Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983

CHILDREN'S GRIEF & LOSS BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Goodbye: A First Conversation about Grief

By: Megan Madison & Jessica Ralli Ages: 2-5

Developed by experts in the fields of early childhood and activism against injustice, this topic-driven picture book offers clear, concrete language and compelling imagery to introduce the concept of grief. This book aims to normalize the topic of death by discussing what it means and how it feels to experience loss. It centers around several questions that arise about grief and honest, simple ways to answer them.

The Memory Tree

By: Britta Teckentrup Ages: 3-5

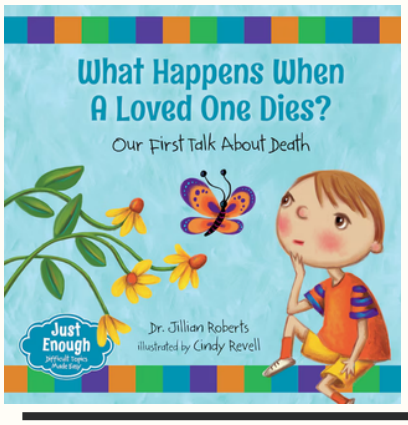
Fox has lived a long and happy life in the forest, but now he is tired. He lies down in his favourite clearing, and falls asleep for ever. Before long, Fox's friends begin to gather in the clearing. One by one, they tell stories of the special moments that they shared with Fox. And so, as they share their memories, a tree begins to grow, becoming bigger and stronger with each memory, sheltering and protecting all the animals in the forest, just as Fox did when he was alive.

The Rabbit Listened

By: Cori Doerrfeld Ages: 3-5

When something sad happens, Taylor doesn't know where to turn. All the animals are sure they have the answer. The chicken wants to talk it out, but Taylor doesn't feel like chatting. The bear thinks Taylor should get angry, but that's not quite right either. One by one, the animals try to tell Taylor how to act, and one by one they fail to offer comfort. Then the rabbit arrives. All the rabbit does is listen . . . which is just what Taylor needs.
With its spare, poignant text and irresistibly sweet illustration, The Rabbit Listened is about how to comfort and heal the people in your life, by taking the time to carefully, lovingly, gently listen.

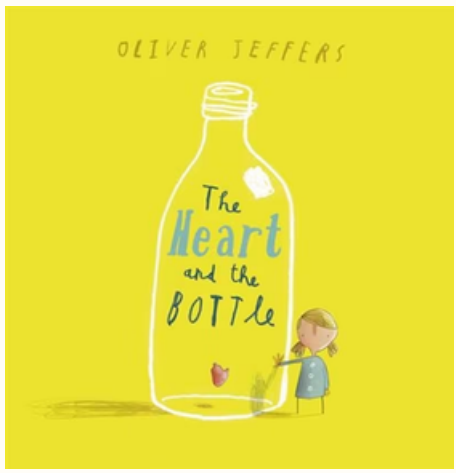
What Happens When A Loved One Dies?: Our First Talk About Death



By: Dr. Jillian Roberts Ages: 3-5

Whether children are experiencing grief and loss for the first time or simply curious, it can be difficult to know how to talk to them about death.
Using questions posed in a child's voice and answers that start simply and become more in-depth, this book allows adults to guide the conversation to a natural and reassuring conclusion. Additional questions at the back of the book allow for further discussion.

Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983



The Heart and The Bottle

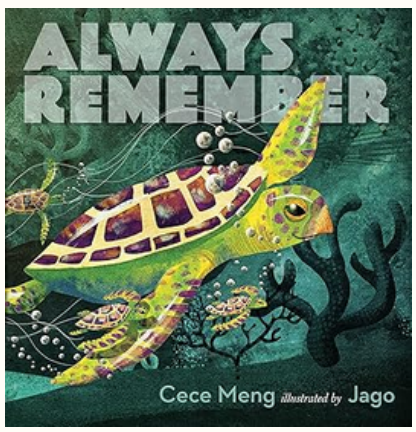
By: Oliver Jeffers Ages: 3-5

Once there was a girl whose life was filled with wonder at the world around her... Then one day something happened that made the girl take her heart and put it in a safe place. However, after that it seemed that the world was emptier than before. But would she know how to get her heart back?
In this deeply moving story, Oliver Jeffers deals with the weighty themes of love and loss with an extraordinary lightness of touch and shows us, ultimately, that there is always hope.

