

Providing evidence-based information about palliative care for everyone because death and dying will affect all of us.

Australian Children's Books on Death and Dying

The books in this list have all either won award(s) or been nominated or shortlisted for award(s). You can use them as starting point when talking to children about death and dying, how to cope with grief, and the importance of remembering loved ones who have died.

Babies and Toddlers (0 - 4 years)

A Leaf Called Greaf (2024). Kelly Canby

A lonely bear forms a strong connection with a special leaf named Greaf. As Greaf changes through the seasons and eventually drifts away, Bear feels the pain of loss but ultimately finds hope and comfort in the cherished memories that they shared.



Grace and Mr Milligan (2024). Caz Goodwin

Grace, a young girl, shares happy moments with her neighbour Mr Milligan and his goat Charlie until Charlie passes away from old age, causing Mr Milligan to retreat in sorrow. Concerned, Grace plans a picnic where they share memories, helping Mr Milligan to heal and find joy again through the power of love and friendship.

Harry & Hopper (2024). Margaret Wild

One day, when Harry comes home from school, his beloved dog Hopper is not there to greet him. This story explores the deep bond and the sadness Harry feels after losing Hopper, and helps children make sense of grief and understand the enduring power of love and memories.



Tough Boris (2019). Mem Fox

Tough guys need to cry, even tough guy pirates! Tough Boris tells of the importance of acknowledging emotions, acceptance of death and experiencing grief. All of these big emotions are experienced by Boris when his beloved parrot dies, while a boy who stows away on Boris' pirate ship helps Boris through this tough period.

Little kids (5 - 7 years)

Jenny Angel (2002). Margaret Wild and Anne Spudvilas

Jenny sees herself as her younger brother's guardian angel, determined to keep him safe from his life-threatening illness. Through her nightly vigil and steadfast hope, Jenny comes to accept the reality of loss and discovers the importance of love and memory in the face of grief.



Old Pig (2017). Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks

An elderly pig and her granddaughter share a peaceful, tender farewell as the older pig prepares for her passing. In their final moments together, they cherish simple joys, gently reflecting on love, loss, and the beauty of life's fleeting moments.

The Important Things (2025). Peter Carnavas

The story follows young Christopher and his mother as they try to move on after his father has disappeared from their lives. When they begin giving away Christopher's father's belongings, the items mysteriously reappear, revealing Christopher's silently holding onto his memories, while his mother learns to honour his need to remember.

The Tiny Star (2021). Mem Fox

A tiny star falls to the earth and becomes a baby, living a loving fulfilling life as years go by, under the loving care of the community. As the star begins to shrink over time and then disappears completely one day, the community feels the loss but later realises that the star has simply returned to its home in the heavens where it continues watching over and loving them.



The Very Best of Friends (2004). Margaret Wild

Jessie and her husband James live happily on a farm with their beloved cat until James suddenly dies. Overcome with grief, Jessie distances herself from the cat—but as time passes, their quiet companionship helps her heal and rediscover comfort in love and friendship.

Big Kids (8 – 12 years)

Bailey Finch Takes a Stand (2021). Ingrid Laguna

Bailey is mourning her mother's passing and finds comfort in spending time by the creek with her dog, Sheba. When Sheba becomes seriously ill from swallowing glass in the polluted water, Bailey forms an unexpected friendship with Israel, a quiet boy knowledgeable about endangered species, as they clean up the creek together and learn about courage and environmental responsibility along the way.

Leave Taking (2018). Lorraine Marwood

Toby and his parents prepare to leave their family farm following the death of his younger sister, Leah. Over the course of a week, Toby revisits meaningful places around the property, guided by memories of Leah and his faithful dog, Trigger, learning to say goodbye and find healing through their shared history.



