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Závěrečná diplomová práce se bude věnovat dětské literatuře. Jejím cílem je zhodnotit, jak je téma smrti prezentováno ve zvolených knihách pro dětského čtenáře a nakolik tyto publikace mohou sloužit účelům tzv. biblioterapie. V úvodní části diplomantka stručně uvede do literárního kontextu dětské literatury a zvolená díla do něj zasadí. Načrtne rovněž proměny přístupu k tématu smrti v dětské literatuře, vysvětlí, co je to biblioterapie a případně definuje další pojmy, s nimiž bude pracovat. Jádrem práce pak bude analýza motivů smrti a umírání ve zvolených dílech. V analýzách diplomantka zohlední jak literární aspekty děl, tak případně i obrazovou složku a zhodnotí jejich efektivitu vzhledem k tematické rovině. V závěru své analýzy shrne, zhodnotí díla z hlediska zvolené tematiky a literárních prostředků k tématům a motivům využitých a pokusí se vyjádřit k jejich biblioterapeutickému potenciálu.

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I hereby declare:

This thesis was prepared separately. All the literary sources and the information I used in the thesis are listed in the bibliography.

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In Pardubice on March 31, 2022   Tereza Prokopová

ANNOTATION

This thesis deals with death in children's literature. The first part is devoted to the theoretical background. Firstly, the history of children's literature is discussed. The introduction of the format of a picturebook follows, discussing its position within the genre of children's literature, its specifics, and its contemporary form. Next, the controversial issue of authorial egocentrism is addressed. Then, the changing approach to death in children's literature is mapped. Bibliotherapy and its possible use are briefly covered in the next chapter, alongside the expert perspectives on children's understanding of death. Finally, concepts of death, including the definition of mature conceptualization of death, and the concept of grief, including theories of grief, are presented as a core background for the analysis. The second part of the thesis analyzes selected contemporary picturebooks and is followed by an evaluation.

KEY WORDS

death, grief, children's literature, picturebook, bibliotherapy

TITLE

Smrt v dětské literatuře

ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá smrtí v dětské literatuře. První část je věnována teoretickým východiskům. Nejprve je pojednáno o historii dětské literatury. Následuje představení formátu obrázkové knihy, pojednání o jejím postavení v rámci žánru dětské literatury, jejích specifikách a současné podobě. Dále je řešena kontroverzní otázka autorského egocentrismu. Poté je zmapován měnící se přístup ke smrti v dětské literatuře. Biblioterapie a její možné využití je stručně popsáno v další kapitole spolu s expertními pohledy na dětské chápání smrti. Nakonec jsou představeny koncepty smrti, včetně definice zralé konceptualizace smrti, a koncept zármutku, včetně teorií zármutku, jako základní podklad pro analýzu. Druhou část práce tvoří analýza vybraných současných obrázkových knih, po níž následuje jejich zhodnocení.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

smrt, zármutek, dětská literatura, obrázková kniha, biblioterapie

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INTRODUCTION

Death is not the opposite of life but an innate part of it.

-   Haruki Murakami

We live in a world full of death; it is an inevitable part of human life; it is part of ourselves. Yet our society looks away from death and denies it and any discussions about it. With infant mortality rates much lower and life expectancy much longer, youth is celebrated and aging, and death is seen as something negative to be fought against.[1] There is so much denial in death's language: people do not die but instead 'pass away, 'rest' or 'go to a better place.[2] We are turning our eyes away from something that has been accepted as a normal part of life for centuries when death took place within the family circle. However, countless advancements in science and medicine have caused people to die at a later age in hospitals and hospices instead. Death in such institutionalized age seems impersonalized and remote.

Children have lost their natural contact with death. They no longer typically experience the sight of a dead person or the process of dying as they commonly did most of the time in the past. As a result, they may struggle with seeing death as an inevitable part of life. This may be due to how society presents, talks and writes about death. Nowadays, children encounter death mainly through the media, which often depersonalize it. Blood, dead bodies, and violence as a form of entertainment in films and TV shows are nothing uncommon. Children may even kill their enemies in video games. If they die during the game, they have additional lives at their disposal, which wrongly convinces them that death is something reversible.[3]

Such impersonal encounters with death have a very different impact on a child than the personal experience of a death of a loved one. In her study of young children, De Minco argues that the "reluctance to discuss death with children often is the result of wanting to shelter them from pain and fear,"[4] which can have an opposite effect to the one intended. It is the uncertainty and ignorance that arouses fear of death in children.[5] Making death a taboo subject, thus, becomes counterproductive, as it does not prevent the experience of grief but only leaves the child

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[1]Milena Šubrtová. *Tematika smrti v české a světové próze pro děti a mládež* (Brno: Pedagogická fakulta Masarykovy Univerzity, 2007), 11.

[2] Kathrine Comellas. "A less than perfect world: representation of death in award-winning picture books." (Master's thesis, Florida State University, 2014),13.

[3] Šubrtová, *Tematika smrti*, 11.
[4] Sandrea DeMinco. "Death in Children's Literature: Connecting with Life." *Illness, Crisis & Loss* 3, no. 3 (1993): 18.
[5] William Y. Dyregov. *Grief in children: A handbook for adults.* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008), 15.

uneducated if that grief is to occur. Once children are personally affected by death, they may be confused and not know how to behave. So, it is necessary to explain the situation and help them cope with it. This leads to the need for death education, which should become a natural and ordinary part of child's learning about the world around them.[6] Children's literature geared towards the subject can be a helpful tool.

Appropriate children's literature on the subject can have a therapeutic effect on children directly affected by a death, or it can serve as a gentle form of teaching about the topic for those who have not yet encountered death, helping to break the taboo around it, and consequently initiate a conversation between a child and a parent. Such a tool for sharing information from the earliest days of life can be a picturebook. There are dozens of picturebooks about death available on the market today. Authors from all over the world are trying to introduce death to children already at an early age. One can come across beautifully illustrated stories about the death of a pet, a sibling, a parent, and even the main character's death. Contemporary authors are not afraid to experiment with existential themes, perspectives, or degrees of explicitness. Some picturebooks almost tempt one to question whether they are intended for child readers at all.

Indeed, to produce a quality picturebook on such a sensitive subject like death, a need to consider various variables is necessary, ranging from children's developmental stages to their capability to understand death's concept. The literary and visual presentation of death should then be carried out accordingly. A picturebook presented to a child needs to be carefully chosen to serve the abovementioned purposes. Therefore, this thesis aims to critically analyze selected anglophone picture books published in the last decade and geared towards death as a central topic in order to get an idea of how contemporary authors deal with this topic, considering all resources available to them in the 21st century. The analysis mainly focuses on the literary presentation of death and grief, including a brief evaluation of the bibliotherapeutic potential of the selected pieces.

The thesis consists of the theoretical background and the analysis part. Firstly, the history of children's literature is briefly discussed and followed by an introduction to picturebooks and their special place within the genre of children's literature. Then, the question of the positioning of children's literature and authorial egocentrism is addressed. The changing approach to death in children's literature is discussed in the next chapter. An introduction to bibliotherapy and

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[6] Maggie Jackson, Jim Colwell. "Talking to children about death." *Mortality* 6, no.3 (2001), 322.

essential psychological viewpoints on children's understanding of death follows. Also, the concepts of death and bereavement are defined alongside the overview of the theories of grief to serve as a framework for the analysis. Finally, the analysis of seven picturebooks is carried out.

1. History of Children's Literature

Historically, literature has been viewed as the domain of the educated and mature; most books are written with the adult audience in mind, assuming a level of aptitude and intelligence necessary to interpret complex themes and storylines. Literature has been the backbone of society, transferring knowledge from one generation to the next and from one community to another, empowering vast numbers of people with the intellectual tools to understand what has gone before. However, there is a genre of literature specifically targeted toward children, which intends to transfer knowledge and information in different ways. This chapter will briefly discuss the history of children's literature.

As with other forms of literature, children's literature has its origins in the oral tradition of stories passed down from generation to generation. As written language and communication became more common, these tales were written down and preserved for future generations[7]. Aesop's Fables, now considered children's literature, was committed to papyrus around 400AD[8]. Thus, the genre arose from committing stories and tales from ancestors to writing.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, children's literature was limited to textbooks, religious texts, and other educational instructional writings. Children were viewed as young adults with the capacity to learn and reason, and the text produced for them was centered on Puritanical teachings of right and wrong, using moral tales and fables. The capability for evil was believed to be present in these young minds, and literature that told stories or fantasies was seen as a temptation not to be entertained[9].

Soon, however, the Enlightenment age shifted views on children, and adults began to view them as creatures of innocence. Small, cheaply produced books known as chapbooks started to be published strictly for the entertainment of young children[10]. These books told lighthearted, entertaining stories that departed from the morality of the Puritanical text used in schools.

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[7] Russell, David L. *Literature for Children: A Short Introduction* (London: Pearson, 2004), 20.

[8] Lumen Learning. "History of Children's Literature" Last modified April 17, 2015. https://courses.lumenlearning.com

[9] Russell. *Literature for Children*, 21.

[10] Lumen Learning, "History of Children's Literature."

Wordplay, riddles, and rhymes began appearing in books written for children, and adult tales were rewritten for the younger audiences they were intended to reach.

During the 18th century, children were seen as playful, innocent beings whose primary purpose was to learn and grow. Acknowledgment that they were not "small adults" led to the proliferation of stories and literature designed to entertain[11]. John Newberry started the first publishing house strictly for producing children's literature in 1744, vastly expanding the amount of material available for children[12]. This led to a boost in the genre, and many other publishers followed this trend.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries firmly established the genre of children's literature and the expectations that children could benefit from stories and tales explicitly directed to young people. In the twentieth century, as society became more industrialized and public education expanded, the themes present in children's literature shifted from the fantastical to the practical[13]. During World War I and World War II, many of the books written for children centered on loyalty, bravery, and patriotism. Similarly, books written in later decades of the 20th century reflected the themes of their times, becoming a tool for children to understand the social issues in which they were growing up.

Contemporary children's literature has shifted toward realism, with authors of the 1960s and 1970s focusing on the hardships young people face, the difficulties of growing up, and sensitive topics that were interesting for a generation of children growing up in the era of divorce and political strife. "Beverly Cleary, Judy Blume, and Paul Zindel wrote about growing up, death, obesity, and other issues, which marked a shift in the boundaries of what was acceptable..."[14] Children's literature has thus become a means of sharing knowledge and addressing complex topics developmentally appropriately.

2. Picturebooks: The Collaboration of Text, Image, and Sophistication

As children's literature has evolved, so too has the format in which this literature is presented. In recent decades, critics of children's literature have recognized the special place of picture books within the genre, slowly establishing its position as a significant piece of literature in the field of literary theory. Although some may refer to the picturebook as a 'genre,' Hunt[15] and

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[11] Matthew Orville Grenby. *Children's Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 45.
[12] Grenby, *Children's Literature*, 46.
[13] Russell, *Literature for Children*, 25.
[14] Lumen Learning, "History of Children's Literature."
[15] Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature* (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 175.

Russell[16] explain that the form encompasses a wide range of literary and linguistic genres. Russell claims that a picturebook is rather a book design than a genre as it can deal with almost any genre when it comes to its content. However, for this thesis, picturebooks will be referred to as a genre as if a subcategory of children's literature.

The picturebook went through an extensive evolution before becoming a genre of its own. Initially, all books containing some illustrations were referred to by the term picturebook, but gradually the term came to be used only for selected books. Rusell defines picturebooks as a specific form of literary art: "[…] these are the works that combine the art of storytelling with the art of illustration. The picture storybook is, in fact, a complex work of art requiring thoughtful conception and skillful execution."[17] Russell adds that, unlike illustrated books, the pictures and the text work together in picturebooks. The pictures navigate and add layers of meaning to the story.

Huck and Kuhn go on and explain the concept of picturebooks in contrast with illustrated books and view a picturebook as "a book in which the pictures are designed to be a part of the text." Therefore, the fusion of the two components - image and text – is essential for a unified presentation. A picturebook translates its message through two mediums, the art of illustration and the art of the written word. The two media must carry part of the narrative. This fusion does not exist in an illustrated book, where the pictures are only a larger text extension. Indeed, they may enrich the interpretation of the text, but they are not essential to understanding it.[18]

Although the two mentioned components of the picturebook – image and text - are interconnected, they are usually characterized by having somewhat different functions in the narrative. "Because they communicate different kinds of information and work together by limiting each other's meanings, words and pictures necessarily have a combative relationship; their complementarity is a matter of opposites completing each other by their differences. As a result, the relationships between pictures and texts in picturebooks tend to be ironic: each speaks about matters on which the other is silent."[19] The text, no matter how short it may be, is a part of the book and possesses some abilities that imagery can never have. The most important feature of the text that cannot be transformed into imagery is the ability to express direct speech.

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[16] Russell, *Literature for Children*, 103.
[41] Russell, *Literature for Children*, 103.
[17] Russell, *Literature for Children*, 103.
[18] Charlotte S. Huck, Doris Young Kuhn. *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 1993), 112.
[19] Perry Nodelman, *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books* (University of Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 221.

It is almost impossible to express direct speech and precisely what the author intended visually. Perhaps, the hint of direct speech in the form of imagery can be used as a stimulus for the continuation of the story and aim at an individual interpretation of each reader. However, if a coherent book is to emerge, it cannot be built on many such "empty" interpretable spots.[20]

Contrastively, the imagery can capture changes in space, time, or characters much more quickly and easily. What must be explicitly described in the text can be effectively expressed in the visual image at once. The image also enables multiple plot twists or locations to be shown in parallel, which can help the reader to understand the context better. Nikolajeva and Scott refer to this ability of the image as to be able to see everything from an "omniscient perspective." Such perspective allows the reader to see what is currently essential at any given moment from all angles.[21] Like this, imagery may have a similar attribute to an omniscient narrator.

Even though the text has an irreplaceable role in certain situations, the image in picturebooks usually tells much more than the text itself. Since most of the space in picturebooks is given over to the pictures, it is reasonable to suppose that the visual component of the books, quite as much as the verbal, is crucial. It is no surprise that wordless picturebooks are also a popular subcategory of picturebooks. As can be seen in Aaron Becker's, the Caldecott Honor-winning author, *A Stone for Sascha* (2018) – a wordless story about a girl grieving the loss of her beloved dog or in one of the older classics: Raymond Briggs' *Snowman* (1978), a wordless story of magic, love, and loss, images can narrate independently of the text too.

Modern picturebook and its form as is known today was greatly influenced by Randolph Caldecott, generally acknowledged "father of picturebook." [22] From the early days of his first picturebook, *The Unbelieving Philosopher, and Other Fairy Stories* (1875), illustrated tales have been seen as the entry point for children into literature and learning.[23] The modern picturebook was, however, influenced by many other experimental works from various historical periods, ranging from the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658) by Comenius to Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789) or much more recent John Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheeseman and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1992) or Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) –

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[20] Jaroslav Provazník, "Obrázková knížka, její podoby a proměny" In *Současnost literatury pro děti a mládež* (Liberec: Technická univerzita v Liberci, 2013), 46.

[21] Maria Nikolajeva, Carole Scott, *How Picturebooks Work (*New York: Garland Publishing, 2001),117.

[22] Martin Salisbury, *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling (*London: Laurence King Publishing, 2012), 16.

[23] Sylvia Pantaleo, "Slow looking reading picturebooks takes time." *Literacy* 54, vol. 1 (2020): 45.

these and many more challenged not only the relationship between word and image but also conventions in society and writing in general.[24]

Contemporary picturebooks are usually 32 pages long. They are utilized to introduce children to reading and language development concepts, allowing them to access stories even before developing reading skills. One of the first roles of the picturebook is that of a tool between a parent and a child, sharing tales and information from the earliest days of life. Beginning vocabulary skills, sentence structure, and story structure are all reinforced through the use of picturebooks with young children[25]. Picturebooks also teach children about elements of life that are otherwise difficult to explain, such as disability, illness, divorce, and even death[26]. So, even though they may masquerade as 'easy' texts, their child-friendly appearance masks the issues they often contain and address.

A contemporary picturebook is very sophisticated, encourages multiple readings, and deals with complex psychological, philosophical, or spiritual themes and themes of everyday life. Also, its form can vary due to countless technical advancements and individual creative ambitions of every author publishing in the age of possibilities. Salisbury attributes some typical characteristics to contemporary picture books, such as the witty, ironic relationship between the word and image, inventive design, postmodernist features, and technically dazzling artwork. He goes on and claims that "… some picture books are laced with postmodern irony and subtle references that keep the parent reader amused and entertained too"[27] So, a thin line between literature aimed at children versus adult readers can be seen more than ever before, which leads to a recurring issue of positioning of children's literature within the literary discourse.

3. Positioning of Children's Literature

Children's literature is created by balancing between "adult writers" and "child readers," as both need to feel represented within the literary work. Therefore, there is a recurring issue with positioning children's literature within the current literary discourse. This is due to children's literature being examined through theoretical lenses meant to analyze literature written for adults. Children's literature has a "different audience, with different skills, needs, and ways of reading" compared to an adult readership.[28] Thus, it is challenging to situate written work

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[24] Salisbury, *Children's Picturebooks*, 13
[25] Pantaleo, "Slow looking", 46.
[26] Pantaleo, "Slow looking", 47.
[27] Salisbury, *Children's Picturebooks*, 43-45.
[28] Peter Hunt. "Introduction: the expanding world of Children's Literature Studies." In *Understanding Children's Literature*, edited by Peter Hunter, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.

intended for young readers with underdeveloped reading skills within the literary canons. Some argue that the critics' neglect of children's literature is intentionally condescending. Peter Hunt highlights that "children's books have been largely beneath the notice of intellectual and cultural gurus,"[29] suggesting that children's literature has not been taken seriously due to elitism in literary criticism.