Grandmother Mouse

By: Peter Thomas McKay Ages: 3-5

When the nighttime sky fills with stars, Grandmother Mouse awakens and begins her grounding ceremonies.
Inhale, exhale
Inhale, exhale
Inhale, exhale. . .
Gifted to the Nisga'a People, Grandmother Mouse is a nurturing protector, tending to the hearts and minds of the people, the plants, the animals, and all of our relations. Imbuing the world with smudge, blessings, and affirmations, Grandmother Mouse is here to offer you gentle, yet profound, teachings so you may walk through life with good intention and strong spirit.



Always Remember

By: Cece Meng Ages: 3-7

After Old Turtle swims his last swim and breathes his last breath, and the waves gently take him away, his friends lovingly remember how he impacted each and every one of them. As the sea animals think back on how much better Old Turtle made their lives and their world, they realize that he is not truly gone, because his memory and legacy will last forever.

Calling the Wind

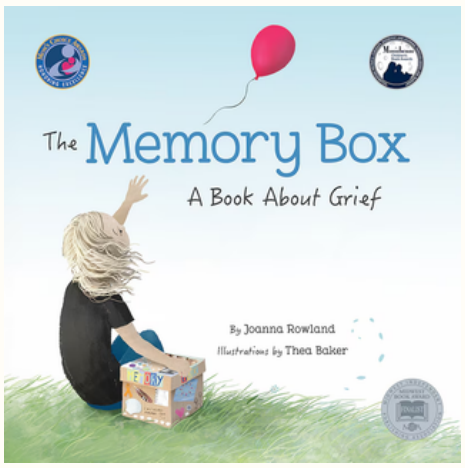
By: Trudy Ludwig Ages: 4-8

In a small village in Japan, a family mourns the loss of their loved one. Each family member grieves in their own way, but it is not until they discover an old-fashioned telephone booth on a windswept hill that they begin to heal. Through the telephone, they are able to express feelings long bottled up--speaking directly to their loved one and also to each other. Slowly but surely, the pain subsides, and hope blossoms anew.
Inspired by Itaru Sasaki's Wind Telephone, which brought healing to the people of Japan in the wake of an earthquake and tsunami this story explores grief and loss, and how we move forward by finding meaningful ways to connect with the family and friends we've lost, as well as those who are still with us.

Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983

The Memory Box: A Book About Grief

By: Joanna Rowland Ages: 6-8



From the perspective of a young child, author Joanna Rowland artfully describes what it's like to remember and grieve a loved one who has died. The child in the story wonders if she will forget the person who has gone. Other days I wonder if I'll ever stop feeling sad you are gone.
The main character creates a memory box to keep mementos and written memories of her loved one to help with the grieving process. Throughout the narrative, the child's feelings are acknowledged, allowed, and assured that feelings are normal and healthy to express. Heartfelt and comforting, The Memory Box helps children, parents, educators, therapists, and social workers talk about this very difficult topic together.

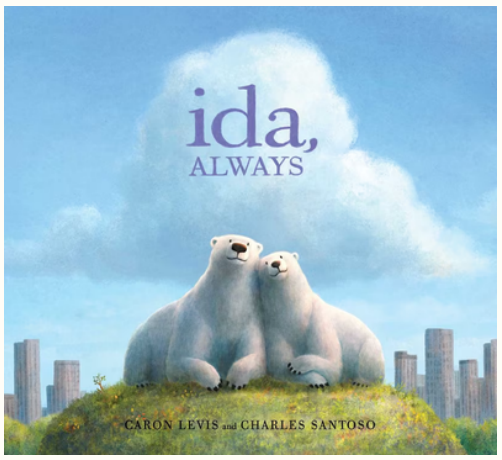
The Invisible String

By: Patrice Karst Ages: 6-8

Parents, educators, therapists, and social workers alike have declared The Invisible String the perfect tool for coping with all kinds of separation anxiety, loss, and grief. It's also been joyfully embraced as a year-round celebration of love--gifted at births, graduations, weddings, Valentine's Day, and beyond. In this relatable and reassuring contemporary classic, a mother tells her two children that they're all connected by an invisible string. "That's impossible!" the children insist, but still they want to know more: "What kind of string?" The answer is the simple truth that binds us all: An Invisible String made of love. Even though you can't see it with your eyes, you can feel it deep in your heart, and know that you are always connected to the ones you love. Does everybody have an Invisible String? How far does it reach? Does it ever go away? This heartwarming picture book for all ages explores questions about the intangible yet unbreakable connections between us, and opens up deeper conversations about love.

