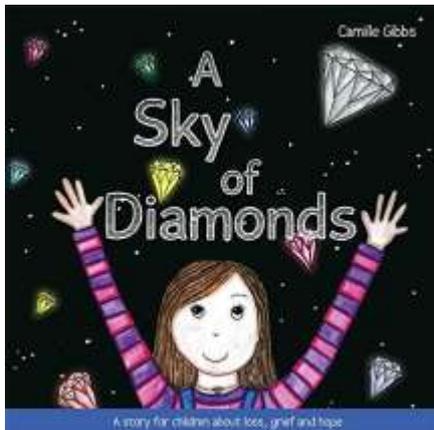


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



A sky of diamonds. A story for children about loss, grief and hope (2015)

Gibbs C.

London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015. 48pp.

ISBN 9781849056229.

£11.99.

Average star rating 4.6 (out of 5)

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This attractive, bright and colourful book is brilliant, I love it. Mia's mother dies unexpectedly at work. With the help of her father, Mia begins to try to make sense of it all, (death, dying, grief, anger) and through a series of activities begins to address her feelings and emotions in a controlled and constructive way.

I like it so much because of the content. It is expertly written and will be so helpful when this difficult subject arises, but also could be read at any time. It not only addresses death and dying but offers professional advice about how to begin the process of explaining to a child about grief and bereavement.

Carer of breast cancer patient (56-65) (May 2019)

This book addresses the shock of grief as well as significant emotions such as anger whilst instilling hope and some normality. It is pitched at the right level for children and the illustrations and title are perfect. It is best read after bereavement and will be helpful for a bereaved child, and anyone supporting them, such as a parent or other main carer, family members, health professionals, teachers, and social workers. It helps to promote hope as well as acknowledge the rollercoaster of emotions. There are some beautiful examples of a father and child learning to cope with grief together. Writing a letter to mum, sharing memories, writing messages on stones are powerful examples of ways to cope with grief and loss.

This well-written book allows the bereaved child to find his/her own way of coming to terms with loss. It addresses many of the emotions experienced during grief and loss and demonstrates how supportive Mia's father is during the process, the "memory journey" being particularly helpful. I love Dad's honest explanation that "no one truly knows where a lost one has gone"; this allows Mia to develop her own beliefs and comfort measures by finding the brightest star to tell her mum about important things.

A health professional who has worked with families who have been affected by all types of cancers (56-65) (February 2019)

This beautiful book explains the many emotions of bereavement. The explanation of death, and how there are many different beliefs about what happens afterwards, is well written. It starts when Mia finds out that her mum has died and the rollercoaster of emotions that follow. The story is easy to follow with brilliant references to Mia's favourite memories of her mother. Memories and emotions are explained very well. It is beautifully illustrated and will also appeal to older children.

I like how it covers memories, changing emotions from sadness to anger, the feeling of complete loss and how feelings can change from day to day. Explaining that anger is a natural part of grieving is important. I like that it talks about releasing the anger and having positive ways to remember your loved one – important parts of grieving.

Mother who lost her own mother at a young age to lung cancer (46-55) (November 2018)

This is one of the best books I have read on grief. Mia's mum died in an accident, but it could be used for death in any context. It is very useful for 5-11-year-olds, to help explain how they might feel when a parent dies. Mia explains in her own words how she felt when her dad told her, how she looked for and dreamed about her mum, and how hard it was. It is easy to understand, and I like how the book looks, with its attractive cover and excellent illustrations, and how it feels as if Mia is talking to you.

There are useful notes for adults and it explains grieving in an excellent way for children. It is full of 'what ifs?' and worries, reassuring children that it is normal to cry or be angry. Mia describes her memories and how she copes over time – all children could relate to this. It's a positive book in that near the end she begins to feel better.