Not only does the writing intended for children get discredited, but its writers also tend to decenter the child reader from their writings. According to Rose, the relationship between the adult writer and the child reader verges on patronizing undertones, as "children's fiction rests on the idea that a child is simply there to be addressed."[30] Children are limited to being mere recipients rather than the owners of the genre, which is meant to provide representation and engagement for them. The child reader strives to evolve in the eye of the writer. Rudd argues that by considering "biological essentialism and cultural determinism," the child is "both constructed and constructive" in its nature.[31] This indicates that a balance between providing for the child through the written text and considering the child at the center throughout the writing process needs to be made.

Early children's literature mainly addressed children but did not engage with them. Patrick Fleming argues that it had connections with the morality tale, as works were made to be both "amusing and instructive" for the younger audiences.[32] On the one hand, they were meant to entertain the young readers but on the other hand, they had to convey a moral message to ensure the child learns the social values of the era. The link with morality tales echoes one of the major genres within children's literature, the fairy tale. Bruno Bettelheim claims that since the establishment of the genre, children have been "enchanted" by fairy tales.[33] Folk tales and fairy tales were, and still are, a crucial part of the childhood experience. Using magic, anthropomorphism, and the supernatural, fairy tales create a world for children, secure from the reality surrounding them.

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[29] Hunt, "Introduction", 1.

[30] Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 1.

[31] David Rudd, "Theorizing and theories: how does children's literature exist?" in *Understanding Children's Literature*, ed. P. Hunt, 2nd ed, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 25.

[32] Patrick C. Fleming, "The Rise of the Moral Tale: Children's Literature, the Novel, and 'The Governess" in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 4 (2013): 463.

[33] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 32.

Nonetheless, Bettelheim also claims that children's literature "fails to stimulate and nurture the resources that the child needs most to cope with their difficult inner problems."[34] This again implies the neglect of the child's needs by an egocentric adult author, who centers their vision within children's writing. The problem with the author's self-centeredness led most children's works to abide by the Anglocentric and male viewpoints,[35] diminishing any traces of diversity or inclusion. Thus, not every child was represented due to authorial bias. Currently, efforts are being made to make children's writings more inclusive of race, gender, sexuality, or beyond – to include taboo topics.

Likewise, Grenby argues that children "have consumed, and still consume, a huge variety of material,"[36] meaning that children's literature needs to oscillate around "identifying broad, portable themes."[37] This perhaps justifies the authorial egocentrism to some extent. As Beverly Clark argues, "children's literature is always written for both children and adults," and "to be published, it needs to please at least some adults."[38] Considering this view and the inevitability of the adult writer's vision being prioritized over the child reader's needs, the writer is responsible for creating children's literature, as most children cannot do it themselves. Adults can also engage with children's literature as writers or readers, as parents read those texts as well, especially speaking of picturebooks. This poses the question of whether it should be decided that the outright consumers of children's literature should only be children. The paradoxical decentering of the child seems beneficial in giving the author artistic freedom within the genre, allowing them to explore more mature themes, create more inclusivity and satisfy the young readers' curiosity on taboo subjects, such as death.

4. Death as a Taboo? The Changing Approach to Death in Children's Literature

The discussion of death being taboo in children's literature has a fluctuating history. Though there are many examples of children's literature dealing with death and loss, modern criticism contemplates whether enough of the discourse focuses on the true nature of death. It is challenging to introduce children to death, as an adult writer may struggle with finding the right

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[34] Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 11.
[35] Hunt, "Introduction", 4
[36] Grenby, *Children's Literature*, 2.

[37] Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 52.
[38] Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 96.

tone, fearing that the child reader is not ready to learn about death. The protection attitude of many writers, though seemingly harmless, is responsible for the miseducation of young readers as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. Death has been misrepresented for centuries, and only recently a more destigmatized and less tabooed depiction of death has occurred.

In children's literature, the approach to death has differed between each century or even decade. Gibson and Zaidman argue that books "present death in a manner understandable to children and introduce them to the world as perceived at a particular time and place."[39] This suggests that global events and attitudes usually directly impact how death is presented in children's literature. For instance, Gibson and Zaidman stress that when "high infant mortality rates were common," death was presented more openly to children. In contrast, when children live longer, "death as a subject in books for the young became taboo."[40] Therefore, children's literature is still quite reluctant to explore the subject of death, and that is particularly interesting, considering that children's literature had dealt with death in the past. Judith Moss emphasizes that "death was a familiar event" in Dickens or Alcott's novels, [41] as the death of children was more widespread during their time. Therefore, in Victorian times, "children were not shielded from death scenes and funerals as they are today"[42] because they dealt with death from a young age. Moss continues her argument by dissecting the modern fear of aging and scrutinizing the adult assumption that children themselves have never wondered about death. Again, an adult perspective is forced onto children's literature, a space for the child reader who may be curious about the temporality of life.

The change that has occurred throughout time, outside of the socio-political context, is how death's nature is presented. A problem evident throughout most books published before the current millennium is the omission of "the possibility of a finite existence,"[43] with death usually being depicted to children as temporary. Lawrence Bailis goes on to elaborate that though death seems to be "expressed openly and directly,"[44] it is "somewhat weakly treated" as a "conceptualization."[45] He implies that treating death as temporary does not resemble death's

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[39] Lois Rauch Gibson, Laura M. Zaidman, "Death in Children's Literature: Taboo or Not Taboo?" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1991): 232.

[40] Gibson and Zaidman, "Death in Children's Literature", 232.
[41] Judith P. Moss, "Death in Children's Literature." *Elementary English* 49, no. 4 (April 1972): 530.

[42] Moss, "Death in Children's Literature.", 530.
[43] Lawrence A. Bailis, "Death in Children's Literature: A Conceptual Analysis," *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying* 8, no. 4 (1978): 301.

[44] Balis, "Death in Children's Literature.", 296.
[45] Bailis, "Death in Children's Literature", 299.

true nature; therefore, the strength of death and grief is weakened for the child reader. Francelia Butler's view is similar as she claims that the "predominant attitude toward death is simple acceptance, combined very often with the belief that death is not final,"[46]

More recent children's literature presents death through immortality. Death tends to function based on resurrection and the implications of immortality, which may interweave with Christianity. For example, Aslan's sacrificial, Christ-like death and resurrection in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe.* This may consequently influence the young readership to assume that death is not finite for most of their childhood. They believe the immortality presented, only to feel disappointment when this does not translate into real-life experiences of death.

In the pre-twentieth century era, some more horrid depictions of death could be noticed, while the twentieth century literature treated death, to some extent, as a taboo. Seibert and Droplet came to two important conclusions in their meta-study of twentieth century children's literature. Firstly, "death themes were not included in children's literature until the 1970s and 1980s,"[47] indicating that death was treated as taboo before this period. Lamers agrees and emphasizes that between the 1940s and 1970s, only a few children's books contained references to death. One example could be E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), which became one of the popular classics and best sellers. Even though White's publisher initially refused to publish Charlotte's Web unless the ending, Charlotte's death, was modified, which White refused. Many critics said that the book should be banned because "death is an inappropriate subject for children."[48]

This could be due to the post-war prosperity and improvement in the quality of life, which reinforces Gibson and Zaidman's perspective that the socio-political state of society influences the amount of taboo placed on death. Secondly, "death themes were more common for children older than age five than younger than age five,"[49] meaning that the inevitability of growing up correlates with the inevitability of learning about death. This poses a question of whether censoring death to young readers is necessary as soon they will learn about death anyways.

Nowadays, the acceptance of the presence of death in children's literature has been solidified. There is less stigma and taboo around the subject, although there is still more work to be done.

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[46] Francelia Butler, "Death in Children's Literature," *Children's Literature* 1 (1972): 120.

[47] Dinah Seibert, Judy C. Droplet, "Death Themes in Literature for Children Ages 3-8," *Journal of School Health* 63, no. 2 (1993): 90.

[48] Elizabeth P. Lamers, "Children, Death and Fairy tales." *OMEGA – Journal of death and dying* 31, vol.2 (1995): 154.
[49] Gibson and Zaidman, "Death in Children's Literature", 233.

Joy Johnson sees three fundamental changes in the recent depiction of death: the "diversity" of race, age, and sex, the "specialization" of specific contexts and family members dying, and "acceptance" of death's infinity.[50] Children's literature liberates death from its taboo status and makes its nature more accessible and represented amongst young readerships. Botelho and Liaw suggest that the presentation of death themes has a socializing function in guiding children through death and the afterlife.[51] This only "gained prominence in the 1970s because of its use in bibliotherapy," [52] which further indicates that the current millennium is making progress in liberating the theme of death from stigmatization. Today, children's books tend to "complicate death through multiple perspectives, across cultures, and different social practices"[53] This further exemplifies the growing inclusivity of socio-cultural identities within children's literature on death. Customs of other cultures shift the perspective of death from a western-centered standpoint and introduce young readers to new experiences associated with death.

Apart from omitting the permanence of death, past children's literature failed to illustrate the unpredictability of dying. Gibson and Zaidman claim that while "old age is a more logical cause of death, losing a loved one in youth or the full bloom of life is more difficult for a child to understand,"[54] which indicates that death is presented as something to be expected after a long life, rather than a possibility at any given moment. Children's literature gatekept the true nature of death for a long time. Currently, experiencing death is a universal theme across children's books. Imogen Russell Williams emphasizes the importance of making "peace with the idea of death as a constant companion, something that awaits everyone"[55] instead of trying to convince children that death is temporary, as represented in many past works of literature.

Bruce Handy believes that books should develop "the possibility of what we now like to call closure,"[56] allowing children to perceive death, even if permanent, through a manageable perspective. It is difficult for parents to familiarize their children with a perception of death as something to be "reconciled with" instead of being "feared" without the appropriate literary

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[50] Joy Johnson, "Historical Perspectives and Comments on the Current Status of Death-Related Literature for Children," *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying* 48, no. 4 (June 2004): 302.

[51] Maria José Botelho and Marsha Jing-Ji Liaw, "Representing Death in Children's Literature: Border Crossings," *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 11, no. 2 (2019): 281.

[52] Botelho and Jing-Ji Liaw, "Representing Death", 275.
[53] Botelho and Jing-Ji Liaw, "Representing Death", 282.
[54] Gibson and Zaidman, "Death in Children's Literature", 233.
[55] Imogen Russell Williams, "A Child's Eye View of Death: The Power of Picture Books to Explain," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2014

[56] Bruce Handy, "How to Talk to Kids About Death According to Picture Books," *The New Yorker*, August 11, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-death-according-to-picture-books.

sources.[57] Children's books openly discussing death can familiarize children with the nature of death more effectively than a sudden occurrence of death in their own lives. If children were to grow up "with the idea of death as both inevitable and essential," they could become accustomed to it[58] and deal with it better in the future.

Modern children's literature moves beyond the taboo of the permanence of death and the non-existence of grief. Therefore, it does not aim to shelter young readers from an inevitable part of life anymore but makes it understandable. As Swenson argues, society "still knows little about the wisest way of presenting death to children through literature,"[59] which means that modern attempts do not guarantee the most effective results of revealing the true nature of death to young readers. Schur highlights that the contemporary period finally emphasizes the fact of dying from a secular perspective and the need to talk about it and grieve.[60] So, many "healthier attempts" of presenting death have occurred since the previous century. These trends continue in the contemporary literary sphere, including literature for the youngest children – picturebooks.

5. A Picturebook as a Bibliotherapeutic Tool

Children who have been personally affected by death may find therapeutic value in children's literature. Healing texts may allow the readers to compare their own experiences to the story, identify with the characters, and provide them with necessary explanations and answers to questions about life and death. It may encourage the conversation between the child and the parent on the subject and help tear down the taboo labels.

Such a therapeutic approach is called bibliotherapy. Russell and Shrodes define bibliotherapy as "a process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature—an interaction which may be used for personality assessment, adjustment, and growth."[61] Similarly, Berns defines bibliotherapy "as the use of any kind of literature by a skilled adult or another interested person to normalize a child's grief reactions to loss, support constructive coping, reduce feelings of isolation, and reinforce creativity and problem-solving." This might

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[57] Imogen Russell Williams, "A Child's Eye View of Death: The Power of Picture Books to Explain," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2014.

[58] Imogen Russell Williams, "A Child's Eye View of Death: The Power of Picture Books to Explain," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2014.

[59] Evelyn J. Swenson "The Treatment of Death in Children's Literature." *Elementary English* 49, no. 3 (1972): 404.

[60] Thomas J. Schur, "What Man Has Told Children About Death, " *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying* 2, no. 2 (1978): 89.

[61] David H. Russell, Caroline Shrodes, "Contributions of Research in Bibliotherapy to the Language Arts Program." *The School Reviews* 58, vol.6 (September 1950), 50.

be crucial for young children coping with death, considering that they do not yet understand it, nor have they experienced it before.

The goal of bibliotherapy is to promote behavioral change, and it is one of many techniques for assisting people who are experiencing emotional pain. Although bibliotherapy suggests a therapeutic modality and connection to psychotherapy, it has not established its claim to such status yet, and there is still controversy around this "field of study." Also, the literature has grappled with whether bibliotherapy is defined as a science or as an art. However, many successful studies and research have been conducted on the effectiveness of bibliotherapy, many of which focused on eliminating fears in young children.[62] Hunt labels texts used for such purposes "healing texts,"[63] which seems reasonable as the power of sharing tales is older than the written word. The power of collective experience has always given voice to the pain and activated the healing process already in the times of bards and storytellers.

In its broadest sense, bibliotherapy consists of suggesting a carefully selected book to a person experiencing a situation similar to the characters in the proposed book. The book may offer solutions to the problem or provide the person with the comfort that they are not alone in their feelings.[64] What follows is a session with a therapist, who helps the client talk about their emotions in the book's background. The selection of a good book is a crucial part of the whole bibliotherapeutic process as the entire process becomes useless with an inappropriately selected book. The selection should be influenced by a specific person's therapeutic needs, background, etc., so one cannot simply claim that there is one universally applicable book for these purposes. Also, some other factors come into play: "the structure of the story, the conflict and outcome, the characters presented and author's treatment of them, the characters' opinions are all important considerations."[65]

Although the selection should be individualized, there are some generally essential factors to consider when choosing books for very young children. Jalongo highlights that books for very young children's bibliotherapy need to have several qualities. Firstly, the child must be able to

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[62] One of the first studies by Webster found that bibliotherapy did reduce fears in first-grade children. Eighty children were interviewed for their fears. Seven groups of children with five children in each group had an intense fear of the dark. One group of five children had an intense fear of dogs. The groups were read five stories, about the dark or the dogs, depending on their fears. Three months later, 29/35 children reported less fear of the dark and all five children reduced their fear of dogs. The author believed that relearning took place and now the children pair the dark and dogs with more pleasant experiences from the books. These pleasant experiences were reinforced during group discussions. Webster, Jane. "Using books to reduce the fears of first-grade children." *The Reading Teacher* 14, vol.3 (1961). 169-162

[63] Hugh Crago, "Healing texts: bibliotherapy and psychology" in *Understanding Children's Literature*, ed. P. Hunt, 2nd ed, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 180.

[64] Carla Marie Eich, "Bibliotherapy: background, application and research" (1999). Graduate Research Papers 589, 2.

[65] Eich, "Bibliotherapy",19.

identify with the plot, setting, and character; this has to do with the child's capability to understand the themes and issues presented and the necessary support on the adult's side. Secondly, the book must offer correct terminology and sound explanations. Thirdly, the characters' emotional reactions and coping strategies should be presented. Finally, the book should depict crisis in an optimistic beatable fashion.[66] Additionally, Pardeck adds a few more essential traits that a book aimed at preschool children should possess. The story must be appealing, exciting, and humorous with moments of surprise to draw a very young child's attention. The same rule applies to illustrations, which need to be eye-catching. Lastly, the information in the story should respect the child's developmental stage and their ability to understand the content.[67] This may, again, vary based on the amount of support on the adult's side.

6. Children and Death

Studies of the development of children's understanding of death typically compare the children's concepts against a presumed "mature" picture of death.[68] Adults recognize that death comes to all living things, that death is the final stage in the lifecycle, that it is inevitable and irreversible, and that it is ultimately caused by a breakdown in the functioning of the body. How can this, nonetheless, be transferred to young children so that they understand death's complex nature too and may thus profit from the book? A child's comprehension of death changes with their development. This chapter will briefly introduce some selected insights from past and recent research on children's understanding of death and provide some possible implications for addressing the topic of death with young children.

Since half of the twentieth century, there has been a considerable body of work on children's conceptualizations of death carried out. Slaughter mentions one of the earliest published works of Anthony[69], Nagy[70], and those inspired by Piaget[71], the first wave conducted from a psychoanalytic point of view, mainly studying children's emotional reactions, the latter oriented more cognitively.[72] The early psychoanalytic results, which are still considered relevant by many (e.g., Slaughter 2005, Jackson 2001, Colwell, 2001), brought interesting insights. For instance, children under ten years old understand death as a form of partings, going away, or

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[66] M.R. Jalongo, "Using crisis-oriented books with young children." *Young Children* 38, no.5 (1983): 29-34.

[67] John T. Pardeck, *Books for Early Childhood· A Developmental Perspective* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 37-40.

[68] Mark W. Speece. "Children's Concepts of Death" University Michigan Publishing 1, vol.1 (1995), 57-69.

[69] Sylvia Anthony. *The child's discovery of death (*London: Kegan Paul and Co., 1940).