Ida, Always

By: Caron Levis Ages: 6-8



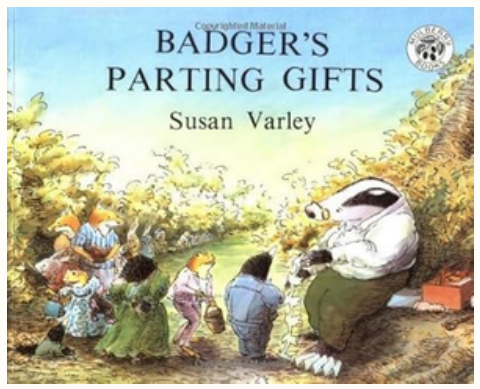
A beautiful, honest portrait of loss and deep friendship told through the story of two iconic polar bears.
Gus lives in a big park in the middle of an even bigger city, and he spends his days with Ida. Ida is right there. Always.
Then one sad day, Gus learns that Ida is very sick, and she isn't going to get better. The friends help each other face the difficult news with whispers, sniffles, cuddles, and even laughs. Slowly Gus realizes that even after Ida is gone, she will still be with him—through the sounds of their city, and the memories that live in their favorite spots.
Ida, Always is an exquisitely told story of two best friends—inspired by a real bear friendship—and a gentle, moving, needed reminder that loved ones lost will stay in our hearts, always.

Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983

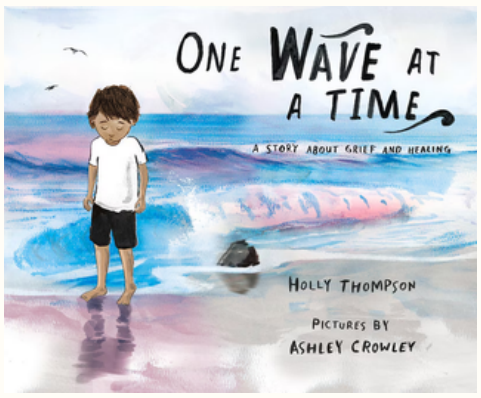
Badger's Parting Gifts

By: Susan Varley

Ages: 6-8



All the woodland creatures--Mole, Frog, Fox, and Rabbit--love old Badger, who is their confidante, advisor, and friend. When he dies, they are overwhelmed by their loss. Then they begin to remember and treasure the memories he left them.
Told simply, directly, and honestly, this uplifting story will be of tremendous value to both children and their parents. A gentle classic that can help foster communication, care, and understanding.



One Wave At A Time: A Story about Grief and Healing

By: Holly Thompson

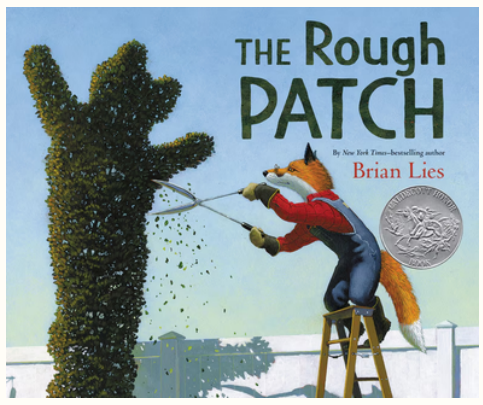
Ages: 6-8

After his father dies, Kai experiences all kinds of emotions: sadness, anger, fear, guilt. Sometimes they crash and mix together. Other times, there are no emotions at all–just flatness. As Kai and his family adjust to life without Dad, the waves still roll in. But with the help of friends and one another, they learn to cope–and, eventually, heal. A lyrical story about grieving for anyone encountering loss.

