charlie. Yet, as the days pass, Victor becomes intrigued by Shelley's kittenish ways and realizes that more than one cat can be the best in the world.

The Bug Cemetery / Frances Hill / 2002

Children start a bug cemetery. Children from the neighborhood bring dead bugs to bury and they think that the funeral experiences are fun until a friend’s cat gets hit by a car. They bury the cat and cry for a long time. They no longer think that funerals are fun and they decide to plant a garden in remembrance the cat with guidance from an adult.

The Christmas Thingamajig / Lynn Manuel / 2002

Chloe knows the first Christmas after her grandmother's death will be painful. When everyone gathers at Grandpa's house, Chloe misses her Grandma's hugs, her hot chocolate, even the latest little "thingamajig" she would have made for the tree. Chloe can't believe how everyone goes about the usual traditions, but as the visit progresses, she and Grandpa talk about how much they miss Grandma. Later, when Chloe creeps down in the night to hang Grandma's last ornament, she unexpectedly meets Grandpa, who offers his hand in a "bit of a jig" ("a new kind of thingamajig").
The Giant / Claire Ewart / 2003

“I remember Mama had said there were giants, strong and tall, and that one was looking after me. I needed to see one to believe.” A young girl grieves for the loss of her mother, but the demands of farm life go on as she and her undemonstrative father must plant, tend, and harvest the crops. Through the seasons, she watches for a sign of the giant without seeing one, until a mishap during a storm that threatens the corn crop causes her to realize that all along that giant has been her father and that her mother’s presence never really left them.

The Grandad Tree / Trish Cooke / 2000

The story leads us on a symbolic circle, Grandad's life through an apple tree's seasons. It begins at a full-grown apple tree with the children talking about their Grandad. Each season of the tree is a season in their Grandad's life. First he was a man, then a husband, next a father, and then a Grandad.

The Hickory Chair / Lisa Rowe Fraustino / 2000

Louis spends every Sunday with Gran listening to her read, tell stories or just listening to the wind. They have many special objects that they enjoy together like her hickory chair, a mirror, an old and an army trunk. Gram dies on year while Louis is in school. Her will says that she left notes all over the house in specials things that each person can keep. Louis finds many notes even though he is blind. He does not find his own note. His father tells him to just pick something to keep, he chooses the chair (had already been searched for a note and they found nothing). When he is old, Louis’s granddaughter finds a note in the chair in which Gran gives the chair to Louis.

The Memory String / Eve Bunting / 2000

As Laura watches her father and her stepmother, Jane, paint the porch of their new home, she begins loudly telling her cat about her treasured memory string of buttons, which belonged to her mother before she died three years earlier. There's one from her great-grandmother's first "grown-up" dress, one from her mother's wedding gown, and most precious to her mother, a button snipped off Laura's father's uniform when he came home from the Gulf War. It is this button that goes missing when the cat breaks the string and the buttons scatter. Then, during a late-night search, Jane finds the uniform button. Laura overhears the knowing Jane say it would be best if the button reappeared as a gift from a good fairy. Now, Laura is ready to begin to accept Jane.
What is Heaven Like? / Beverly Lewis / 2006

Wondering about heaven after the death of his grandfather, a boy questions his sister, a teacher, his parents, and other people, whose diverse answers help him begin to understand life after death and how to ensure that he will see his grandfather again one day.

Wild Girl and Gran / Nan Gregory / 2000

A girl and her grandma walk daily to a tree where the girl climbs and they have adventures. The grandma gets sick and the girl wants to save her but she doesn’t know how. The girl remembers her grandma as she goes through her old things. The girl and her mother sprinkle their grandma’s ashes on the earth by the tree to always remember her.

Wishes for One More Day / Melanie Joy Pastor / 2006

Anna and her younger brother Joey wake up one morning to the smell of pancakes, but when they come into the kitchen they notice that their mother’s eyes are red, as if she has been crying. Mother explains that their beloved grandfather has died. “Why couldn’t I have had one more day with Poppy,” the children lament. Mother suggests Joey and Anna make a list of all the things they would do with Poppy if they had one more day. The children experience grief over Poppy’s death and happiness as they remember him.
APPENDIX C.