[70] Maria Nagy. "The child's theories concerning death." *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 73 (1948), 199-216.

[71] Jean Piaget. *The child's construction of reality (*New York: Basic Books, 1954).

[72] Virginia Slaughter. "Young children's understanding of death." *Australian Psychologist* 3, vol.40 (2005), 179.

living in "another place." They often assimilate death to sleep or associate it with punishment for evildoing. The results also showed that children understand the dead are unlikely to return, in a way that the dead are unable to return as they "live far away." So, the children do not understand the aspect of irreversibility in its true nature but instead separate two worlds – our world and the world where the dead live, be it heaven, cemetery, or other place designated for the deceased. [73]

The Piagetian wave of research used individual subcomponents of death[74] to interpret which aspects of death children understand.[75] By the age of 5 or 6, children acquire the subcomponent of irreversibility and universality, whereas cessation and causality are the last subcomponents to be mastered. Based on her investigation of Piagetian researchers' works, Slaughter concluded that "children do not grasp all the subcomponents of death, and therefore lack a full understanding of death before the age of seven at earliest." Jackson and Colwell support this conclusion by stating that "the age of eight seems to be appropriate to begin the formal teaching process about death," suggesting that death should and can, at this age, become a part of the British school curriculum.[76]

Both waves of early research indicated that young children's capacity to understand death is mainly limited by their cognitive immaturity, implying that the developmental stage influences their understanding of death. Contrastively, other variables affect children's understanding of death, such as socio-cultural background, religious beliefs, or unique life experiences (personal experience of death), as can be withdrawn from the follow-up 1970s and 1980s waves of research focused on individual differences in children's developing death concept. [77] Although the understanding of death appears to be most influenced by the development of cognitive maturity, it can vary with everyone's personal "story."

The constitution of the mature death concept differs in various death studies and authors (Klett, 1991, Speece, 1985). Yet, the biological aspect of death seems to play an irreplaceable role in developing the mature death concept. Slaughter is confident that adults fundamentally recognize death as a biological event. This biological understanding impacts other facets of this complex concept, including cultural, religious beliefs, or other personal issues.[78]   In her

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[73] Slaughter, "Young children's understanding", 179-181.
[74] Compared to subcomponents addressed in chapter 7, this research included 7 subcomponents in total: irreversibility, universality, personal mortality, inevitability, non-functionality, causality and unpredictability (Slaughter, "Young children's understanding", 180)
[75] Slaughter, "Young children's understanding", 180.
[76] Maggie Jackson, Jim Colwell. "Talking to children about death." *Mortality* 6, no.3 (2001), 322.
[77] Slaughter, "Young children's understanding", 181.
[78] Slaughter, "Young Children's Understanding", 179

research, Slaughter concluded that "to conceptualize death as a biological phenomenon" is one of the crucial steps in children's journey towards an adult understanding of death.[79] Jackson and Colwell support this claim by stating that by "talking to children about death as part of a lifecycle, children can begin to understand why someone might have died."[80] So, understanding death as a part and the inevitable final stage of the lifecycle seems to be the critical element in the child's journey toward the mature conceptualization of death.

As previously reviewed research has shown, young children rather identify death with familiar and more basic occurrences like "going away" and "sleeping." As a result, rather than seeing death as a biological phenomenon, young children see it as behavioral. Carey argues that this misconceptualization of death occurs because young children have not yet constructed "a coherent folk theory of biology," which would enable them to integrate what they know about death with other biological phenomena such as life, illness, or lifecycle.[81] Slaughter stresses that acquiring the "life" theory of the body and perception of the body as a "life machine" results in a change in children's understanding of death. This is critical when children move from misunderstanding death as a psychological phenomenon to understanding death as a biological phenomenon.[82] At the same time, Jaakola and Slaughter argue that children first begin to perceive the human body as a biological entity between 4 and 6 years of age, based on the results of their study.[83]

Addressing the issue of death with children is indeed not an easy task as children's understanding of death is very different from that of adults. Understanding death is cognitively complex for young children, and their conceptualizations may vary immensely due to their developmental stages and personal backgrounds. Moreover, young children struggle with understanding death as a biological event. There are, however, countless implications and recommendations provided by many psychologists or thanatologists on how to present death to young children. Some selected advice relevant to this thesis is to be introduced in the following paragraph.

As far as language is concerned, many scholars argue (e.g., Dyregov, 2008, Webb 1993) that death should be discussed in concrete and unambiguous terms. It is not advisable to use

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[79] Slaughter, "Young Children's Understanding", 185.
[80] Jackson and Colwell, "Talking to children", 322.
[81] Carey, Susan. *Conceptual Change in Childhood (*Boston: MIT Press Classic, 1985), 113.
[82] Slaughter, "Young Children's Understanding", 182-183.
[83] Kelly Jaakola, Virginia Slaughter. "Children's body knowledge: Understanding „life" as a biological goal." *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 20 (2002), 337.

euphemisms, abstract notions, or metaphors that a child might interpret literally.[84] Karns goes on and elaborates on the importance of the use of the "D" words: die, dying, dead and death as children become confused with other terms such as "gone away" or "gone to sleep."[85] Moreover, it is not appropriate to compare death to sleep. This reinforces the child's idea of death as temporary and their framing of the death concept as a psychological phenomenon instead of a biological one.[86] The importance of making every effort not to inadvertently fuel the child's misunderstanding of death as a biological concept is stressed by Slaughter.[87]

7. Concepts of Death and Bereavement

Understanding the concept of death is undoubtedly related to understanding the concept of life. At the same time, it is tough to grasp and define this phenomenon. Perhaps working with the most real and graspable point of view of death as the state that ends the last phase of any living organism's life seems most appropriate. From a biological point of view, it is the complete cessation of all life functions in the organism, and this condition is irreversible. The cause of death can vary from the archetypal death caused by old age, disease to death caused by another person or suicidal death.

Bradbury understands the concept of death and dying as omnipresent yet not fully knowable or comprehensible in all aspects.[88] Explaining death as a concept seems very difficult as it may become understandable given the large number of often contradictory or inconclusive explanations provided by science and literature, philosophy, and religion. For centuries, people have been trying to come up with possible interpretations of death and the afterlife. All that may be rooted in fear of the unknown as part of human nature. Even though death can be somewhat defined, experiencing and representation of the concept still rely on imagination and subjective interpretation to a large extent, mainly because possible interpretations of death into different cultures and religions could be expanded.

Rusňák mentions two concepts of perception of death - subjective and objective. The subjective concept of death is "personal and unique meaning for the individual," i.e., how one fears it, what one expects from it, and how it is important to him. The subjective concept of death, on the other hand, is understood as "the awareness of the fact that death is the irreversible cessation

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[84] Dyregov, *Grief in children,* 15.

[85] Jeanne Karns. "Children's Understanding of Death." *Journal of Clinical Activities, Assignments & Handouts in Psychotherapy Practice* 2, vol.1 (2008), 45.

[86] Slaughter, "Young Children's Understanding", 184.

[87] Slaughter, "Young Children's Understanding", 185.

[88] Mary Bradbury, *Representations of Death* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), 152.

of the vital functions of the organism, which affects all living things."[89] Moreover, many researchers identify different sets of subcomponents of the complex concept of death across their studies, varying considerably in the exact number of these components and their definitions (e.g., Karns, 2008, Slaughter, 2005, Speece, 1994).[90] However, according to Slaughter and Speece, these subcomponents very often overlap, as they ultimately conclude that four account for the bulk of research: *Universality*, *Non-functionality*, *Causality*, and *Irreversibility.*[91] The definitions of the four bio-scientific subcomponents are provided below (Karns, 2008, Slaughter, 2005, Speece, 1994).

1. *Universality* (also *Applicability*): all living things must eventually die
2. *Non-functionality* (also *Cessation*)*:* the understanding that once a living thing dies, all the bodily and mental functions cease after death, including all the typical life-defining capabilities of the living physical body (e.g., walking, eating, hearing, seeing, thinking, etc.)
3. *Causality:* understanding of the external and internal events that might cause an individual's death and the understanding that the breakdown of bodily function causes death
4. *Irreversibility* (also *Finality*)*:* the understanding that once death occurs, the physical body cannot be made alive again

Though Slaughter argues that there are other subcomponents across the studies, namely, Unpredictability, Inevitability, and Personal mortality, these appear to play a crucial role in mastering a mature death concept.[92] Yet most of the research on children's concepts of death has focused on the four bio-scientific subcomponents mentioned above.[93]

Furthermore, death is associated with bereavement, the objective situation of an individual who has experienced a loss of something or someone that they treasure. Corr offers a conceptual viewpoint, "the key structural elements of bereavement are an attachment, a loss, and a bereaved person (someone who is victimized or made bereft by the loss or ending of that attachment)."[94] Contrastively, Corr explains bereavement from a subjective viewpoint, "bereavement usually involves a wide range of possible reactions to actual or anticipated loss,"

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[89] Radoslav Rusňák. *(Ne)Samozrejmé kapitoly z literatúry pre deti a mládež* (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita v Prešově: 2017), 67-68.
[90] Slaugther, "Young Children's Understanding", 180.
[91] Speece, "Children's Concept of Death", 57-69.
[92] Slaughter, "Young Children's Understanding", 180.
[93] Speece, "Children's Concept of Death", 57-69.
[94] Charles A. Corr," Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning in Death-related literature for Children", 1.

ranging from grief and grieving, coping to efforts to accept and go forward in life.[95] Grief, grieving, and coping as fundamental subcomponents of bereavement will be defined in the following paragraphs, bereavement being understood as the superordinate "umbrella" term.

First, as grief is rather a complex phenomenon with its meaning being socially and culturally constructed, a significant variability as to how different authors approach the words grief, grieving, and mourning can be revealed. Corr describes grief as a term used to describe human reactions to loss, whether physical, behavioral, psychological (cognitive or affective), social, or spiritual. Zembylas and Stylianou agree and add that grief is "the usual, expected reaction to loss"[96] and highlight the variety of individual differences concerning the intensity, duration, and different forms of expression of grief.[97] In Corr's words, mourning is commonly used to refer to all intrapsychic and interpsychic processes of coping with loss and social or ritualized reactions to loss.[98] At the same time, Corr and Rosenblatt describe the inconsistency in using the terms grieving and mourning in various authors[99], and Rosenblatt believes that the distinction between the two terms does not make sense.[100] For this thesis, the terms grief, grieving, and mourning will be treated as equivalents as they all include reactions to loss, be it an emotional reaction, a ritual reaction, or any other.

Secondly, as already mentioned, bereavement involves coping with the loss. Johnston defines coping as what people do to minimize stress. It is commonly seen in health psychology as problem-focused, directed at reducing the threats and losses, or emotion-focused, directed at reducing the negative emotional consequences.[101] Coping styles, strategies, and models are as numerous and varied as the stressors that precede them. It would require more profound knowledge from psychology to discuss these issues. For this thesis, Corr's common "coping scenarios" in grieving will be used as a framework for the analysis, namely, coping by oneself versus sharing thoughts and feelings with someone, coping through funeral rituals or any memorial activities (including spontaneous "informal" memorial activities of any kind), and coping through memories and legacies as a means of reinforcement of memories aiming at

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[95]Corr, 1.

[96] Zembylas and Stylianou, „Dealing With the Concepts of "Grief" and "Grieving" in the Classroom: Children's Perceptions, Emotions, and Behavior" *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying* 2, no. 2 (1978): 3.

[97] Zembylas and Stylianou, „Dealing With the Concepts of "Grief", 3.

[98] Corr, A. Charles and Dona M. Corr, "Historical and contemporary perspectives on loss, grief and mourning" In Handbook of Thanatology, edited by David E. Meagher and David E.Balk (New York: Routledge, 2013), 136.

[99] Paul C. Rosenblatt. "Grief across cultures: A reviews and research agenda." In *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and invention*, edited by Stroebe et al. (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 206.

[100] Rosenblatt, "Grief across cultures", 207.

[101] Marie Johnston, Derek W. Johnston, *Comprehensive Clinical Psychology: Health Psychology* (Pergamon, 1998), 94.

creating a tangible record of the person who died.[102] The latter coping scenario is directly associated with the current and most recognized grief theory of continuing bonds, which will be discussed further.

8. Theories of Grief: From Detachment to Continuing Bonds

Seemingly essential experience in human life that everyone has experienced. Perhaps it is precisely because of grief's ubiquitous nature that researchers and clinicians have attempted to explain the nature of bereavement and grief in various ways from various angles throughout history. As a result, there are many accounts of this topic to explore up to this day. For that reason, only some well-known foundational theories and more contemporary theoretical perspectives will be addressed in this chapter, portraying how the approach to grief has evolved.

Before World War I, it was broadly accepted, according to Packman, that "death has a lifelong impact on the bereaved, and this accepted way of thinking about grief included concepts like ongoing attachment to the deceased."[103] A significant shift in perspective on grief occurred in the aftermath of World War I as there were countless war-related deaths throughout Europe, emotionally overwhelming the bereaved ones. Naturally, a new posture towards grief and loss came about, and it, in Neimeyer's words, "became a patriotic duty to repress one's grieving and distance oneself from it. This model of self-constraint, rather than self-expression, became the new approved way of reacting to the loss."[104]

It is evident from the first well-known Freudian and medical models' perspective on grief, which emphasized pathological aspects of grief, that emotional detachment was seen as necessary to achieve closure.[105] Perhaps best known for comments in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Sigmund Freud advocated for so-called decathexis, i.e., bereaved individuals' withdrawal of their emotional attachment to the deceased, literally "letting go." Corr and Corr understand Freud's viewpoint as if the loss of a person is associated with pain since "man has spent his psychological energy in them." Thus, according to them, mourning is the act of gaining distance or separation.[106] This emotional disengagement as a means of successful adaptation to grief was only reinforced by the medical model that compared grief to

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[102] Corr, "Bereavement, Grief and Mourning", 350-356.
[103] Packman et al. "Sibling bereavement and continuing bonds." *Death Studies* 30 (2006), 818.
[104] Neimeyer, as cited in Packman et al., 818.
[105] Packman et al., "Sibling bereavement", 818.
[106] Corr and Corr, „Historical and contemporary perspectives", 136.

a wound, which is forgotten once healed.[107] According to Worden, these models were criticized for not being constructed in a more empirically testable way and not covering a wider range of aspects of grief.[108]

Moving towards mid-century, in his seminal paper *Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief* (1944), Lindemann published his distinctions between acute grief and morbid grief. He attributed some typical characteristics to acute grief, such as guilt, distress, or changes in usual behavioral patterns.[109] According to Lindemann, acute grief was a normal kind of grief compared to rather unhealthy morbid grief resulting from repressed grief expressions. He insisted that the bereaved must express grief to return to "normal" and make every effort to end the bond with the deceased[110]. Having discussed the Freudian, medical, and Lindemann's models, it seems that the bereaved could feel quite a pressure to put their energy towards moving on with their lives and starting over. Those deemed unsuccessful at grieving were labeled as having "pathological grief."[111]

Early death and grief theories also suggest that suffering happens in stages. Mourners participated in a series of grief phases to eventually find closure and detachment from their loss. One example of such contributions to thanatology is Bowlby and Parkes's four stages of mourning that "represented the trajectory of grief after the death of a loved one": (a) numbing, (b) yearning and searching, (c) disorganization and despair, and (d) reorganization.[112] Similarly, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, one of the first scholars to study the social implications of how a culture deals with death and dying, describes five fundamental stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.[113] Though, Kübler-Ross claims she never intended these stages to be a rigid framework that applies to everyone who mourns, as she said of the five stages of grief, "they were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. Many people have responses to loss, but there is no typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grieving is as individual as our lives."[114] According to Worden, her stage approach has remained prominent in the popular media despite a lack of research evidence.[115]

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[107] Packman et al., "Sibling bereavement", 818.
[108] Worden et al. "Foundational Grief Theories" In *Handbook of Thanatology: The essential body of knowledge for the study of death, dying and bereavement,* edited by H.Chapple (London: Routledge, 2021), 4.
[109] Lindemann Eric, "Symptomatology and management of acute grief." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 101, vol.2 (1944), 145.
[110] Lindemann, "Symptomatology and management", 146.
[111] Lindemann, "Symptomatology and management", 146.
[112] Worden et al. "Foundational grief theories", 8.
[113] Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, *O smrti a umírání* (Praha: Portál, 2015).
[114] Kübler-Ross, O smrti a umírání.
[115] Worden et al., "Foundational grief theories", 12.

Though Kübler-Ross' stages have influenced many people's perceptions of death and dying and have thus made their way into cultural products such as literature, grief theory has evolved in leaps and strides since those early days. A significant shift from emotional detachment to new forms of adaptation to loss is evident in the more recent studies. To start with, Worden thought of mourning as an active process and introduced a set of tasks that a bereaved person must work through before reaching a new level of learning to live with the death of their loved one. Task I is to accept the reality of loss by overcoming denial of death. Task II is to process the pain of grief. Task III is to adjust to a world without the deceased. Task IV (2009) to find an enduring connection with the dead while embarking on a new life., the latter encouraging bereaved persons to "restructure their relationships with the deceased in ways that reflect the changed circumstances of life after death but remain satisfying." [116] Likewise, Rando's Six "R" Model suggests six activities that are necessary for successful adaptation to loss: recognizing the loss, reacting to the separation, remembering and re-experiencing the deceased, relinquishing attachments and assumptions, readjusting to a new world, and finally, reinvesting in new activities and relationships.[117] These alternative views of grief perceive grief, for the first time, as a proactive process and emphasize the importance of readapting to the world to be able to live with the loss.