The Rough Patch

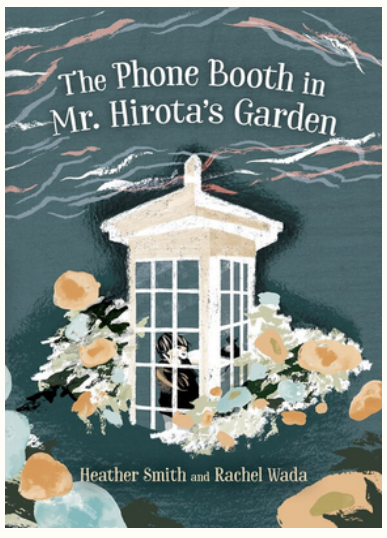
By: Brian Lies

Ages: 6-8



Evan and his dog do everything together, from eating ice cream to caring for their prize-winning garden, which grows big and beautiful. One day the unthinkable happens: Evan's dog dies. Heartbroken, Evan destroys the garden and everything in it. The ground becomes overgrown with prickly weeds and thorns, and Evan embraces the chaos.
But beauty grows in the darkest of places, and when a twisting vine turns into an immense pumpkin, Evan is drawn out of his isolation and back to the county fair, where friendships–old and new–await.

The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden



By: Heather Smith

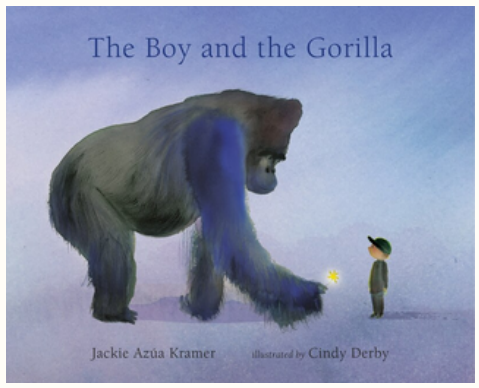
Ages: 6-8

When the tsunami destroyed Makio's village, Makio lost his father . . . and his voice. The entire village is silenced by grief, and the young child's anger at the ocean grows. Then one day his neighbor, Mr. Hirota, begins a mysterious project–building a phone booth in his garden. At first Makio is puzzled; the phone isn't connected to anything. It just sits there, unable to ring. But as more and more villagers are drawn to the phone booth, its purpose becomes clear to Makio: the disconnected phone is connecting people to their lost loved ones. Makio calls to the sea to return what it has taken from him and ultimately finds his voice and solace in a phone that carries words on the wind.

Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983

The Boy and The Gorilla

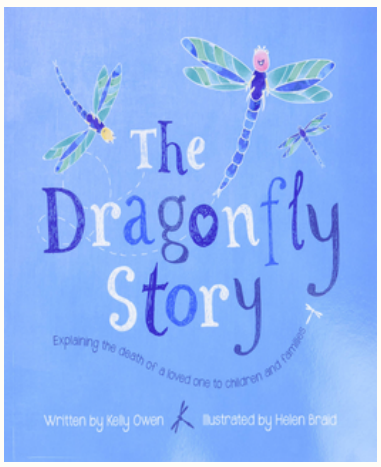
By: Jackie Azúa Kramer Ages: 6-8



On the day of his mother's funeral, a young boy conjures the very visitor he needs to see: a gorilla. Wise and gentle, the gorilla stays on to answer the heart-heavy questions the boy hesitates to ask his father: Where did his mother go? Will she come back home? Will we all die? Yet with the gorilla's friendship, the boy slowly begins to discover moments of comfort in tending flowers, playing catch, and climbing trees. Most of all, the gorilla knows that it helps to simply talk about the loss–especially with those who share your grief and who may feel alone, too. Author Jackie Azúa Kramer's quietly thoughtful text and illustrator Cindy Derby's beautiful impressionistic artwork depict how this tender relationship leads the boy to open up to his father and find a path forward. Told entirely in dialogue, this direct and deeply affecting picture book will inspire conversations about grief, empathy, and healing beyond the final hope-filled scene.