MATRIX FOR EVALUATION OF PICTURE BOOKS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Author/Year Published</th>
<th>Deceased or Dying Character’s Age</th>
<th>Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender</th>
<th>Deceased or Dying Character’s Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Deceased or Dying Character’s Role in the Story</th>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
<th>Main Character’s Age</th>
<th>Family/Friend Immediate Reaction to the Death</th>
<th>Types of Grief Present</th>
<th>Coping Strategies of Family/Friends</th>
<th>Success of Coping Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Butterfly for Brittany / Cristine Thomas / 2005</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Conversation about heaven)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Grand Old Tree / Mary Newell DePalma / 2005</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown (Tree)</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Elderly (Is the deceased or dying character)</td>
<td>Continue on With Life</td>
<td>New Identity</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>A Story for Hippo: A Book About Loss / Simon Puttock and Alison Bartlett / 2001</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown (Hippo)</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Time Alone Silence</td>
<td>Searching Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Regression Denial Displacement Mirror Adult (Memories)</td>
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<td>Always and Forever / Alan Durant / 2004</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown (Fox)</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Crying Said Goodbye Silence</td>
<td>Searching Mitigation Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Displacement Repression Mirror Adult (Memories and live on)</td>
<td>Unsuccessful Unsuccessful Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna's Corn / Barbara Santucci / 2002</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Time Alone Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Alarm Searching Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Plant corn seeds to keep memories and live on)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackberry Stew / Isabell Monk / 2005</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Searching Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bluebird Summer / Deborah Hopkinson / 2001</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories and plant garden)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
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<td>Flamingo Dream / Donna Jo Napoli / 2002</td>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Alarm Searching Mitigation Anger Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Sprinkle ashes and make a book for memories)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title/Author/Year Published</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Age</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender</td>
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<td>Goodbye, Mousie / Robie H. Harris / 2002</td>
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<td>Unknown (Mouse)</td>
<td>Pet</td>
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<td>Child</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>Alarm</td>
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<td>Grandma's Purple Flowers / Adjoa Burrowes / 2000</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
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<td>Alarm</td>
<td>Searching</td>
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<td>Hugs and Kisses from Brittany / Cristine Thomas / 2005</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td>Cancer</td>
<td>Child</td>
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<td>Crying</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Alarm</td>
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<td>I Remember Miss Perry / Pat Brisson / 2006</td>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Alarm</td>
<td>Searching</td>
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<td>If Nathan Were Here / Mary Bahr Fritts / 2000</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>Alarm</td>
<td>Searching</td>
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<td>In the Piney Woods / Roni Schotter / 2003</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Alarm</td>
<td>Searching</td>
<td>Mitigation</td>
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<td>Janna and the Kings / Patricia Smith / 2003</td>
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<td>African American</td>
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<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
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<td>Jasper's Day / Marjorie Blain Parker / 2002</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown (Dog)</td>
<td>Pet</td>
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<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Time Alone</td>
<td>Mitigation</td>
<td>New Identity</td>
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<td>Jubela / Cristina Kessler / 2001</td>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown (Rhino)</td>
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<td>Alarm Searching</td>
<td>Mitigation Anger Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Displacement Mirror Adult (New acceptance)</td>
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<td>Lighthouse: A Story of Remembrance / Robert Munsch / 2003</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mama / Eleanor Schick / 2000</td>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying Confusion</td>
<td>Alarm Searching</td>
<td>Mitigation Anger Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories and always with you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs / Tomie DePaola / 2006</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Alarm Searching New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One More Wednesday / Malika Doray / 2001</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown (Animal)</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Alarm Searching New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adults (Funeral attendance and memories)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying Goodbye to Lulu / Corinne Demas / 2004</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown (Dog)</td>
<td>Pet</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying Silence</td>
<td>Alarm Anger</td>
<td>Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adults (Burial and plant tree for memories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet, Sweet Memory / Jacqueline Woodson / 2000</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying Silence</td>
<td>Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories and continue on)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you, Grandpa / Lynn Plourde / 2003</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Said Goodbye</td>
<td>Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Taught about nature living and dying)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title/Author/Year Published</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Age</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Role in the Story</td>
<td>Cause of Death</td>
<td>Main Character’s Age</td>
<td>Family/Friend Immediate Reaction to the Death</td>
<td>Types of Grief Present</td>
<td>Coping Strategies of Family/Friends</td>
<td>Success of Coping Strategies</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>The Best Cat in the World / Leslea Newman / 2004</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown (Cat)</td>
<td>Pet</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying Time Alone</td>
<td>Searching New Identity</td>
<td>Displacement Mirror Adult (Burial, plant memory bush and love again)</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bug Cemetery / Frances Hill / 2002</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown (Cat)</td>
<td>Pet</td>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Alarm Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Make grave stone and plant garden)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Christmas Thingamajig / Lynn Manuel / 2002</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Regression Mirror Adult (Memories)</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Giant / Claire Ewart / 2003</td>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Searching Mitigation New Identity</td>
<td>Displacement Mirror Adult (Memories and live on)</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grandad Tree / Trish Cooke / 2000</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Plant a tree in memory)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hickory Chair / Lisa Rowe Fraustino / 2000</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Memories)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Memory String / Eve Bunting / 2000</td>
<td>Middle-aged</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Searching Anger Guilt New Identity</td>
<td>Repression Displacement Mirror Adult (Memories and love again)</td>
<td>Unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Heaven Like? / Beverly Lewis / 2006</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Confusion Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Searching New Identity</td>
<td>Mirror Adults (Belief in heaven)</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title/Author/Year Published</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Age</td>
<td>Deceased or Dying Character’s Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Girl and Gran / Nan Gregory / 2000</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Scatter ashes for memory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishes for One More Day / Melanie Joy Pastor / 2006</td>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Feeling Lost</td>
<td>Mirror Adult (Create memory book)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>