Many authors elaborate on that idea and view grieving as a process of reaffirming or re-constructing a world of meaning challenged by loss; in other words, understanding grief as a quest for new meaning. For instance, Neimeyer stresses the need for "reconstruction of meaning" in the bereaved person's life and says, "meaning reconstruction in response to a loss is the central process in grieving." Attig goes on and elaborates on the significance of "relearning the world" in a way that helps the bereaved live with the loss.[118] The idea of relearning is viewed as a coping resource and active engagement. Also, it offers a broadly accessible understanding of grieving with respect for individuality as it promotes the idea that all the bereaved have their unique experiences, objects, places that must be relearned,

"We engage as whole persons as we learn how to be and act in the world that is transformed by our losses. We reshape all facets of our lives. The concept that we must relearn the world as we grieve captures both the variety and the potentially all-encompassing scale of the tasks we face. When we grieve, we must relearn virtually every object, place, event, relationship

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[116] Corr and Corr, "Historical Perspectives", 137-138.
[117] Corr and Corr, "Historical Perspectives", 138-139.
[118] Packman et al., "Sibling bereavement", 818.

with others, and aspect of ourselves that the lives of those who have died have touched. Our grieving takes as long because there is so much we must relearn. (…) As survivors, we must relearn the world in our ways in particular circumstances."[119]

Moreover, in the view of Attig and Neimeyer, there does not necessarily have to be an end to grief.[120] A fundamental shift from detachment and "letting go" to a continuing relationship with the deceased also becomes evident in grief studies. Fundamental research was conducted by Klass, Silverman, and Nickman, who concluded that while grieving, both adults and children frequently strive to maintain continuing bonds with their loved ones who have died.[121] The significance of ongoing connection with the deceased has become generally accepted. Increasing attention to the so-called "continuing bond" in relation to coping has occurred widely in the body of works on bereavement (e.g., Berns, Klass, Packman, Corr).

This new perspective on grief denies the previously discussed notion that grief entails absolute disconnection of the ties with the deceased. Several common elements briefly define the continuing bonds theory, first introduced by Klass, Silverman, and Nickman in *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*. Firstly, continuing bonds theory normalizes a continuing relationship with the deceased, involving holding on to items and cherished objects belonging to the dead, having internal conversations with them, dreaming about them, constructing any internal representation of the absent person, etc.[122] Berns believes that if "properly understood and properly carried out, efforts to maintain continuing bonds with someone who has died do not represent unhealthy or morbid activities. They are, in fact, constructive and rewarding part of mourning."[123] Corr and Corr agree and highlight that continuing bonds are aspects of normal mourning processes and do not represent psychopathology.[124] Secondly, such behavior is not only normal, but it also helps one cope with grief as it facilitates the ability to cope with loss and adjust to changes in life. And finally, there is not necessarily an end to grief as it may become a never-ending part of life, with the pain easing eventually.[125]

One more recent perspective on grieving is offered by Bonanno, who has been the leading advocate of the idea that resilience is the most characteristic feature of the human experience

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[119] Thomas Attig. *How We Grieve: Relearning the World.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 122.
[120] Packman et al., "Sibling bereavement", 819.
[121] Klass and Silverman, P. R., & Nickman, S. L. (Eds.). Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief. (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis, 1996), 36.
[122] Klass et al. *Continuing Bonds*, 350.
[123] Carol Berns, "Bibliotherapy: Using Books to Help Bereaved Children." *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying* 48, no. 4 (2004), 323.
[124] Corr and Corr, "Historical Perspectives",141.
[125] Klass et al., "Continuing Bonds"

of loss.[126] Based on the pre-loss data, he managed to outline grief trajectories. His contributions to the field include mainly the idea that the absence of grief is a healthy outcome rather than something to be feared, as opposed to the thought and practice before his research, and his view of genuine laughter and smiling, rather than crying, as a healthy response to a loss or stressor event.[127] Corr and Corr add that proponents of Bonanno's concept believe that grief does not necessarily have to be overwhelming for most survivors.[128] This questions the stage-based proposals that all bereaved people go through stages in their grief.

To sum up, the approach to grief has evolved significantly from the absolute disconnection of ties with the deceased, through stage-based models, expecting the manifestation of all the "tasks" to successfully cope with the loss, to the continuing bonds with the dead, viewing grief as a never-ending part of life and not something that one "gets over", to an ongoing emphasis on one's ability to be resilient. The contemporary approach to grief considers the grieving process as highly individual and that one person's method of grieving and healing may not work for another. There are also no defined stages of grief or tasks that need to be worked through to achieve recovery.

[126] Corr and Corr, "Historical Perspectives", 141.
[127] Psychology Wiki, "George Bonanno" Last accessed January 14, 2022.
https://psychology.fandom.com/wiki/George_Bonanno - cite_note-perseusbooksgroup.com-7
[128] Corr and Corr, "Historical Perspectives", 141.

9. Picturebooks Analysis

Although a picture book is undoubtedly a work of art, as discussed earlier on, it is vital to take a very different perspective when analyzing picture books from a literary point of view. Painter and Martin strongly believe that picture books should be understood as multimodal text, with visual modality being just as significant as the verbal in forming readers' impressions. Understandings the nature of the meanings that visual choices can convey and how these may relate to the structural and verbal components of the narrative text are much more important than information about the techniques and materials for creating art or a critical framework for judging images in picture books as works of art.[129] At the same time, Salisbury emphasizes that the layers of messages conveyed in modern picturebooks may be open to subjective personal interpretations – just as in artworks, which are usually experienced in the context of galleries, etc.[130]

All this makes a picturebook analysis quite a challenging domain. Mainly because there has not been much research conducted on the topic, and there is no prescribed framework for sufficient picture book analysis. As the picture books selected for the upcoming analysis are from the last decade, no critical texts are used as there are not any. The author of this thesis works solely with the theoretical background as a framework for the analysis and is open to subjective personal interpretations. The analysis takes two perspectives, the literary aspect of how death and grief are depicted and the possible overlap with bibliotherapy. The latter's evaluation is a mere suggestion based on basic familiarity with bibliotherapy, not an expert opinion of a professional from psychology or bibliotherapy.

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[129] Clare Painter, J.R. Martin, and Len Unsworth. "Reading Visual Narratives: Image Analysis in Children's Picture Books." *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* 10, vol.3 (2015), 2.
[130] Salisbury, *Children's Picturebooks*, 59

The Grandad's Island by Benji Davies

After the phenomenal success of *The Storm Whale and On Sudden Hill*, this is the newest book by British author-illustrator Benji Davies. Benji studied animation and has since worked on various projects, from picturebooks and animated short films to music videos, commercials, and title sequences. His books have been co-editioned in many languages and countries around the world. *Grandad's Island* is a colorful and imaginative book dealing with the emotional topic of losing a grandparent.

The *Grandad's Island* is an adventure story of a small boy Syd and his Grandad, who have a very close relationship. Syd visits his grandfather regularly. On one of his visits, he finds Grandad in the attic, where Syd has never been before. Grandad appears to be ready to make a journey, and the pair set out on a voyage, entering onto the deck of a ship by passing through a large metal door that Syd has never seen before. They spend a wonderful time together on a beautiful tropical island before Grandad reveals that he will be staying there, and Syd must make the journey home alone. After Syd's solo return home, he visits Grandad's house the next day, figuring Grandad is not there anymore. Syd discovers an envelope behind the window, and when he opens it, there is a greeting in the form of a picture of Grandad, surrounded by animals and plants, smiling.

By traveling to a desert island, the boy learns what death and grief mean, although the themes are not addressed explicitly. In the story, these themes are rendered with the help of visual and verbal metaphors of the island and Syd's solo journey back home. First, the picture of the beautiful island is directly linked to the concept of death in the book because it also brings serenity and calmness. A small island in the middle of the ocean is portrayed with the help of warm green and dark green hues that contrast with the brown and grey colors of the attic. Considering that the green color symbolizes quietness, restfulness, and emotional balance, the island is associated with paradise. The island's brightness and color, including its green leaves, flowers, and colorful animals, also contribute to this idea, presenting death as a natural process one should not fear. In this context, the grandfather's journey to the island is a metaphor for the last journey to the place where one's soul may rest in peace. It serves as a substitute for Grandad's final resting place. The illustrations, encouraging subjective interpretations.

Grandad's words, "I'm thinking of staying,"[131] signify that the he is expecting that he will die and that death is somewhat impending. On the other hand, Davies' decision to use the word

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[131] Benji Davies, *Grandad's Island (*New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 12.

"thinking" here suggests that Grandad may decide about it, contradicting death's unpredictable nature. It undermines its biological aspect as it is against the laws of nature to control one's death. Grandad's follow-up decision to stay on the island symbolizes the transition between life and death and the readiness to accept it. When Syd "hugged Grandad one last time" and said, "he would miss him very much,"[132] he also acknowledged that he would never see his grandfather again. Syd's immediate acceptance of the situation may also mean that he is not yet fully aware that he will not see his grandfather again, thus showing his natural, child-like naiveness. The knowledge that his relative would be safe and happy on the island convinces the boy to sail back to the 'real' world alone.

The concept of grief is primarily built on the motif of Syd's solo journey back home after leaving his grandfather on the island. The images of the grey cloudy sky and the black water of the ocean with the small ship in the middle of it represent the sense of loss and grief. These emotions are constructed with the help of visual contrast between the island's colorful setting and the ocean's dark emptiness. There is a visible contrast between the happiness the two characters experience on the island and the rocky trip home, exploring the difficult emotions Syd may be experiencing. The dark shades of the picture mimic the inner state of the boy and the growing sadness in his heart. The line, "Across the waves, the ship chugged and churned,"[133] illustrates the boy's struggle to get used to the loss and continue living without his grandfather. In this context, the physical challenges to steer the ship home are reminiscent of an emotional journey across loss and grief. The metaphor of traversing the rough sea all by himself and yet getting home safely, in the end, represents the importance of resilience during such emotionally difficult times.

The depiction of the boy wearing Grandad's hat is also symbolic since it shows how individuals cope with grief. By keeping things that remind them of their beloved ones, people learn how to live with the loss and fill the void in their hearts by manifestation of continuing bonds. For the little boy from the story, these things are essential to help him cope with the loss through memories and legacies and to move on and become a mature person. This is also reinforced by the loneliness the boy must come to terms with as his grandfather is not coming back. In many ways, the metal door in the attic is also a powerful symbol of the last farewell as Syd realizes, upon returning to his grandfather's home, the metal door they both left through to get to the island, is no longer there. The literal disappearance of the metal door makes it impossible for

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[132] Davies, *Grandad's Island*, 14.
[133] Davies, *Grandad's Island*, 18.

Syd to go back to the island and see his grandfather again. It directly addresses one of death's subcomponents, and that is irreversibility. The door serves as a portal between life and death and prepares the boy to relearn the world without his granfather and accept the event's irreversibility aspect.

Missing his grandfather, Syd is comforted by the idea, as represented by the letter from the island that he receives, that Grandad is in a good place. The picture of Syd's grandfather surrounded by exotic animals is also a reminder that the deceased beloved ones will always live in one's memories. The letter carries an underlying message about our loved ones, and metaphorically, the bond will never be lost no matter how far they are. Contrastively, the greeting in the form of a letter from the deceased Grandad undermines the biological nature of death in every aspect. It implies that the grandfather still physically exists somewhere else and that his body is still functioning. Such an ending makes it very difficult to make any logical explanation of where that letter is coming from or to what extent it may be the result of the main characters' imagination. Considering the second option, it could be viewed as another possible way of coping with the death of a loved one, especially in the case of a young child who is still prone to confabulation. The letter may also symbolize the robust nature of the continuing bond between the bereaved and the deceased.

From the bibliotherapeutic point of view, *Grandad's Island* offers a positive tone throughout the story rendered with bright, eye-catching imagery, which could be appealing to a child. Nonetheless, the concepts of death and grief are solely translated into metaphors and universal symbols, which seems highly inappropriate should this book be used to explore death with young child. The implicitness may pose a challenge for younger children to connect the death and Grandad's decision to remain on the island. The deeper meaning, which may be an obvious metaphor of loss for adult readers, may not be processed at all by children. On the other hand, the book has endless opportunities for discussions and predictions to extend children's understanding of the story, leaving it up to them to explore it at their own pace. Also, the guidance and support on the adults' side is an essential factor that needs to be considered as a variable that influences the overall effectiveness of the bibliotherapeutic use of a book.

The Funeral by Matt James

Matt James is an American painter, author, illustrator, and musician. His books have won many prestigious awards, including the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award and the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award. *The Funeral* is about a little girl Norma who goes to her great-uncle's funeral. It is her first experience, and thus she does not know how to behave or what to expect. Immediately as she finds out that she has a day off from school to be able to attend the funeral, she is more excited than sad. Also, she is looking forward to playing with her favorite cousin Ray there. When she arrives at the church, she is confronted with rituals and ideas that have never occurred to her before. Norma is confused and asks many questions, discussing the whole event with Ray from their children's perspective. Then, the two play outside the church and genuinely have fun while thinking that their uncle would have enjoyed his funeral.

This picture book instantly breaks the taboo of dying through the language used to describe death. Norma's mom is informed that her great-uncle Frank "has died," meaning that "today was for saying goodbyes."[134] It is significant that the author does not use a euphemism to address death, as it directly familiarizes the young readers with it. Though it is spoken about directly at first, the following description of death is a more euphemistic comparison to "saying goodbyes," meaning that James somewhat balances between being explicit about the nature of death while also keeping it age-appropriate not to cause distress. The foregrounding of the mother crying in the illustration, with Norma being minimized in the background, implies that Norma is separated from her mother's experience. This signifies that James' choice to juxtapose euphemistic and direct language also corresponds to Norma's limited and her mother's overwhelming understanding of the nature of death.

Norma "practicing her sad face in the mirror" (see Appendix D) suggests that as a child, she is not yet accustomed to what it means for someone to die. She is "happy" as she is primarily faced with not having to go to school, which, outside of considering a family member's death, is a fun experience for a child. Also, being able to see her cousin brings her joy. This subliminally indicates the aspect of death and grief, which many adults tend to neglect, that grief can bring the family closer together. Without being fully aware of the nature of death, Norma represents the perception of death outside of context. Though she must have some prior knowledge about death, since she gathered that she had to make a "sad" face, the picturebook

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[134] Matt James, The Funeral (London: Groundwood Books, 2018), 3.

clearly illustrates how confused children are from truly understanding the meaning and consequences of dying.

As Norma and her family are headed to the "church" to attend the funeral, it is notable that the author decides to use a traditional funeral as a form of farewell. Funerals are common rituals to help bereaved persons by disposing of the deceased's body in appropriate ways and as a form of communal grief, during which it is socially acceptable to cry and express sadness in public. The funeral in the story also represents a form of gathering or even celebration of life. This can be seen through the illustration of the car being surrounded by slightly tinted flowers, alluding to the flowers being left at the funeral. The flowers can connote the natural, implying that death is a natural part of lifecycle, just like it is natural for flowers to bloom and fade. This reinforces the biological aspect of death.

The funeral further presents a spiritual aspect of death. Norma, nonetheless, is initially more concerned with the church being filled with "invisible dust" that was "dancing in beams of light"[135] as she sits on her "hard seat." She notices that there was more "talk about God and souls, and not very much talk about Uncle Frank," which can be considered a critique of religious funerals made by the author. There is too much emphasis on the spirituality of the afterlife and not enough on those who die. Only through a child's perspective, in this case, Norma, an analysis of the human dealings with death can be carried out. This is because children point out the direct observation they make about death without the biases that adults construct or believe to soothe their grief. Norma explores the passing of her uncle in her way, and her thoughts and reflections are more profound and wiser than those of adults around her.

As Norma questioningly tells her mom that "Uncle Frank was really old, right?"[136] it is evident that, to some extent, Norma understands the relation between old age and death. Death is associated with old people, which indicates that Norma has some understanding that life must come to an end. However, an archetypal death model is reinforced by only associating death with the elderly. This suggests that Norma does not yet understand the full extent of death and has been somewhat protected from other examples of death in her life. A pivotal realization of the nature of death is made by Ray, who poses the question to Norma: "Is Uncle Frank still a person?"[137] It is evident that the children are somewhat coming to terms with death's finite and transforming nature. The questioning of Uncle Frank's personhood is interweaved with the

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[135] James, *The Funeral*, 18.
[136] James, *The Funeral*, 21.
[137] James, *The Funeral*, 21.

close-up illustration of concerned Norma. This indicates that a funeral is an entirely different experience for naïve children and grown adults, as not knowing much about death makes the experience of grief more contemplative than melancholic.

As for the grief, the children do not seem too melancholized by death, perhaps because they do not understand death's complex nature, for example, that it is irreversible – therefore, they will not see their uncle again. When Norma and Ray go outside, a series of illustrations of the children playing, doing cartwheels, and jumping around in open and grass-filled areas follows. This implies that children are not as attached to sentimentality while grieving. They find opportunities to enjoy their freedom by enjoying the present moment with those around them that they love. The freedom is symbolized through Norma and Ray's childishness as they are detached from death's sentiment and choose to free themselves by playing and having fun during the funeral. This would perhaps happen during other events not primarily meant for children too. Yet both children experience grief and miss Uncle Frank, which is particularly highlighted by Norma looking at a "photo of Uncle Frank, who was smiling right at her." They both react to their uncle's death, though they do not fully understand why he is no longer here with them. Norma ultimately concludes that "Uncle Frank would have liked his funeral." The conditional tense here is crucial, as it demonstrates Norma's awareness that Uncle Frank no longer exists in the present. Norma implies that her enjoying herself at the funeral is what Uncle Frank would have wanted – for his life to be celebrated through the joy of his loved ones. Thus, through a child-like naiveness, death and grief can be handled using a brand-new perspective, which centers on togetherness as a source of joy and healing during grief.