Lucy's Bay (2003). Gary Crew and Gregory Rogers

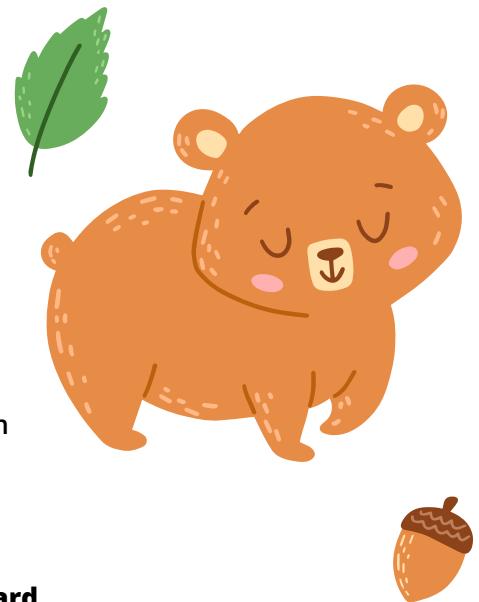
A teenage boy returns to his grandfather's beach house after many years, confronting the painful memory of his younger sister Lucy's drowning, an event which he blames himself for. As he revisits the bay where the tragedy occurred, he confronts his guilt and sorrow, ultimately finding a path toward healing and reconciliation.

Pie in the Sky (2020). Remy Lai

Jingwen relocates from China to Australia with his mother and younger brother, Yanghao, following his father's sudden death. Struggling with loneliness and a language barrier, Jingwen finds comfort in baking cakes inspired by his father's dream of owning a bakery, all while keeping this secret from his mother.

The Elephant (2021). Peter Carnavas

A girl named Olive imagines her father's depression following the death of Olive's mother as an elephant that follows him everywhere. With help from her cheery grandfather and her best friend, Arthur, Olive sets out to chase the elephant away.



The Naming of Tishkin Silk (2013). Glenda Millard

Griffin Silk is an uncommon boy from an uncommon family, and live with his father, grandmother, and five sisters in a warm, loving home. Troubled by the absence of his mother and baby sister, Griffin's world shifts when he befriends Layla, a spirited classmate who helps him confront his feelings and understand the changes in his family.

Teenagers (13 – 16 years)

Bridge of Clay (2018). Marc Zusak

This story explores the impact of parental death on family bonds and the importance of brotherhood in maintaining a sense of normality in relation to the real, adult world, especially when faced with a sense of abandonment and heartbreak.

How It Feels to Float (2023). Helena Fox

16-year-old Biz struggles with a profound sense of detachment and isolation following her father's passing. When she starts seeing her father's spirit, it challenges her sense of reality and leads her to confront her inner turmoil, where she begins to discover the importance of connection, self-acceptance, and healing.



Painted love letters (2015). Catherine Bateson

A heartfelt novel about Chrissie, a teenage girl coping with her father's terminal illness and the emotional challenges it creates within her family. Through art, poetry, and reflection, Chrissie begins to navigate grief, love, and growing up.

The Grief Book (2010). Elizabeth Vercoe with Kerry Abramowski

A compassionate resource to help young individuals navigate the complex emotions associated with grief. Featuring 52 practical strategies, the book offers coping mechanisms, personal stories, and insights to support readers in comprehending and coping with their grief, whether from the loss of a loved one, family changes, or other significant life events.

The Messenger Bird (2014). Rosanne Hawke

Tamar is mourning the loss of her older brother, and the emotional distance between her and her father grows as they both struggle with their grief. Her path toward healing begins when she discovers an old piece of music and reconnects with her piano, which leads her to meet Nathaniel, a gifted violinist who helps her find a path forward.



The Protected (2018). Claire Zorn

Hannah struggles to rebuild her life following the sudden death of her older sister in a car accident. As she copes with grief, strained family relationships, and the aftermath of past bullying, Hannah finds unexpected support from a new student named Josh, helping her confront her pain and heal.



The Simple Gift (2019). Steven Herrick

Billy runs away from his difficult home life and finds refuge in an abandoned train carriage in the quiet Australian town of Bendarat. There, he forms unexpected friendships with Old Bill, a reclusive homeless man, and Caitlin, a wealthy girl seeking meaning, where together they discover the transformative power of kindness and human connection.

This Is Not a Sad Book (But It's OK to Feel Sad) (2024). Liz Vercoe

A practical, compassionate guide filled with stories and ideas to support children through their grief and loss. It reassures us that even in our darkest moments, there is a path forward.



Visit caresearch.com.au/Dying2Learn for more information and resources.

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