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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



The grandad grand prix (2017)

Crowther L.

Newcastle-under-Lyme: North Staffordshire Press,
2017.

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This emotional story depicts the closeness between a young girl, Flo, and her family. It is a wonderful example of how Grandad could live until he died, and I like the good words and advice he gives Flo. It is all very positive, whilst demonstrating that coping together helps as well as talking to peers. It is helpful for Flo to have a chance to say goodbye to her grandad; this will hopefully help with the grieving process.

It could be read at any stage and is suitable for children who know someone with cancer, those caring for them, and professionals working with children, e.g. nurses and teachers. It is logically written in an honest way and there are no problems understanding it. The cover shows Grandad Fred's well-deserved trophy.

I like how Flo is always told the truth, never given "false hope", and that Grandad is very open with her with just the right amount of information. She is included in serious conversations, especially when given bad news about Grandad dying.

Retired Macmillan Nurse (56-65) (April 2019)

This is a pleasure to read. It has a good story that will appeal to boys and girls and although sad, it shows a lot of happiness, positivity and understanding. It could be used at any stage. I recommend it for reading aloud to children aged four and up, or for children able to read themselves probably up to ten years. I would be happy to read it to my four-year-old grandchild and pass it on to her nine-year-old cousin to read herself. It could be a good book to have in a school to help children.

It is easy to read and there is nothing controversial, so will suit anyone. The language is well thought out and easy for children to understand. The cover is quite good but should include Flo, the main character apart from the grandads; it looks masculine and needs to appeal to both sexes. The illustrations are fun, but it would be better if the grandads looked more different. I would like an age guideline on the cover.

This is a very thoughtful book and one that should be recommended. It's written in such a caring way and, despite the sadness, has a very positive vibe. You could safely give this to any child without any offence or discomfort.

Breast cancer patient with five grandchildren (46-55) (September 2017)



Not all stories involving cancer have happy endings. This story shows real-life aspects of life with cancer and how life goes on when someone dies. It highlights the immediate aftermath, the funeral, and life after death – all with the ability to have fun.

It is very easy to understand. All technical words are explained in the story when Flo asks her grandad what they all mean. I like that it is written in chapters, so you can skip pages and the story still makes sense.

Child psychologist (26-35) (August 2019)

This book takes you through the full journey, so it would be beneficial to read at any stage for a child or young person who knows someone with cancer, their parents, and other family members. It is great for most ages, but probably from about the age of 11 due to some of the language, which is quite advanced in parts.

The cover is colourful and inviting. Inside, the illustrations are good and fit in with the story nicely and help readers imagine the characters. I like that it is in chronological order in terms of symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment, right up to the end. It uses a child's perspective to show any questions they may have and answer questions they may have, whilst using modern phrases and humour.

I like that this is a complete story from the start of cancer to the end. It is told from a child's perspective but isn't too childish – anyone can read it. The modern references and phrases are good – it is relatable. It has loveable characters. It is quite good in the sense that I didn't want to put it down; I wanted to see what happened next.

My mum had breast cancer when I was a child (18-25) (July 2019)

This could be useful on several levels. It could benefit a child who has a grandparent with cancer and be used as an aid by a parent or family member to navigate such a sensitive issue with younger members of the family. It could help to prepare a child when they are facing a bereavement and could be read again afterwards to help a child understand fully the message of Flo carrying on her grandad's sentiments.

The story flows well – although the jump in time at the end is rushed – and introduces you to the characters in an upbeat and lively way before diagnosis. It then follows a logical order through treatment to eventual decline. It is easy to understand and suitable for children of about six or seven years up. I was confused that Flo's mother refers to both grandads as 'Dad'. Is this an error? I wasn't keen on the illustrations; they are simplistic, and the grandads look almost identical. It would be better to have a clearer distinction. I wonder if the distinctive cover will appeal to girls as much as boys? It is a shame if girls are deterred as the story works well for either gender.

I like how the story remains upbeat despite the topic. The relationships between Flo and her family embody the love and openness that most people in an archetypal

family hopefully exhibit. It is heart-warming in places, a reminder of the wonderful relationship that children can have with grandparents. The sentiment at the end is a nice way to show how people can live on in our thoughts and actions. I recommend it for a child whose grandparent has cancer. It delivers just the right amount of information, enabling Flo to be part of what is happening. It also promotes the idea of children discussing their feelings with their family and their peers.

As a child, I lost family members to cancer. I am also parent to a child who lost a relative (36-45) (June 2019).