From a bibliotherapeutic perspective, the book does not seem to elaborate too much on emotional reactions to loss or any coping scenarios. The tricky part is that although the main characters think of the deceased uncle, they are not exceptionally close to him and thus do not seem to be too affected by the loss. On the other hand, they are very reflective about the whole situation, which opens the way for possible discussions on funerals or death with children. Witnessing the acceptance of varied reactions to death and the elements of the memorial may help children prepare for or reflect upon their first funeral. Yet this book does not seem to aim at becoming a bibliotherapeutic tool primarily; instead, it provides an interesting perspective on what it is like for children to go to a funeral and how they are likely to think and behave, which could instead be an interesting and helpful material for adult readers. In this sense, the book especially has so much to offer.

Dance Like a Leaf by A.J. Irving and Claudia Navarro

Written by an American children's literature author AJ Irving and illustrated by a Mexican artist Claudia Navarro, this picture book celebrates shared moments between a girl and her grandma during autumn. As Friedman from School Library Journal captured it in his review, "a tribute to autumn, love, and loss. This evocative pairing of story and art creates a tone poem and lesson, a lovely reflection on the seasons of life, and a gentle lead-in to a discussion of death and renewal,"[138] it is undoubtedly a book worthy of attention. Irving's lyrical language, coupled with Navarro's vibrant illustrations, provides an instant experience of what it feels like to love and lose someone and how to cope with it.

The story is about a little girl having a very close relationship with her grandma. The story starts in September, when the two start, as every year, celebrating the delights of autumn together: sipping tea, bundling up in scarves, singing and waving to the trees, and "dancing like a leaf" as the trees lose their leaves. But, as time goes by, Grandma has more and more difficulty enjoying her tea, wrapping in scarves, twirling, and waving under the trees. As the season changes from autumn to winter, Grandma can no longer do all the traditions, and the girl must take the lead as Grandma turns slow and forgetful. One day, Grandma dies. The loss is excruciating for the granddaughter, but she carries her grandmother's memory in her heart, continuing to "dance like a leaf" as Grandma taught her.

The author's decision to treat death in a complex yet implicit way is evident throughout the story. To start with, Irving uses seasonal symbolism to address death. Scheltema claims that writers can use seasonal symbols "to express, heighten, or even play against feelings and the passing of time and age."[139] Of the four seasons, spring and autumn could be understood as opposites in this sequence. The appearance of new growth in spring in the form of tiny, green leaf shoots tells the world that life is reborn. Whereas the opposite applies in the autumn—the drying, dying, and falling of leaves symbolizes the impending death of the life cycle. It is evident through the author's decision to set the story in autumn that the allusion to the end of a life cycle is made. This perhaps reinforces the biological aspect of death.

Irving and Navarro depict autumn as a source of beauty and joy, when "yellow sings a sweet melody" and grandma and her granddaughter "bundle up in scarves," "sing with the breeze,"

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[138] Robbin Friedman's review of Dance Like a Leaf, by AJ Irving and Claudia Navarro, School Library Journal. July 01, 2020. https://www.slj.com/review/dance-like-a-leaf

[139] Gwyn Scheltema, "Seasonal Symbolism", Writescape, Accessed March 01, 2022. https://writescape.ca/site/2019/10/seasonal-symbolism/

and "dance like leaves." Contrastively, the motif of falling leaves and autumnal melancholia suggests that it is also a source of pain and preparation for an end for the characters. This is notable when grandma's health declines simultaneously with the winter months approaching and leaves changing their color and gradually falling.

The author uses months as time references to navigate the story. In September, Grandma and the granddaughter "sip their tea" and "bundle up in scarves," and their happiness is notable from the illustrations[140]. In October, Grandma's health is slowly declining as she "forgets the teacups and scarves." This also suggests that the emotional weight of the impending loss is experienced differently as it emerges clearly in the two characters' body language; the grandmother grows more hunched and withdrawn, while the girl's posture does not signal increased anxiety, only until the page where she sits on the bed, alone. The girl is, at this point, yet not accustomed to what is happening to Grandma as she is depicted with a happy face, taking the lead in their usual traditions as can be seen in the line "Grandma forgets the teacups, so I put two on our special table." The foregrounding of the girl joyfully staring at the falling leaves and waving at trees with Grandma being turned away from the window suggests that Grandma, unlike her granddaughter, is anticipating death[141]. This can be seen in many other instances throughout the story through illustrations of grandma's somewhat melancholic facial expression in contrast with the little girl's almost naïve happiness[142]. A little girl is naturally naive when it comes to death and the finality of life. This is because children struggle with understanding the mature concept of death. The death of a family member is usually a significant milestone on their journey towards a mature understanding of death's complex nature.

As the story goes on and November comes, the "crisp and fragile leaves, hanging by a thread" and "curling at the ends"[143] foreshadow incoming death. The fragility of the leaves is an allusion to Grandma's severely declining health. Grandma's death is implicitly addressed as she "smiles and drifts off to sleep,"[144] subliminally implying that she died happily. In this context, sleeping is a metaphor for the cessation of life functions – death. The visual representation of the granddaughter's emotions signifies that she is experiencing loss and pain, which suggests that she might be aware of Grandma being dead. However, the character does not explicitly mention

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[140] Irving, Dance *Like a Leaf* (Boston: Barefoot Books, 2020) 5.
[141] Irving, Dance *Like a Leaf,* 13.
[142] Irving, Dance *Like a Leaf,* 7-14.
[143] Irving, Dance *Like a Leaf,* 13.
[144] Irving, Dance *Like a Leaf,* 16.

Grandma's terminal sickness or that she "died" or "passed away." Instead, the author uses the line, "Nearly naked trees shed the last of their leaves. Grandma's bed is empty,"[145]to address death subcomponents irreversibility and non-functionality here. The leaves of trees play a symbolic role alongside the author's lyrical text, floating just like the autumn foliage. Also, through associating death with the elderly, in this case, grandmother, an archetypal model of death is reinforced.

The concept of grief is primarily built on the close-up illustration of the crying girl sitting on the sofa with a stack of empty teacups in front of her[146]. It suggests she is experiencing loss and is not motivated to continue with the traditions she used to do with her grandmother, which could correspond with the stage of grief called depression. The intense emotions are reinforced by the dark and empty view from the window, with trees covered in snow. This scene illustrates the girl's struggle to get used to the loss and continue living without her grandmother. The author's decision to use vibrant colors and scarves fluttering across the room, "hanging like a rainbow," interestingly and almost illogically, contrasts with the growing sadness in the girl's heart. This scene emphasizes that real-life remains unchanged even though the individual experiences crisis during grief and life seems to stop for a while. This may also credibly represent the manifestation of continuing bonds with her grandmother through objects like scarves. The granddaughter strives to maintain and foster the connection to her grandma through the scarves and memories/rituals they shared. The scarves represent the externalization of these memories and are essential to the girl because they are tangible as opposed to mere memories.

Irving devotes two pages to the girl's "healing process," using the period of all four seasons to illustrate that the bonds that caused the pain were deep, so it makes sense that the healing would take depth (and time) as well. Through the line "Winter turns to spring, spring turns to summer, and summer turns to autumn."[147] alongside the girl facing towards the sky, smiling, it is evident that healing is in the process, and the girl is hopeful. Although the girl is coping by herself and only has memories of Grandma to console her, she learns to find comfort in recreating those memories when autumn comes along. The line, "Grandma loved autumn. I sip my tea. I bundle up. I wave to the trees. I sing with the breeze. I dance like a leaf"[148], implies that the girl remembers her unique traditions with Grandma and copes with the loss by manifesting them.

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[145] Irving, *Dance Like a Leaf,* 18.
[146] Irving, *Dance Like a Leaf*, 20.
[147] Irving, *Dance Like a Leaf,* 21-22.
[148] Irving, Dance *Like a Leaf,* 24-26.

This is only reinforced by a vibrant illustration of the little smiling girl dancing and twirling under the trees. The girl's final statement "…just like Grandma taught me"[149] suggests that she found her way to cope with loss through memories and rituals, maintaining a constructive kind of mourning and possibly accepting the new reality as her permanent reality.

From the perspective of bibliotherapy, this book provides readers with a vivid depiction of emotional reactions and ways of coping through memories and legacies. The crisis connected to death and loss is portrayed in a beatable and optimistic fashion desirable in bibliotherapy. Through both the written and illustrated media, the authors communicate key messages such as the importance of time for the healing process, the emotional reaction, in this case, crying, as a natural and healthy response to loss, and the significance of continuing bonds with the deceased as a coping strategy. Although the book does not provide much detail about the loss, it highlights the main character's resilience, serving as a great role model for young readers affected by a loss. The way death is depicted, nonetheless, is not necessarily suitable as it is implicit, with the use of the metaphor of sleeping, which is considered a highly inappropriate comparison by many experts.[150]

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[149] Irving, *Dance Like a Leaf,* 28.
[150] The author of this thesis informally interviewed AJ Irving on the use of this book as a bibliotherapeutic tool. AJ Irving claims that she gave several copies of *Dance Like a Leaf* to the grief counselor at Jackson Hole Community Counseling Center (Wyoming, USA) where it is being actively used for bibliotherapeutic groups. Also, AJ Irving mentioned that the book was labeled as "exceptional" by some local bibliotherapy specialists.

Ida, Always by Caron Levis and Charles Santoso

The award-winning picture book *Ida, Always* which The New York Times Book Review called "an example of children's books at their best." was written by an American children's literature author and a university professor Carol Levis and illustrated by an American artist Charles Santoso, who has worked for iconic clients such as Warner Bros, Harper Collins, or Penguin Random House. It is a story of dealing with the impending death of a loved one, love, loss, grief, and hope.

The story is about two anthropomorphic polar bears, Ida and Gus, who are inseparable companions at New York City's Central Park Zoo. They spend their days together, playing ball, splashing, swimming, running, chasing each other, and simply being there for each other. Then one day, everything changes as Gus learns from the zookeepers that Ida is very sick and she is not going to get better. Gus and Ida then try to adjust to the idea that they will soon be parted and help each other face this difficult news by sharing whispers, sniffles, cuddles, and even laughs. They also confront the mystery of death and loss together, pondering over the idea of where Ida will be once she is gone. Once Ida dies, Gus slowly realizes that she is and will always be with him even after her death—through the memories that live in their favorite spots.

Levis and Santoso both explore the theme of death straightforwardly. Levis' decision to directly address death using the "D" words, specifically *die* and *dying,* instead of widespread euphemisms such as passing away, moving on to a better place, or using inappropriate metaphors makes the story very intense and authentic from the beginning. Levis' narrative explores the entire process from the situation before death, the death, to the follow-up grief. This complex perspective made it possible to uncover several subcomponents of death.

Through Ida's terminal illness, Levis employs the biological aspect of death and addresses death as the cessation of bodily functions, as seen in "Then one day, when her body stopped working, Ida would die."[151] The main character, in this case, Gus, gets to explore what leads to Ida's death and what will have caused it, more precisely. Gus is informed by the zookeeper that "Ida is very sick," which is followed by a more complex explanation of what will follow, "Ida wouldn't hurt, but she would get tired and too weak to swim and play."[152] These lines support the acquisition of death subcomponents of non-functionality and causality. Contrastively, the biological aspect of death is undermined later in the story, where it is evident that both

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[151] Caron Levis and Charles Santoso, *Ida, Always* (New York: Atheneum Books, 2015), 12.
[152] Levis, Ida, Always, 13.

characters believe that after Ida's death, her body will still exist, only somewhere else, as in the line "They wondered, where Ida was going"[153] or in Ida's direct speech about her future "Wherever I go,..".

The scene where Gus finds out about Ida's sickness illustrates that this is not something he would expect. The moment of surprise is depicted by a close-up illustration of Gus' facial expression with his mouth open and horror in his eyes. Thus, death is presented as something unpredictable. The unpredictability subcomponent of death is further explored through Ida's perspective. Ida, terminally sick, is not yet accustomed to her condition and must come to terms with it. The book portrays the passing of time and how Ida deals with her impending death. Her diagnosis was unexpected, but she can expect her death after being told about the diagnosis. This is reinforced by the zookeeper's claim: "Usually, there's a way to make a sick bear better, but this time was different."[154], implying that it is inevitable that Ida will die.

Levis admirably opted for telling the story from two different perspectives - how Gus learns to accept that his polar bear companion Ida is slowly but surely dying and equally how Ida also prepares herself for when she will no longer be there when she is no longer alive. This decision makes the exploration of the theme of death highly complex. Mainly because the two characters not only prepare themselves for death but also confront the mystery of death and loss together, pondering over the idea of where Ida will be once she is gone as in "A plane roared overhead. They wondered where it was going. They wondered where Ida was going too."[155] This moment of wonder is illustrated by a scene where the two bears lean against each other and look up into the sky. Death is presented as a mystery, especially related to the possible afterlife, which is open to subjective interpretations. Additionally, due to Ida's perspective, a theme of one's personal mortality is explored as she is, at this moment, accustomed to the fact that she is going to die soon. Therefore, she understands that she is mortal, which is evident in her wondering about "where she will go."

The anthropomorphism and how the characters are almost overtly humanized, depicted, and shown by both Levis' text and Santoso's artwork helps explore the emotional reactions to death and loss. The bears' changing emotions associated with the situation in which they occur predominantly come to life through their actions and facial expressions. This can be seen, for example, in the picture where Santoso portrayed both bears in one place, but each on a different

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153 Levis, *Ida, Always,* 20.
154 Levis, *Ida, Always*, 14.
155 Levis, *Ida, Always,* 21.

page. This signifies that even though the bears are in the same zoo and only a tiny stream separates them, they are experiencing a different personal crisis and need their own space. Both are unhappy at first glance, but it is evident that each is experiencing sadness for a different reason. This is, again, because the two perspectives of both the dying bear and the soon-to-be bereaved bear can be seen in the story.

The concept of grief and feelings connected to it is built mainly on a bond theme as the two main characters have a powerful bond, which is visible throughout the whole story. For example, when the bears spend every day together, playing ball, swimming, observing the city, cheering each other up. Finding out that one of them will soon die changes this bond – it becomes even more powerful. Their relationship slows down, softens, and deepens. The two spend as much time together as possible, manifesting intense emotions. This can be seen, for instance, through their waving to each other every night, saying, "I'll miss you." Harder it gets after Ida dies as Gus must cope with the grief by himself. He is subconsciously looking for Ida everywhere and is devastated. This can be seen through his facial expression, which is reinforced by the dark colors used. Gus's desolation is eventually tempered by the realization that, in some ways, "Ida is still with him,"[156] that she will always be with him. The continuing bond is reinforced by his memories of her, her words he remembers, and the places that remind him of her. It conveys the survivor's feeling, retaining their loved one, feeling that the person is "still here."

As for the bibliotherapeutic potential, this book could perhaps be a suitable option to broach and discuss mortality, death, and loss with younger children in a reassuring and very complex manner. The utmost quality of this book for possible bibliotherapeutic use is its straightforwardness about the whole process and the number of perspectives it offers. This book takes the reader through the entire journey from everyday happy life to discovering a diagnosis, the "growling days, laughing days, and days that mixed them up," death, and learning to move forward. It does not skip any of it and does not shy away from what is happening – both language-wise and illustration-wise. Both characters have time to process their emotions, express them, and are visibly full of sorrow and hope. Due to the portrayal of the whole process ending on a hopeful note, the book may serve as an excellent tool for someone's reflection on their own experience. At the same time, it would not perhaps be totally out of place to argue whether this book would not be too intense, especially in the immediate conjunction of a child's

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[156] Levis, *Ida, Always*, 26.

loss. This picture book may serve as a model of coping with impending death and the accompanying grief, stressing the importance of continuing bonds.

Finn's Feather by Rachel Noble

After losing her son and searching for picturebooks on grief for children, Australian author Rachel Noble realized there were gaps in this genre. That inspired her to write *Finn's Feather*. The author of the illustrations is American artist Zoey Abbott, an author of several picture books. Her illustrations are clear and warm, telling the emotional tale with gentle tenderness and leaving ample room for Noble's text to carry a deeper meaning. *Finn's Feather* is a story of how a child who has lost a sibling finds a way to keep his beloved brother in his life despite the difficulty the adults around him are experiencing. It portrays the unique perspective of a bereaved child, his remarkable resilience, and how deep the love of family is.

Finn is an upbeat and energetic boy who discovers a white feather on his doorstep. He runs to show the new treasure to his mother, explaining that the feather is from his deceased brother Hamish. His mother responds with a deep breath and a big hug. His teacher's reaction is similar - muted. Finn is so thrilled with his brother's gift that he cannot understand his mother's or teacher's reactions. Finn's friend Lucas is the only one who understands and shares his enthusiasm. Together they find ways to include the unique feather in their playtime. The feather becomes their equal adventuresome partner as if Finn's brother was right beside them, sharing the delights of playtime with them. Once they are done playing, Finn finally decides to write a letter to Hamish and uses the feather as a pen. Together with his mother, Finn secures his letter in a tree branch.