The Dragonfly Story

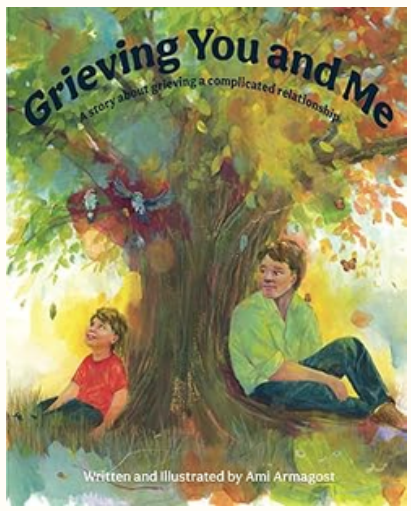
By: Kelly Owen Ages: 6-8



This beautifully illustrated story is an adaptation of the fable of the transformation of the dragonfly. This fable has been long used to explain death and the hope of heaven. This version opens with two siblings talking about missing their sister and wondering where she had gone now that she had died. The mother then tells them the dragonfly story. Using the experience of the death of her eldest child, the author has retold the fable in simple terms to encourage children and families to talk about death and what happens when we die. The book does not shy away from the subject of death, but aims to explain it in a real and loving way. The story starts in the family home as the siblings feel sad and confused about their sister's death, so the parents take them to the park where they discover a dragonfly. The dragonfly story is then told and they reflect on how that might explain their loss. It is a useful book to discuss death when you have experienced a loss in the family. The book is ideal for people of all beliefs and none. The Dragonfly Story offers hope and comfort to the bereaved.

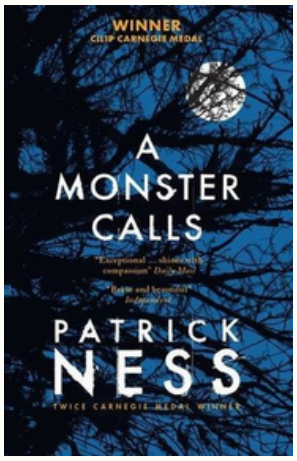
Grieving You and Me

By: Ami Armagost Ages: 4-12



Grieving You and Me is a children's book that gently explores a child's experience of grieving the death of someone they had a complicated relationship with. Whether impacted by substance, painful memories, or unresolved conflict, this story acknowledges that children can grieve the loss of someone they had mixed emotions about--something often overlooked or unspoken.
With soft illustrations and supportive language, this book creates space for honest conversations about death, grief, and self-care. It validates children's mixed emotions, encourages healthy emotional expression, and reassures them that it's okay grieve–even if it's messy.

Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983



A Monster Calls

By: Patrick Ness

Ages: 8-12

Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth.

Patrick Ness takes the final idea of the late, award-winning writer Siobhan Dowd and weaves an extraordinary and heartbreaking tale of mischief, healing and above all, the courage it takes to survive.

King and the Dragonflies

By: Kacen Callender

Ages: 8-12

Twelve-year-old Kingston James is sure his brother Khalid has turned into a dragonfly. When Khalid unexpectedly passed away, he shed what was his first skin for another to live down by the bayou in their small Louisiana town. Khalid still visits in dreams, and King must keep these secrets to himself as he watches grief transform his family.

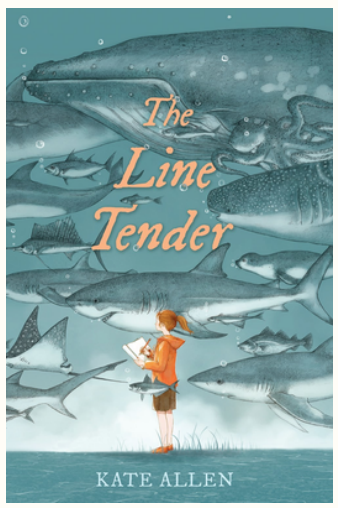
It would be easier if King could talk with his best friend, Sandy Sanders. But just days before he died, Khalid told King to end their friendship, after overhearing a secret about Sandy–that he thinks he might be gay. "You don't want anyone to think you're gay too, do you?"

But when Sandy goes missing, sparking a town-wide search, and King finds his former best friend hiding in a tent in his backyard, he agrees to help Sandy escape from his abusive father, and the two begin an adventure as they build their own private paradise down by the bayou and among the dragonflies. As King's friendship with Sandy is reignited, he's forced to confront questions about himself and the reality of his brother's death.