Breast cancer patient in remission with 7 grandchildren (46-55) (June 2018)

This is a truly brilliant book about a little girl, Mia, whose mum dies suddenly. The text and illustrations capture the feelings of grief that a child (or anyone) may feel. The hero of the story is Dad, who allows Mia to grieve and shows her different ways to do so whilst maintaining Mum's memory. There is also an introduction for parents and professionals, explaining the story and the ideas within it.

The story is told sensitively, in a way that will make sense to a child. The language is simple, to the point, but not patronising. It is engaging, yet easy enough for a young child to understand with an adult to share it with them. The illustrations are collaged and express a wide range of emotions, showing that it is ok to be angry, but that things do get better, one day. The cover is inviting and made me want to look inside.

Read it to feel the warmth. It is emotional, heart breaking, but with promise, just as grief can be. Books rarely make me tearful, but this did. It could be a useful tool for those who are also grieving or floundering at how to explain death and grief to a child. It is most useful after death, but suitable for anyone, not just the bereaved.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) and former teacher of 3-16-year-olds with SEN (46-55) (June 2018)

This is a wonderful book that looks at a very difficult issue and allows children to think about their feelings honestly. It shows children that adults struggle with bereavement too and have the same feelings. It will be useful for children, families and professionals (such as nurses, social workers, psychologists, teachers) because it looks at so many of the issues related to bereavement. It would be particularly useful after a bereavement because it considers the feeling of the child and adult who have been bereaved and suggests several strategies to help with these feelings. The section at the beginning with guidance for parents and professionals is useful.

The story takes you through a logical order of the feelings that might be encountered when going through bereavement. The language is suitable for children at various ages; older children could read it themselves, younger children could read it with an adult, or have it read to them. The cover makes you want to pick up the book and see what it is about but does not show that it is about bereavement, so children will not feel stigmatised when looking at it. The illustrations are good and there is plenty of detail to allow for discussions.

Children can feel left out in the bereavement process and this book gives them, and adults, strategies to help them to cope with it. I love their suggestions to help with bereavement, such as a memory box and writing a letter to the person who has died.

Retired teacher. Pancreatic cancer patient (56-65) (May 2018)



Mia's mother dies suddenly and unexpectedly at work. This book describes Mia's grief, her behaviour, and how she and her father learn to deal with their grief. Mia experiences loss, sadness, anger and guilt. At first her world seems grey and dark and she loses interest in the world around her. Then she starts to grieve, and we learn how her father helps her deal with her anger in safe ways, such as painting or punching a newspaper. Mia is full of doubts and questions and writes messages on stones and throws them into the sea. She feels guilty that she didn't say goodbye to her mother and writes a letter to her. She creates a memory box full of photos and objects to remind her of her mother to help her cope. Finally, she finds her own way of coping with her grief. She looks up to the stars and her 'Sky Diamond', the brightest star, which helps her think about her mother in a more positive way.

The blurb states that this book is suitable for children aged 5-9. However, I think a five-year-old would struggle to read this book, even with an adult. It is more suitable for upper primary children and maybe even 10-11-year-olds. The cover is quite nice and attractive to children, but some of the illustrations are confusing as other elements are introduced that are not in the text; they could be better quality and focus more on underpinning the text. I do appreciate though that it is very difficult to illustrate emotions and feelings. The best pages are those where the text is shorter, and the message is very clearly conveyed by the illustration. There are nice child-friendly human touches e.g. the hand-written letter from Mia to her mother. The 'sky diamond' idea could have been introduced earlier as a recurring theme.

This book deals with the various stages of grief from initial disbelief, through feelings of anger, sadness and doubt, to acceptance and hope. It shows the importance of allowing children time and space to grieve in their own way. It deals with quite complex emotions and would be best used for discussion with an adult rather than read by a child alone. It could be more useful for grief counsellors and professionals rather than a family member as the issues dealt with are complex and the text is not always completely clear in relation to the illustrations, which could be better quality and more appealing to children. I probably wouldn't choose this book to use with children as I think there are better, more child-friendly books dealing with grief.

Breast cancer patient (56-65) (August 2019)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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