Although death is not explicitly mentioned in the book, it is the central theme. Nowhere in the story does it expressly appear, as far as language is concerned, that the main character's brother, Hamish, has died, but it can be retrieved from the context that he has. The first such occurrence is evident when Finn discovers the feather and runs to his mother to show her, "Look what I found! Hamish sent it!"[157] His mother's very conventionally sensitive reaction when she gives Finn a big hug and states, "Hamish is always with you. Feather or no feather,"[158] clearly implies Hamish is no longer alive. This is only reinforced through the first illustration of Finn's room, where he is getting out of his bed, and there is one extra empty bed with a pillow in the shape of the letter "H." This suggests that the room is initially designed for two children. It foreshadows further confirmed reality that Finn's brother Hamish has died. Another example

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[157] Rachel Noble and Zoey Abott. *Finn's Feather (*New York: Enchanted Lion Books, 2018), 7.

[158] Noble, *Finn's Feather*, 8.

is the tense Noble uses in "He was a really cool brother,"[159] again proving Finn's brother is not there anymore and Finn's awareness of this fact.

Yet Finn is not fully accustomed to what it means to be dead. Though Finn understands that his brother is not physically there or ever returning, he understands death as some form of partings or living in "another place." This can be seen through the letter Finn writes to his deceased brother, where he directly addresses Hamish as if a receiver of the message stating, "I hope you have a happy time in heaven. When you make a rainbow, I will shout out, "I love you, Hamish!" Finn's belief that Hamish is now in heaven, capable of making a rainbow, proves that Finn still believes in Hamish's physical existence somewhere. This mainly contradicts the biological nature of death and the subcomponent of non-functionality. Additionally, heaven can also undoubtedly have a religious connotation here, that of a place regarded in various religions as the abode of God and the angels and life after death.

Death and loss are further portrayed through the unique perspective of a child. Noble uses the innocent and child-like naiveness to show how children process death and loss differently. This can be seen primarily through Finn's conviction that the feather he has found on the doorstep is from his brother Hamish and his excitement about it and the adults' rather pragmatic reaction in contrast. For example, as Finn is excited about the feather, proudly presenting it to his mother, it is evident that he is convinced it is from Hamish: "It's not just any feather, Mum. Hamish sent it."[160] His mother's reaction in the form of a big hug and comforting words makes Finn wonder why his mother is not excited too, as the feather "is definitely from Hamish." Likewise, the teacher's reaction to Finn's excitement about the feather "from Hamish" is an empathetic hug, showing the teacher's understanding of the grief Finn must be going through. All the adults make Finn confused and upset as he feels misunderstood and has no one to share his enthusiasm with, as can be seen in the line "Finn was confused. Why was he the only one excited about his feather?" alongside a close-up illustration of Finn sadly holding the feather. Noble and Abbott depicted how adults may have different expectations of how children deal with death and grief.

Furthermore, the theme of death and grief is depicted through the symbolism of a feather. Nobel and Abbott used a feather as a symbol of connection between our concrete world and the airy spaces above - and more specifically, as a connecting point between a deceased brother "in heaven" and the bereaved sibling. Due to their link to birds, feathers can also be seen as a

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[159] Noble, *Finn's Feather*, 32.
[160] Noble, *Finn's Feather*, 7.

symbol of freedom, both physically and spiritually, leading to transcendence and communication with spiritual realms. Perhaps, Noble depicted a little bit of everything in the story. The accompanying Abbot's illustrations in an attractively textured pastel color palette also draw attention to the ever-present, symbolic feather.

The feather in the story has an exceptional value for Finn, the main character. He adores it and cherishes it from the moment he finds it, as seen in the line, "It was white, it was amazing, it was perfect."[161] The real value of the feather lies in the fact that Finn is convinced that his deceased brother sent the feather. Finn feels connected to his brother through it as he believes that by sending this feather, his brother "wanted to say hi." As Finn and his friend play with the feather all day long, Finn feels happy as if he was spending the day with his brother Hamish. This can be seen through the various illustrations of the two boys laughing and enjoying themselves during adventurous activities throughout the day. The feather provides Finn with freedom in the form of carefree childhood play and a connection with his brother, and it serves as a tribute to a life that has been loved.

The concept of grief is primarily built on Finn and his friend's playtime. Although they are enjoying themselves, there are moments when Finn openly admits that he misses his brother, as in "He was a really cool brother, I really miss him," alongside the illustration of the two boys lying on the grass and watching the sky (see Appendix F) – perhaps allusion to the already mentioned heaven. Finn is coping with the loss through the continuing bond with his brother by holding on to the feather and keeping his memory and spirit alive. Noble and Abbott also use a potent tool to depict grief and that of Finn writing a letter to Hamish. The close-up illustration of Hamish writing a letter with his mother sitting next to him also shows that Finn copes by sharing thoughts and feelings for Hamish. The letter represents Finn's deep relationship with Hamish and his natural child-like naiveness.

From the bibliotherapeutic point of view, the story well depicts ways of coping with the death of a loved one. It also shows emotional reactions, although it seems that the death occurred some time ago before this story takes place. Therefore, the grief and its responses may be partly processed already. Nevertheless, the story conveys an important idea: eventually, there is always hope, and we can benefit from the continuing bond with the loved ones that are no longer here. Also, childhood resiliency shines through the whole story, which shows the crisis in a beatable way. Perhaps the book may be more (biblio)therapeutic for parents than for children,

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[161] Noble, *Finn's Feather*, 5.

as it is told very much through a child's eyes and how they process sorrow so differently, almost as if aiming at parents' education in this matter.

The Rough Patch by Brian Lies

A 2019 Caldecott Honor-winning picture book, *The Rough Patch,* by an American author and illustrator of children's books, Brian Lies (also the author of the New York Times bestselling *Bats* series), deals with a complex topic of grief, especially the anger aspect of grief, and hope. Lies' newest picturebook explores what it feels like to lose something close unexpectedly, how turbulent and dark the aftermath of such loss may be, and most importantly, how powerful and healing may friendship, curiosity and nature be.

The story is about Evan, an anthropomorphic fox who loves his pet dog. He does everything with his dog; they play, read, eat, and primarily work in Evan's extraordinary garden, where flowers and other beautiful things flourish and reach for the sky. One day Evan loses his best friend. The dog sadly dies. Evan immediately falls into cruel darkness, and he cannot bear to even look at the place, the garden, they had enjoyed so much together, and that had meant the most to them. He destroys the garden to bits and, in his grief, creates something to match his angry mood – the most desolate and ugly place full of pricky weeds. Not for long remain the garden a dark place as the pumpkin vine sneaks in under his garden fence. Evan waters it and eventually takes the grown pumpkin to Fair Week, an event he used to visit with his dog. His pumpkin is awarded a prize – a box with a puppy, and so Evan returns from the fair with a new "family member."

The concept of death is dealt with rather implicitly as far as the language is concerned; nevertheless, many subcomponents of death are opportunely addressed, making its complicated and complex nature more graspable. Death, nor any other "D" words, are ever explicitly mentioned throughout the story. Instead, the main character is depicted kneeling over the bed of his dead pet dog, who lies motionless, facing the ground. The stillness can be spotted in contrast with Evan's hand reaching toward to dog. Evan's change of posture and facial expression from smiling to sad and dejected suggests that death has occurred and that the character is aware.

Death is presented as something unexpected and unpredictable in this sequence. It is partly clear from Evan's above-mentioned sudden change of posture and facial expression and partly from the author's word choice. Through the line "But one day, the unthinkable happened"[162] alongside the picture of the deceased dog, it is evident that Evan was not anticipating his pet's

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[162] Brian Lies, *The Rough Patch* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018), 10.

death whatsoever. The unpredictability as one of the subcomponents of death is directly addressed here. At the same time, Lies' decision to depict the dog as very old in the last scene before its death foreshadows the upcoming event. There is a stark contrast between the depiction of Evan and the dog's adventures at the very beginning, where it is vividly depicted as a lively puppy, and in the last scene, where they harvest their crops, and the dog is considerably old. This may also suggest that the dog died of old age, reinforcing the archetypal kind of death, exploring the causality subcomponent of death, and understanding internal events that might have possibly caused the death. The motif of death as a final and inevitable stage is rendered with the help of visual representation of the dog's long and joyful life and his gradual aging from a puppy to a gray-muzzled old dog, as can be seen through the vignettes of Evan's life with the dog in little bursts surrounded by white. The employed white space illustrates the passing of time; it packs days, seasons, and years into several pages. This seems crucial as it supports the biological aspect of death by depicting an individual's life span and death as its final inevitable part.

Rather explicitly did the author treat death in the scene where "Evan laid his dog to rest in the corner of the garden"[163] The idiomatic "laying to rest" derived from the Latin "requiescat in pace," which is a direct translation of "rest in peace" is, according to James, an incredibly popular euphemism to address death, and one with centuries of history.[164] This word choice signifies that, at this moment, the main character is fully aware of the irreversibility of the event, which is only reinforced by the line "and nothing was the same," suggesting that the main character understands that his companion is not about to return. The actual "laying his dog to rest" is depicted through a picture of Evan standing over the grave of his deceased dog, leaning on the shovel he has just used to bury it. Any form of the ceremony does not accompany burial as a method of final disposition. There are no details about the practice itself in this sequence, only the aftermath of the practice; that is Evan's emotional reaction. The close-up illustration of unhappy Evan with teary eyes staring at the dog's grave alludes to the grief he is going through.

Furthermore, the concept of death is explored through the garden's symbolism. The garden serves a dual function in the story that of a happy place full of life as in "there everything they planted grew as big and as beautiful as the sky above them"[165] as well as a lonely and sad place

[163] Lies, *The Rough Patch*, 11.
[164] Jamet, Denis "Euphemisms for Death: Reinventing Reality through Words?" *Academia.edu*, Universite de Lyon, www.academia.edu/5589274/Euphemisms_for_Death
[165] Lies, *The Rough Patch,* 10.

as in "without his best friend, the garden was a bitter and lonely place." The garden symbolizes Evan's life before his companion's death and his loss and grief after the death. These two stand in clear contrast to one another, which is visible from the harshness of the illustrations, turning the original colorful garden into a dark place. This also represents the notion that death has a way of changing one's life completely.

Moreover, the dog's death and the garden's destruction as Evan "hacked it all to bits and threw everything into a heap" [166] represent the simultaneous end of things he cherished the most. The garden, although destroyed by Evan, nevertheless eventually brings new life. As opposed to the dog's literal death, the garden's symbolic death is therefore reversible, which represents nature's circle of life in which every end also entails a new beginning. Such representation is evident in "a good place won't stay empty for long, new plants sprouted toward the sky" or through the pumpkin vine sneaking under the fence, eventually growing into a pumpkin, setting in motion a series of events that help Evan heal and restart his life once again.

As far as the concept of grief is concerned, it is almost as if the author geared the book towards grief as a central topic. The exploration of how hard it can be to deal with the loss of something and the complicated emotions that come with it resonates throughout the book. The illustrations capture the emotional register of each scene. After the dog's death, the sudden harshness of the illustrations in terms of the use of darker shades, colors signify that the main character is grieving and going through rough times. The grey sky and lack of sunshine serve as a metaphor for Evan's grieving, implying that there is no "light" in his life anymore.

In this sequence, the bereaved character's reaction to loss is anger and a feeling of "not being self." When Evan's companion dies, he withdraws from his usual activities, eventually destroying his garden in rage at the universe. The concept of grief in the form of anger is mainly depicted through a close-up illustration of Evan angrily smashing around with a hoe in his paw, slashing the garden to the ground (see Appendix A). From his facial expression and the dynamic of the illustration, it is clear that the character is angry and trying to cope with the loss. As the destroyed garden begins to overgrow into something ugly and brutal, it has a symbolic function, representing the main character's anger and sense of being lost. The main character even identifies with the new "ugly" garden, for he feels it suits him "just fine." This can be seen primarily through the resemblance of Evan's current mood and the language used to describe the weeds in the garden: "Itchy ones. Spiky and prickly ones. Foul-smelling ones. These weeds

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[166] Lies, *The Rough Patch*, 15.

suited Evan just fine, so he took care of them."[167] This implies that his emotions are as raw as the weeds in the garden, and it makes him feel comfortable encouraging everything poisonous and destructive to grow as a form of his coping with the loss.

Nonetheless, the garden reflects hope and resilience too. As the pumpkin vine sneaks under Evan's garden fence, it helps the main character heal and recover. The pumpkin vine, and later a grown pumpkin, symbolizes Evan's transformation back to hope. This is only reinforced by a sudden change of illustrations from grey skies to partly cloudy with the sun once he discovers the vine. Finding new hope means relearning the world for Evan after the loss. This reinforces the view of grieving as a process of reconstructing a world of meaning challenged by loss; in other words, understanding grief as a quest for new meaning. Evan's search for new meaning starts when he decides to take the grown pumpkin to a local fair and reunite with his friends, eventually returning home with a new puppy.

The line "it felt good to be out again, even if it wasn't quite the same" suggests that Evan has a continuing bond with his deceased canine companion as he is nostalgic about the times when they visited the fair together. Yet he can enjoy himself once again even though he is still grieving, which supports the theory that there does not necessarily have to be an end to grief. Finally, the new puppy won at the fair symbolizes life and a new meaning for Evan. Instead of instantly replacing what was lost, however, Lies well employed the passing of time, using seasonal changes to show that healing took time.

From a bibliotherapeutic point of view, *the Rough Patch* could be considered for bibliotherapeutic use mainly for its outstanding depiction of emotional reactions to loss through vivid illustrations, which are very authentic and never too maudlin. Though the piece does not mention "death" in language, the illustrations make it unnecessary for the words to be explicit. *The Rough Patch* may ensure the reader that it is okay to be driven by anger, destroy things that make one feel upset, and shut oneself off from the world for a while to heal. The book reinforces the idea that every individual copes with grief differently and that it is okay to do so, be it anger, crying, or anything else. It also shows that life will be okay to live again and that one day, while things are not the same and will never be exactly as they were, life will go on as there is always new hope. Finally, the story showcases how grief can be both sudden and harsh process that should not be rushed or hidden.

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[167] Lies, *The Rough Patch*, 19.

Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup

An award-winning author and a Royal College of Art in London graduate Britta Teckentrup wrote over 120 children's picture books translated into over 120 languages. Some of Teckentrup's particularly acclaimed works include. *Don't Wake Up Tiger,* which was awarded a Dutch picture book of 2018, and *Under the Same Sky,* which made it on the shortlist for the Kate Greenaway Award. *The Memory Tree* is a picture book about the death of a loved one, the circle of life, and the hope that can follow. It offers a heartfelt celebration of the memories that comfort those left behind.

The story is about Fox and his forest friends who recall their memories with him. In the very beginning, Fox lies down in his favorite clearing, and as he is old and tired, he dies. Although he dies, he is remembered by all his forest friends as they soon begin to gather in the clearing. One by one, they tell stories of the special moments they shared with Fox. As they begin to share memories of him, a small tree starts to grow. The tree grows bigger and stronger with each memory, eventually sheltering, and protecting all the animals in the forest, just as Fox did when he was alive.

Teckentrup goes straight to the point as the main character dies on the very first double page. The whole book is then thematically focused on the aftermath of the death. Nonetheless, the way death is presented is somewhat controversial, although seemingly sensitively handled. To start with, Teckentrup uses the metaphor of sleeping to address death, as in "Fox closed his eyes, took a deep breath and fell asleep forever."[168] The juxtaposition of the words "fall asleep" and "forever" makes it difficult to evaluate whether death's irreversibility can be retrieved as one of death's subcomponents. On the one hand, sleeping is naturally something temporary, and it should be understood as such, whereas the word forever suggests that the state is finite. However, the attempt to address death as something finite and irreversible is noticeable. The finality is reinforced through the gradual snowfall, covering Fox's body until it disappears completely. From that moment on, the Fox can be seen only in memories depictions alongside the text in the past tense, which suggests Fox's existence is only referred to retrospectively as in "I remember when Fox and I were very young."[169] or "I remember how much Fox loved the sunset."[170]

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[168] Britta Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree* (Great Britain: Orchard Books, 2013), 2.
[169] Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 10.
[170] Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 13.

Especially interesting is how the unpredictability subcomponent is presented in this sequence. The language used signifies that Fox is anticipating death, almost as if he is in control. This can be seen in the line, "Fox had lived a long and happy life, but now he was tired. He made his way to his favorite spot in the clearing."[171], which suggests that the main character is aware of the incoming end. Additionally, he can decide where he wants to die – at his favorite spot. Also, the line "He looked at his beloved forest one last time and lay down" illustrates Fox's farewell to his home as he is, again, aware of the incoming death and sort of in control of its timing. This violates the innate understanding of death's nature, for it is presented as something one can prepare for or even control. Indeed, one may argue that such situations occur in humans' lives when people are diagnosed with terminal sickness and thus may predict their death. Speaking of first encounters with death, however, it is crucial for children to understand the very basic subcomponents of death, including unpredictability, to achieve a mature understanding of death. So, the representation of unpredictability could be considered problematic here.

The concept of death is also primarily built on tree symbolism. There are countless mythical qualities symbolized by trees, one of which is a widespread symbol of the tree as a symbol of life. The tree growing at the exact spot where Fox died supports the motif of the lifecycle, implying that every end entails a new beginning – a new life. The tree in the story embodies the deceased Fox as it is depicted in the same color as Fox's fur. Also, after spotting the tree, all the bereaved animals state that "Fox is still part of them.", which signifies that they perceive the tree as Fox's embodiment. The tree has also attributed to the notion of shelter and protection in the story, and these are qualities Fox used to possess. This supports the acquisition of the biological aspect of death as it presents it on behalf of the natural forces and as a part of a lifecycle.

The biological aspect of death is further reinforced through the close-up illustration of Fox dying alongside the line "Fox closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and fell asleep forever.", where "took a deep breath" alludes to Fox's very last breath, referring to breathing as a necessary life function. Thus, with his last deep breath, it could be expected that no more breathing occurs, which explores another death's subcomponents: non-functionality. Moreover, the biological aspect of death is reinforced by the statement, "Fox had lived a long and happy life, but now he was tired.", positioning death as a final and inevitable part of an individual's life span.

