

The Memory Box: A Book About Grief - Reading Guide

Author: Joanna Rowland Illustrator: Thea Baker

Themes: grief, remembering lost loved ones

Lesson/Notes: Children depend on support from adults during the grieving process, but grief can be difficult to discuss. Books help create a more comfortable environment to talk about difficult feelings. This book is told from the perspective of a young girl who has lost a loved one and makes a memory box of special items to help her remember the person. For more practical tips and information, I recommend the book *The Magical Thoughts of Grieving Children: Treating Children with Complicated Mourning and Advice for Parents* by James A. Fogarty.

When someone you love dies, it can be difficult to talk about. You may have lots of different feelings - sadness, anger, fear - or it may seem like you don't feel anything. Many people find it helpful to talk (or draw) about their feelings or what they miss about the person who has passed away.

Discussion Questions

- *How did the girl in the story feel? (sad, scared, later happy)*
- *What did she do to remember the person who died? (made memory box, talked about memories with others, went places that were important to them, made new memories)*
- *Have you had any thoughts or feelings like the girl in the story?*

Activity: Make A Memory Box

Suggested Supplies: box, paint; optional: tissue paper, glue, markers, stickers, etc.

- Encourage the child to decorate his or her own memory box however (s)he likes.
- Talk about what the child may want to put in the box to remember good times with the person. If the child is unsure what to add, offer suggestions such as pictures or written memories, but try to let the child decide what to include.
- Ask the child if (s)he would like to share any memories about the person who has passed away. If a child does not feel like talking, do not force the conversation. You may want to encourage other forms of expression such as art (music, drawing, etc.) or movement (running, dancing, etc.).