The Line Tender

By: Kate Allen

Ages: 8-12



The Line Tender is the story of Lucy, the daughter of a marine biologist and a rescue diver, and the summer that changes her life. If she ever wants to lift the cloud of grief over her family and community, she must complete the research her late mother began. She must follow the sharks.

Wherever the sharks led, Lucy Everhart's marine-biologist mother was sure to follow. In fact, she was on a boat far off the coast of Massachusetts, preparing to swim with a Great White, when she died suddenly. Lucy was eight. Since then Lucy and her father have done OK–thanks in large part to her best friend, Fred, and a few close friends and neighbors. But June of her twelfth summer brings more than the end of school and a heat wave to sleepy Rockport. On one steamy day, the tide brings a Great White–and then another tragedy, cutting short a friendship everyone insists was "meaningful" but no one can tell Lucy what it all meant. To survive the fresh wave of grief, Lucy must grab the line that connects her depressed father, a stubborn fisherman, and a curious old widower to her mother's unfinished research. If Lucy can find a way to help this unlikely quartet follow the sharks her mother loved, she'll finally be able to look beyond what she's lost and toward what's left to be discovered.

Langley Hospice Society
langleyhospice.ca
Providing compassionate care and support since 1983

The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise

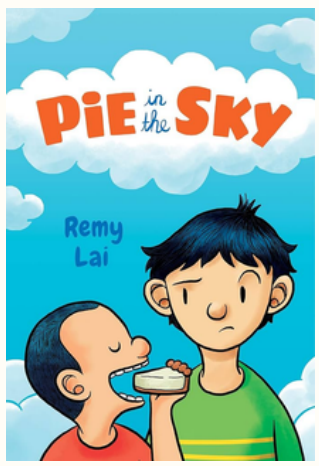
By: Dan Germeinhart

Ages: 8-12

Five years. That's how long Coyote and her dad, Rodeo, have lived on the road in an old school bus, crisscrossing the nation. It's also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters in a car crash.
Coyote hasn't been home in all that time, but when she learns the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished - the very same park where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box - she devises an elaborate plan to get her dad to drive 3,600 miles back to Washington state in four days...without him realizing it.
Along the way, they'll pick up a strange crew of misfit travelers. Lester has a lady love to meet. Salvador and his mom are looking to start over. Val needs a safe place to be herself. And then there's Gladys....
Over the course of thousands of miles, Coyote will learn that going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all...but that with friends by her side, she just might be able to turn her "once upon a time" into a "happily ever after".

Pie in the Sky

By: Remy Lai



Ages: 8-12

When eleven-year-old Jingwen moves to a new country, he feels like he's landed on Mars. School is torture, making friends is impossible since he doesn't speak English, and he's often stuck looking after his (extremely irritating) little brother, Yanghao.
To distract himself from the loneliness, Jingwen daydreams about making all the cakes on the menu of Pie in the Sky, the bakery his father had planned to open before he unexpectedly passed away. The only problem is his mother has laid down one major rule: the brothers are not to use the oven while she's at work. As Jingwen and Yanghao bake elaborate cakes, they'll have to cook up elaborate excuses to keep the cake making a secret from Mama.
Told in prose and graphic novel elements, this middle-grade novel is about a boy's immigration experience, his annoying little brother, and their cake-baking hijinks!

But I Don't Want To Say GOODBYE!

By: Ta'shay Mason

Ages: 9-12

In this poignant and heartfelt book, author Ta'Shay Mason expertly crafts a tender story about how to make peace with the death of a parent...by honoring them. Through soft and soothing words, the author weaves a story that shares both the commonality and uniqueness of loss, with the mother and child coming up with their own special way to honor and remember their beloved family member.
But i don't want to say GOODBYE! is a perfect book to help any family experiencing grief and also for those young readers who might need help in understanding someone else who is going through a loss.
The death of a loved one is never easy to understand, let alone speak about. But for a little girl whose father has just died, the hardest thing is figuring out how to say goodbye. As Mommy makes funeral arrangements and tries to figure out the best way to say goodbye to a man who was loved by many, the little girl must find her own way to come to peace with her father's death. As the funeral gets closer, will she find a way to say goodbye?