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[171] Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 2.

The concept of grief is built mainly on the motif of collective grieving. In the story, the animals begin to gather at the clearing once Fox dies, creating a circle around their deceased friend. This group of animals is a community that has been affected by the loss. Roldan claims that when grief encompasses a community, gathering in one place will help the bereaved to grieve with one another sharing their heartaches, hopes, and fears.[172] It is evident from the story that Fox was dear to this community of forest animals, as can be seen in the line, "Fox had been loved by everyone. He had been kind and caring. No one could imagine living in the forest without him."[173] Additionally, the animals' postures, depicted as mainly facing downwards, signify that they are experiencing grief. Another very symbolic role is that of silence in the story. As the animals gather to honor the memory of their friend, Teckentrup uses silence as one of the first expressions of honor and grief: "The animals sat in silence for a very long time." This could refer to a moment of silence as an appropriate and conventional way to acknowledge someone's death.

Similarly, the collective sharing of memories serves as a form of communal coping with the loss and expression of grief. When animals share their memories with Fox, one by one, they feel comfort and happiness as "their heavy hearts began to feel lighter."[174] This way of gathering to share memories over the deceased body is arguably, reminiscent of Māori funeral traditions, where the family members gather and share their memories over the open casket for several days. Nonetheless, the sense of community is very vividly depicted in this sequence through both media, implying that the deceased cope together through sharing of memories.

This sharing of memories plays a crucial role in the story, as with every story told, the tree becomes more robust and taller. The memories are a metaphor for life because they nourish the tree: "The more they remembered, the more the tree grew, higher and higher and more beautiful, until it was the tallest tree in the forest. A tree made from memories and full of love."[175] The author's decision to work with the idea of the tree made of memories supports the theory of continuing bonds. The animals strive to maintain the continuing bond with their deceased friend by keeping him metaphorically alive in their memories. The idea becomes even more potent through collective sharing. It is rendered with a vivid depiction of the forest community

[172] Karen Roldan, "Collective Grief" Usurns.online. Last updated April 12, 2012.
 https://www.usurnsonline.com/grief-loss/collective-grief/
[173] Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 7.
[174] Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 14.
[175] Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 19.

eventually finding shelter in the fully grown tree, always remembering Fox, who "lived on in their hearts."

From the perspective of bibliotherapy, this book offers vital messages on how important shared support is and how loss may bring people together. *The Memory Tree* may be an excellent choice as it successfully guides through the emotions of grief, showing it is okay to be sad that someone close has died, but it is still important to remember the happy times one shared with that person. Also, it shows concrete ways how one may celebrate the life of someone who has died and that maintaining continuing bond is a normal reaction to loss; what is more, it is a very healthy reaction to loss. The way death is depicted is not necessarily suitable as the metaphor of sleeping is used, which is considered a highly inappropriate comparison by many experts. On the other hand, the event is depicted in a very optimistic fashion since the stress on eventual healing is evident.

10. Evaluation

Even though the books were linked by death as their central topic, it was apparent that each author approached the subject in their unique way. Across the selected books, the death of a pet, a sibling, a grandparent, and a friend appeared. How death was presented varied primarily in the degree of explicitness of language and illustrations. For example, only two books out of seven addressed death by the words die, dying, or death, specifically, *Ida Always* and *The Funeral*. Though *The Rough Patch* could also be considered still very explicit in this respect, precisely because of the illustrations, which in this case, made it entirely unnecessary for the words to be direct. Interestingly, two out of seven picturebooks seemed to aim at adult readers rather than children as they portrayed death from child's perspective.

In the remaining books, death was either presented implicitly, i.e., somehow inferred from the context or presented figuratively. Specifically, in *The Memory Tree* and *Dance Like a Leaf,* the generally much-criticized and inappropriate metaphor of sleeping was used. *Grandad's Island* was a particular piece compared to the other books as the entire narrative was built solely on visual and verbal metaphors and was completely open to subjective interpretations in a way that it was demanding to claim it was about death. As for the subcomponents of death, many of them were addressed. Those that appeared across multiple books were irreversibility, unpredictability, inevitability, and non-functionality. Exceptionally, there were also personal mortality and causality. However, the presentation of all the abovementioned subcomponents was often very inconsistent as some of the subcomponents were simultaneously reinforced and undermined within the same story. None of the picture books covered all the subcomponents at once.

Most picture books presented death in some connection to nature, be it the passing of time, seasonal symbolism, or lifecycle. The attempts to address death as a biological concept were visible, although often self-contradictory. Incredibly successful in this respect was *Ida, always,* and *The Rough Patch*. The same approach to grief has been very consistent across all the books, reflecting the most contemporary trend in theories of grief - continuing bonds and individuality in terms of emotional responses to grief. The theme of continuing bond resonated throughout all the narratives.

 As for the bibliotherapeutic potential, most of the books meet the requirements of eye-catching illustrations, the portrayal of the crisis in an optimistic and beatable manner, and the portrayal

of various emotional reactions to grief. Yet it must be stressed that the overall effectiveness of bibliotherapy highly depends on the amount of guidance and support on the adult side. So, theoretically, any of the analyzed books could be considered for bibliotherapy. However, the author of this thesis believes, the books *The Rough Patch* and *Ida always* are of exceptionally high quality, mainly because they depict death and the whole process of grieving from a very complex perspective compared to the other picturebooks.

All in all, contemporary authors often balance between being explicit about the nature of death while also keeping it seemingly age-appropriate not to cause distress. Many attempts to depict death in a complex way could be spotted, some of them more successfull than others, and many also very inappropriately carried out. In spite of the fact that there are resources available in the twentieth century, mainly the studies stressing the importance of omission of figurative language in death presentation, it is at least disappointing that there are picturebooks available on the market that depict death in this way. On the contrary, it was evident that some of the picturebooks could be just as much meant for adult readers, which would then justify the use of metaphors and symbolism solely.

CONCLUSION

This thesis dealt with death in children's literature, particularly with death in contemporary picturebooks. As children's literature has evolved, so too has the format in which children's literature is presented, which resulted in recognition of the special place of picturebooks within the genre of children's literature among the critics, slowly establishing its position as a significant piece of literature in the field of literary theory. Picturebooks were defined as a tool for a child's first encounter with the world of literature and as a suitable tool between parent and child for sharing tales and information from the earliest days of life, playing a crucial role in death education. The unique format of picturebooks was further explored. It was stressed that picturebooks convey their message through two mediums, both carrying an essential part of the narrative as opposed to merely illustrated books. It was concluded that even though contemporary picturebooks may masquerade as relatively easy texts, their child-friendly appearance masks the sophistication and issues they often address.

This posed a question on the recurring issue of positioning children's literature within the literary discourse. There is a thin line between literature aimed at children versus adult readers. It was commented on how writing intended for children gets discredited and how writers tend to decenter the child reader from their writings, manifesting authorial egocentrism. It was concluded that the paradoxical decentering of the child seems beneficial in giving the author freedom within the genre, allowing them to explore mature themes and taboo subjects, such as death.

The next chapter focused on the changing approach to death in literature. It was stated that the approach to death has differed between each century or even decade. Firstly, it was mentioned that the socio-political state of society highly influences the amount of taboo placed on death. Secondly, the change that has occurred throughout time is how death's nature is presented. It came to light that most books on death published before the current millennium depicted death as temporary, convincing the reader that death is not finite. On the other hand, some more recent literature took the very opposite view and showed death as something reversible. It was concluded that the concept of death was weakly treated in the past. Contrastively, the contemporary approach to death in literature is less stigmatized, its depiction more complex, and yet it was stated that there is still more work that needs to be done, meaning that modern attempts do not guarantee the most effective results of revealing the true nature of death to young readers.

Furthermore, several areas relevant to the analysis of the selected picturebooks were explored: bibliotherapy, children's understanding of death, and concepts of death and grief. A deeper exploration of these areas yielded interesting findings that served as a framework for analyzing and evaluating the selected picturebooks. As for bibliotherapy, it has been concluded based on experts' opinion that for the book to be suitable for bibliotherapeutic use, it needs to include characters' emotional reactions and coping strategies, it should depict the crisis in an optimistic and beatable manner, and the illustrations should be eye-catching to sustain young child's attention. Also, the guidance and support on the adults' side was emphasized as essential factor influencing the effectiveness of the bibliotherapeutic use of a book.

Concerning the child's understanding of death, it was concluded that addressing the issue of death with children is a challenging task, mainly because it is cognitively complex for young children, and their understanding may vary immensely due to their developmental differences and personal experiences. It was noted that the biological aspect of death plays an irreplaceable role in developing the mature death concept, meaning that the conceptualization of death as a part and the inevitable final stage of the lifecycle is one of the crucial steps in a child's journey toward an adult-like understanding of death. The importance of not inadvertently fuel the child's misunderstanding of death as a biological concept was highlighted. Other vital recommendations on suitable presentation of death to young children supported the use of concrete and unambiguous language; specifically, words die, dying, death, and no euphemisms, abstract notions, or metaphors, such as sleeping.

Next, several subcomponents of death were defined: universality, non-functionality, causality, irreversibility, unpredictability, inevitability, and personal mortality. Especially the first four appeared across most research, representing the mature concept of death. Finally, theories of grief were explored. It was concluded that the approach to grief has evolved significantly from the absolute disconnection of the ties with the deceased to the continuing bonds with the dead, viewing grief as a highly individual process and a never-ending part of life.

The analytical part consisted of seven analyses of seven contemporary picturebooks published in the last ten years. The aim was to evaluate how the themes of death and grief are depicted and to what extent could the selected books serve the purposes of bibliotherapy It was concluded that there were many attempts to depict death in a complex way, some of them more successful than other. Many also very inappropriately carried out, mainly those that used figurative comparisons. As for the depiction of grief, all the books depicted grief as an individualized process, and the current trend of continuing bonds from theories of grief was

implemented. It was stressed that all the selected books could be, in some way, considered for bibliotherapeutic use. Some of the picturebooks also seemed to be aimed at adult readers.

Because death is a tough notion to grasp in combination with children's underdeveloped cognitive skills, it should be appreciated that there are many kinds of attempts, and that the world of literature for the youngest is expanding into such sensitive topics. However, there is still work to be done, especially regarding self-education on the picturebooks' creators' side. This thesis may serve as an inspiration for further examination of this remarkable topic.

RESUMÉ

Tato práce se zabývá smrtí v dětské literatuře. V úvodu je konstatováno, že smrt je nevyhnutelnou součástí nás samých, a přesto naše společnost neustále od smrti odvrací zrak. Především děti ztratily přirozený kontakt se smrtí, jelikož už obvykle nezažívají pohled na mrtvého člověka, jako tomu bylo většinou v minulosti, kdy se běžně umíralo doma v rodinném kruhu. V důsledku toho mohou mít problém vnímat smrt jako nevyhnutelnou součást života. To může být způsobeno tím, jak společnost smrt prezentuje, jak o ní mluví a píše. V dnešní době se děti setkávají se smrtí především prostřednictvím médií, která ji často depersonalizují.

Takové neosobní setkání se smrtí má na dítě zcela jiný dopad, než osobní zkušenost se smrtí blízkého člověka. Přitom neochota hovořit s dětmi o smrti ve snaze uchránit je před bolestí a strachem, může mít zcela opačný účinek. Právě nejistota a neznalost vzbuzují v dětech strach ze smrti. Vytváření tabu kolem tématu smrti se tak stává kontraproduktivním, protože nezabrání prožitku smutku, ale pouze zanechá dítě nevzdělané, pokud k tomuto smutku někdy dojde. Jakmile jsou děti smrtí osobně zasaženy, mohou být zmatené. Je tedy nutné jim koncept vysvětlit. Z toho vyplývá potřeba vzdělávání o smrti, které by se mělo stát přirozenou součástí dětského poznávání okolního světa. Pomocným nástrojem může být dětská literatura zaměřená na toto téma. Vhodná dětská literatura na toto téma může mít dokonce terapeutický účinek nebo může sloužit jako šetrná forma edukace pro ty, kteří se se smrtí ještě nesetkali a pomoci zahájit rozhovor mezi dítětem a rodičem. Takovým nástrojem pro sdílení informací od nejútlejšího věku může být obrázková kniha. Na trhu jsou dnes k dispozici desítky obrázkových knih o smrti. Současní autoři se nebojí experimentovat s existenciálními tématy, perspektivami nebo mírou explicitnosti. Některé obrázkové knihy téměř svádějí k otázce, zda jsou vůbec určeny dětským čtenářům.

Pro vytvoření kvalitní obrázkové knihy na tak citlivé téma, jako je smrt, je tedy nutné vzít v úvahu různé proměnné, od vývojových stadií dětí až po jejich schopnost pochopit pojem smrti. Podle toho by pak měla být provedena literární a výtvarná prezentace smrti. Obrázková kniha předkládaná dítěti musí být pečlivě vybrána tak, aby mohla sloužit výše uvedeným účelům. Cílem této práce je proto kriticky analyzovat vybrané anglofonní obrázkové knihy zaměřené na smrt jako ústřední téma a vydané v posledním desetiletí a získat představu o tom, jak se s tímto tématem vypořádávají současní autoři s ohledem na všechny zdroje, které mají v 21. století k dispozici. Následně je také cílem zhodnotit, do jaké míry mohou vybrané obrázkové knihy sloužit účelům biblioterapie.

S vývojem dětské literatury se vyvíjela i forma, v níž je dětská literatura prezentována, což vedlo k uznání důležité role obrázkových knih v žánru dětské literatury mezi kritiky. Obrázkové knihy jsou v této práci vydefinovány nejen jako ideální nástroj pro první setkání dítěte se světem literatury, ale také jako vhodný způsob sdílení příběhů a informací mezi rodičem a dítětem od prvních dnů života, který má zásadní roli při vzdělávání o smrti. Jedinečný formát obrázkových knih byl dále zkoumán v kontrastu s ilustrovanými knihami. Bylo zdůrazněno, že na rozdíl od pouhých ilustrovaných knih předávají obrázkové knihy své poselství prostřednictvím dvou médií, přičemž obě nesou podstatnou část vyprávění. Byl učiněn závěr, že ačkoli se současné obrázkové knihy mohou maskovat jako poměrně jednoduché texty, jejich zdánlivě dětský vzhled skrývá propracovanost a komplexní témata, které může skrývat.

To vyvolalo otázku problému umístění dětské literatury v rámci literárního diskurzu, neboť existuje velmi tenká hranice mezi literaturou určenou dětem a dospělým čtenářům. Bylo zmíněno, že mají často spisovatelé tendenci dětského čtenáře ze svých děl vyloučit, což je projevem autorského egocentrismu. Došlo se k závěru, že paradoxní decentrace dětského čtenáře se nakonec zdá být v tématu smrti a vzdělávání o smrti prospěšná, protože dává autorovi v rámci žánru svobodu a umožňuje mu zkoumat i podobně „dospělá" a běžně tabuizovaná témata.

Další kapitola se zaměřila na měnící se přístup ke smrti v literatuře. Bylo konstatováno, že přístup ke smrti se v jednotlivých stoletích, ba dokonce desetiletích lišil. Především bylo zmíněno, že sociálně-politický stav společnosti velmi ovlivňuje míru tabuizace smrti. Zadruhé, změna, k níž v průběhu času docházelo, spočívá v tom, jak je prezentována samotná podstata smrti. Vyšlo najevo, že většina knih o smrti vydaných před současným tisíciletím zobrazuje smrt jako dočasnou a vybízí tak čtenáře k tomu si myslet, že smrt není konečná. Některá novější literatura naopak přijala zcela opačný postoj a zobrazovala smrt jako něco zvratitelného. Došlo se k závěru, že pojem smrti byl v minulosti zpracováván velmi povrchově a nedostatečně. Naopak, současný přístup ke smrti v literatuře je méně stigmatizovaný, její zobrazení je komplexnější, ale i přesto je třeba na prezentaci smrti ještě zapracovat, což znamená, že moderní pokusy stále nezaručují efektivní odhalení skutečné povahy smrti mladým čtenářům.

Dále bylo zkoumáno několik oblastí relevantních pro analýzu vybraných obrázkových knih, a to biblioterapie, dětské chápání smrti a pojetí smrti a zármutku. Hlubší zkoumání těchto oblastí přineslo zajímavá zjištění, která posloužila jako rámec pro analýzu a hodnocení obrázkových knih. Co se týče biblioterapie, na základě názorů odborníků byl učiněn závěr, že aby byla kniha vhodná pro biblioterapeutické využití, musí obsahovat například emocionální reakce postav a

strategie vyrovnávání se se ztrátou blízké osoby. Měla by také zobrazovat celou situaci optimistickým způsobem a ilustrace by měly být poutavé, aby udržely pozornost malého dítěte. Jako zásadní faktor ovlivňující účinnost biblioterapeutického využití knihy bylo zdůrazněno také vedení a podpora ze strany dospělých.

Pokud jde o dětské chápání smrti, bylo konstatováno, že zabývat se otázkou smrti u dětí je náročný úkol zejména proto, že pro malé děti je koncept smrti kognitivně složitý a jejich chápání se může vzhledem k individuálním vývojovým rozdílům a osobním zkušenostem velmi lišit. Bylo zdůrazněno, že konkrétně biologický aspekt smrti hraje nezastupitelnou roli při rozvoji vyspělého pojetí smrti, což znamená, že konceptualizace smrti jako součásti a nevyhnutelné závěrečné fáze životního cyklu je jedním z klíčových kroků na cestě dítěte k dospělému chápání smrti. Snaha vynaložit veškeré úsilí, aby se neúmyslně nepodnítilo nesprávné chápání smrti jako biologického konceptu u dítěte byla označena jako stěžejní faktor. Další zásadní doporučení týkající se vhodné prezentace smrti malým dětem zahrnovala používání konkrétního a jednoznačného jazyka, konkrétně slov umřít, umírání, smrt, žádné eufemismy, abstraktní pojmy nebo metafory, jako je například spánek.