This story doesn't provide facts but is relevant to a child who has someone in their life with cancer, a parent or other family member. It starts before diagnosis, then goes through treatment, to afterwards and could be used before or after bereavement – it will certainly help pave the way. I like how cancer is handled honestly with good explanations, and how the outcome of the illness is realistic, not providing false hope.

It's easy to understand, using child friendly language and explaining words as they appear. The cover is inviting, and there are the right number of illustrations, in the style of Quentin Blake, so easily recognisable. The typeface is clear and friendly.

Parent of a child with a family member with cancer (56-65) (October 2017)



This book will be ideal after a child has been told about diagnosis and had a chance to work it through in their own mind. It is a great book for a grandparent or parent and child to read together and talk about the challenges and feelings.

The story is fun and mischievous and attractive to children. The heart of the story about cancer is open and truthful yet told in the context of family togetherness, fun and adventure. Moreover, it is real and doesn't shy away from difficult messages. The language is playful and easy to read, and the amusing illustrations complement the story. Parents will be able to use the illustrations to talk about the situation with their children and start a conversation about their thoughts and feelings.

I like that it takes a difficult message and sets in the context of a lovely family story; it is good at showing that life, fun and laughter carries on even in troubled times. I struggled with the ending. I like the intention and how it is written and illustrated but feel the leap to Flo at 14 may be too difficult for a younger child to comprehend.

I recommend it for children with a grandparent with cancer. It concentrates on the relationship with the granddads and some children do not have wider family support so it may add to the concerns for some.

Breast cancer patient and parent (56-65) (March 2019)

This comes across as a normal children's book that includes grandad becoming ill. Two very competitive granddads compete against each other in silly races and events. One becomes unwell, is diagnosed with cancer and treated, but later becomes more unwell, goes into a hospice, and dies. Flo explains how she feels and how her family are upset and dealing with each stage. However, it is entwined gently into the story so can act as a focus for talking to a child in similar circumstances. It is most suitable for children aged 8-10 to read to themselves or to share with an adult and should be read when a child is first told of someone becoming unwell.

The style and language suit the audience of children between 8-10 very well. There are no difficult medical terms. The cover looks like a normal reading book for children and the blurb describes Grandad as having a serious illness, with nothing to indicate that the story involves cancer. It is a good quality book with a nice size font and layout for children with some nice pencil illustrations every few pages.

I like how Grandad's cancer is only part of the story; this means a young reader will be attracted to the book for the story of the silly competing granddads, which is strong. However, the family in the book is very traditional – a young girl with a mum, dad and two sets of grandparents, who all spend a lot of time together. It's not a dislike as such, just something to be aware of if you are sharing it with a child.

I do have mixed feelings about it. It has a specific audience, only being suitable for discussing a grandparent's cancer with a young child. I like the strong story that isn't focused on the grandad's cancer but at the same time I feel the author has missed an opportunity to explore Flo's emotions in more detail as this would help young readers even more. However, it is a good way to start a conversation with a child about a poorly grandparent, so it is worth a read. It may help children with a grandparent with cancer feel that they are not alone and that it can happen to other children.

Living with incurable neuroendocrine cancer (NETS) (46-55) (April 2018)

I didn't know what to expect from this story other than what the blurb on the back told me. But that was ok. What I then read was a refreshing approach to looking at cancer in an older generation, something not often written about. It's an original idea, about a beloved granddad who has cancer and his relationship with his granddaughter and "rival" grandad and could be read at any time. The end of the story, when Flo has grown up, is perhaps a tad twee, but illustrates that life can go on and memories are incredibly dear. It also shows that the experiences we provide our children and the things we say, do go in and stick, even when we think that they don't.

It is very simply told in a way that most children, from about the age of seven, would understand. Older children could read it for themselves. The illustrations, cover and font make it look different, not like a book found in a library or bookshop. The font is very childlike, and the cover is not to my taste; it is bright and bold but quite ugly to look at. Because it looks different, it may not be read as comfortably or fit in as well as other books in a classroom, though at home this would not matter.

I like the simplicity of this book and its different perspectives on cancer and cancer in a different age group. It demonstrates hope, love, and friendship. However, it is not an attractive book to look at and children may not find it for themselves; it may need to be suggested by a concerned adult. Appearances aren't everything, but certainly help when encouraging involvement and trying to engage and attract an audience.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) and former teacher of 3-16-year-olds with SEN (46-55) (August 2017)

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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