

# Ben's Flying Flowers - Reading Guide

Author: Inger Maier   Illustrator: Maria Bogade

Themes: grief, sibling death (by illness)

Lesson/Notes: In this story, a sibling dies from a chronic illness. This book can help children in similar circumstances but could unnecessarily induce fears in other children; consider your child's sensitivity and life circumstances when selecting books. In the back, there is a helpful note to parents from the author Inger Maier, PhD. It is important to answer children's questions honestly and clearly - Emily's parents explain Ben will not be able to come back.

*When someone we 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

- What did you notice in the story?
- What did Emily and Ben like to do together?
- What happened to Ben? (He was very sick for a long time. He died.)
- How did Emily and her parents feel when Ben died? (very sad)
- Emily's sadness was very big at first. What helped the sad feelings grow smaller?
- Would you like to talk about how you're feeling?

## Activity: Butterfly Symmetry Painting

Suggested Supplies: paint (3-4 colors), paper, scissors, chenille stem, glue

- Direct the child to fold the paper in half, then unfold it.
  - Looking at the paper on the table, there should be a left and right half of the paper with a crease in the middle.
- Help child squirt lines, dots, swirls, etc. of different colors of paint on only one side of the crease (e.g. the left side of the paper).
- Re-fold the paper along the crease from earlier like a book.
  - Press down all across the paper to push the paint onto both in-sides of the paper. Take care - paint might squish out of the sides.
- Carefully unfold the paper. The painting to the left and to the right of the crease should match like a mirror. Leave the painting to dry.
- Once the paint is dry, cut the paper into the shape of a butterfly using the crease of the paper as the butterfly's body.
- Fold the chenille stem in half, then bend the ends to look like antennae.
  - Glue the chenille stem to the paper to be the butterfly's body.