Dále bylo definováno několik dílčích složek smrti, a to univerzálnost, nefunkčnost, kauzalita, nevratnost, nepředvídatelnost, nevyhnutelnost a osobní smrtelnost. Zejména první čtyři se objevily napříč většinou výzkumů a představují vyspělé pojetí smrti. Nakonec byly zkoumány teorie zármutku. Došlo se k závěru, že přístup k zármutku se výrazně vyvinul od absolutního přerušení vazeb se zemřelým až k přetrvávajícím vazbám se zemřelým, přičemž zármutek je vnímán jako vysoce individuální proces a nikdy nekončící součást života.

Analytická část se skládala ze sedmi analýz sedmi současných obrázkových knih vydaných v posledních deseti letech. Cílem bylo zhodnotit, jak jsou zobrazena témata smrti a zármutku a do jaké míry mohou vybrané knihy sloužit pro účely biblioterapie Bylo zjištěno, že existuje mnoho pokusů o komplexní zobrazení smrti, přičemž některé z nich jsou úspěšnější než jiné. Mnohé také velmi nevhodně provedené, především ty, které využívaly obrazná přirovnání. Co se týče zobrazení zármutku, všechny knihy zobrazovaly zármutek jako individualizovaný proces a reflektovaly současný trend „přetrvávajících vazeb se zesnulým" vycházejících z teorií zármutku. Bylo zdůrazněno, že všechny vybrané knihy lze určitým způsobem zvažovat pro biblioterapeutické využití.

Vzhledem k tomu, že smrt je v kombinaci s nedostatečně rozvinutými kognitivními schopnostmi dětí těžko uchopitelný pojem, je třeba ocenit, že existuje mnoho pokusů o

adekvátní prezentaci smrti a že se svět literatury pro nejmenší neustále rozšiřuje o takto citlivá témata. Stále je však na čem pracovat, zejména pokud jde o sebevzdělávání ze strany tvůrců obrázkových knih. Tato práce může sloužit jako inspirace pro další zkoumání tohoto pozoruhodného tématu.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
The Rough Patch images[176]
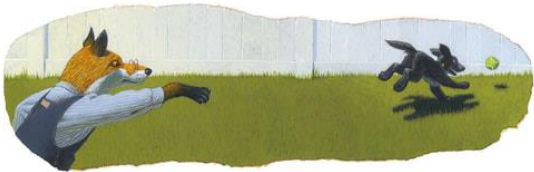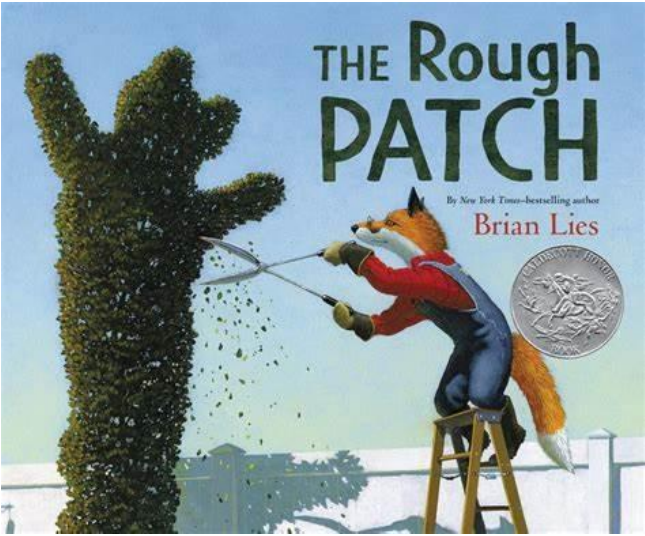
They played games
and enjoyed sweet treats.

They shared music
and adventure.

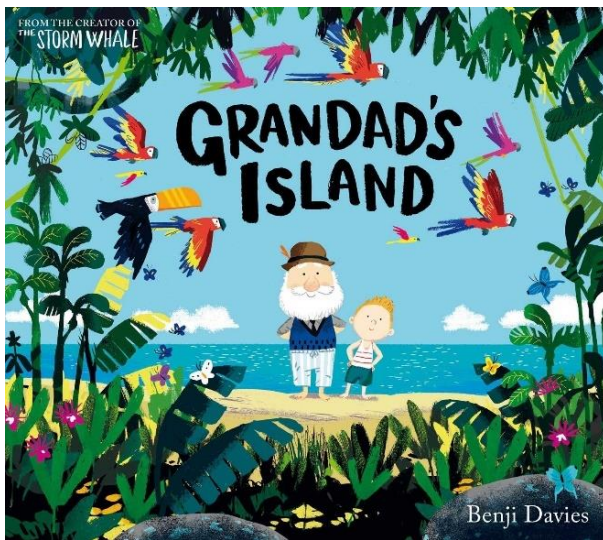---

[176] Brian Lies, *The Rough Patch,* 2018.

Appendix B
The Memory Tree images[177]
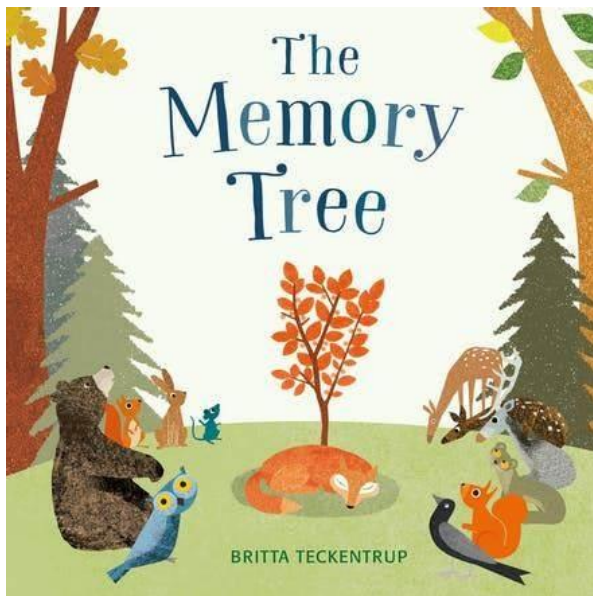
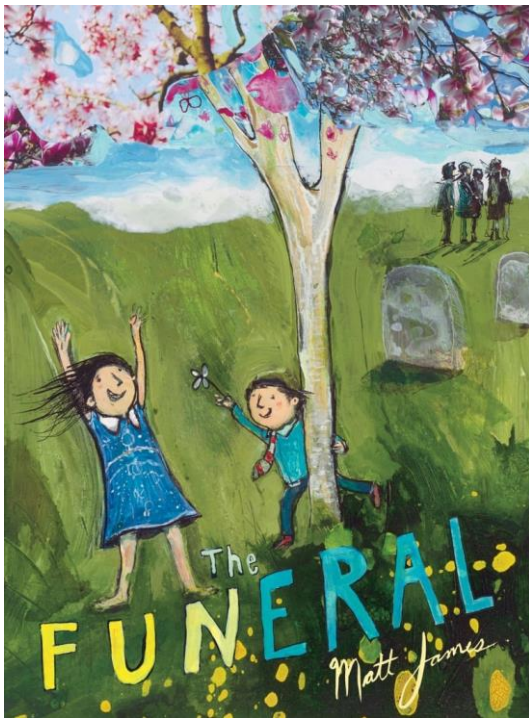[177] Britta Teckentrup, *The Memory Tree*, 2013.

Appendix C
Grandad's Island images[178]
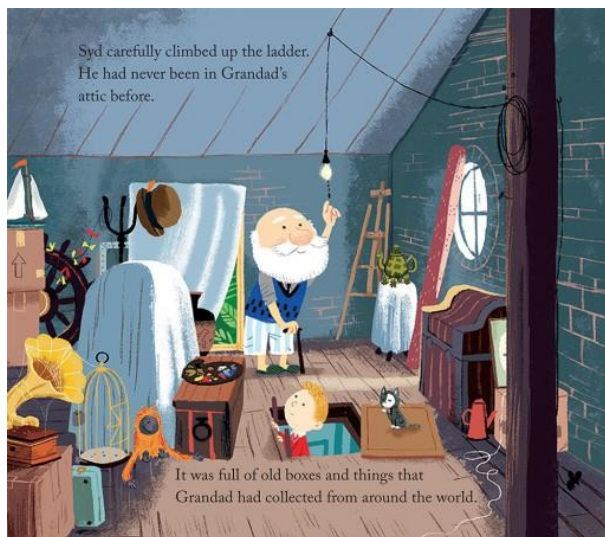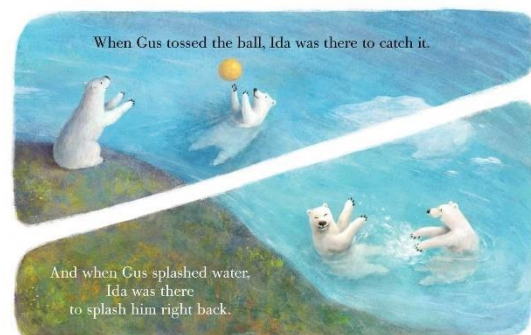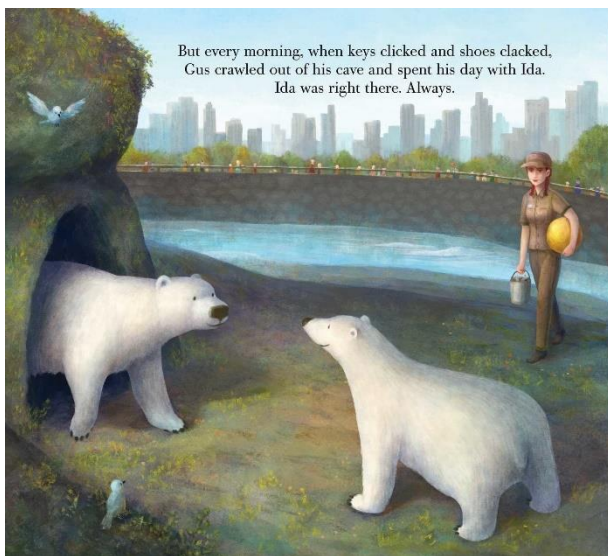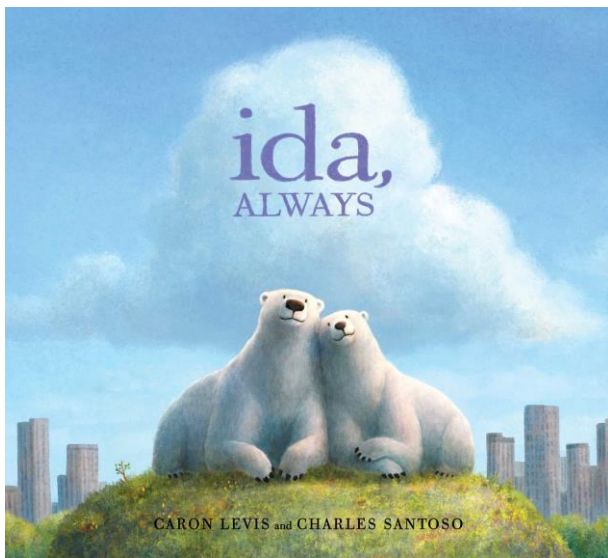
[178] Benji Davies, *Grandad's Island*, 2015.

Appendix D
The Funeral images[179]

[179] Matt James, *The Funeral*, 2018.

Appendix E
Ida, Always images[180]

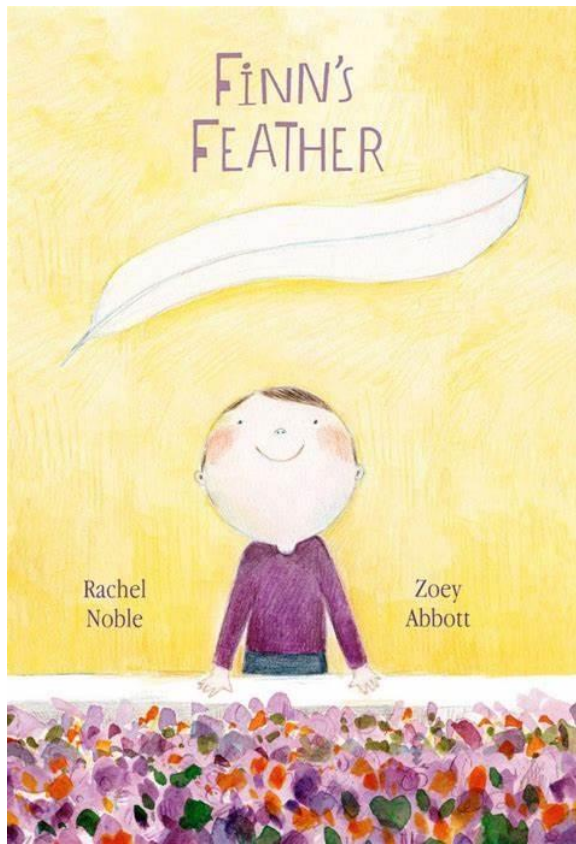[180] Caron Levis, *Ida, Always,* 2015.

Appendix F
Dance Like a Leaf images[181]

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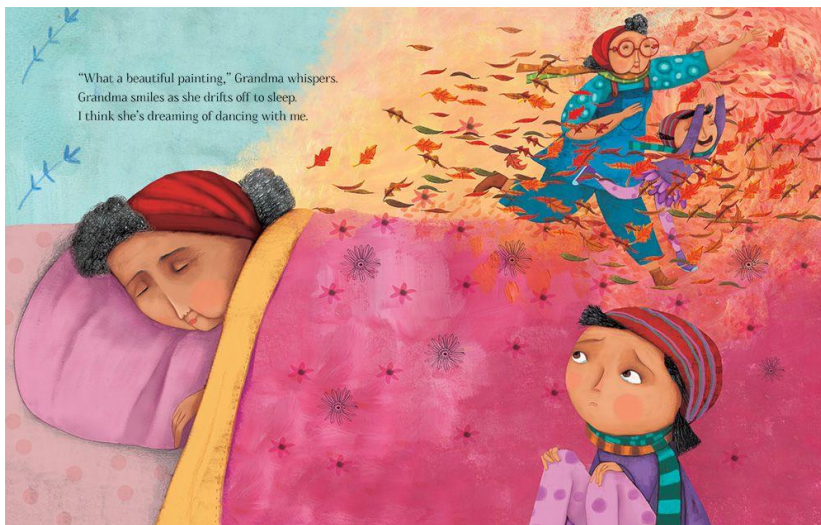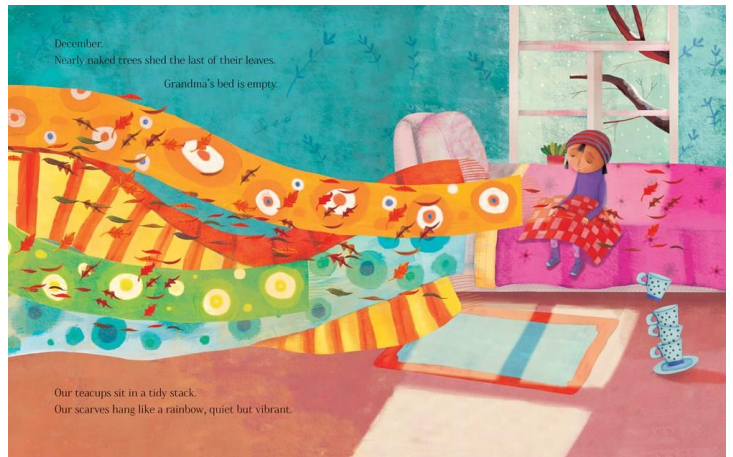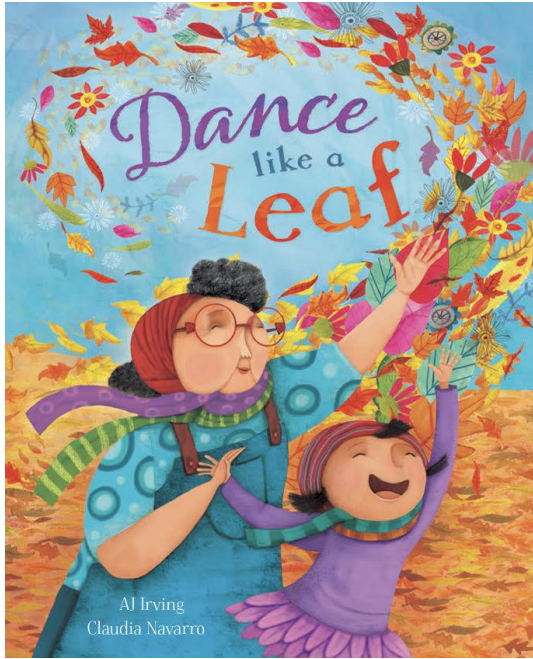
[181] AJ Irving, *Dance Like a Leaf,* 2020.

Appendix G
Finn's Feather images[182]

"This feather is the best!" said Lucas.
"I'm so glad Hamish left it for you. He's a pretty cool angel."
"He was a really cool brother. I miss him."

Finn ran his finger down the spine of the feather,
happy to have his friend at his side.

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[182] Rachel Noble, *Finn's Feather,* 2018.