

SENSITIVE TOPICS

CANCER/ILLNESS

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>A Story About Cancer With a Happy Ending</u> by <u>India Desjardins</u></p>	<p>While the story has a hopeful ending, it honestly reflects what it is like to be a teenager with cancer. The narrator wants to be treated normally and is tired of being told how “strong” she is, especially by her mother. For older ages, grades 5-9.</p>
<p><u>Harry Goes to the Hospital: A Story for Children About What It's Like to Be in the Hospital</u> by <u>Howard J. Bennett</u></p>	<p>The story of Harry, who has to go to the hospital but finds it scary. For children who may need to go to the hospital or receive treatment.</p>
<p><u>The Great Katie Kate Tackles Questions About Cancer</u> by <u>M. Maitand Deland</u></p>	<p>Part of a series, this book follows Great Katie Kate as she takes on the Worry Wombat as she teaches a young girl about treating cancer. Written for young cancer patients on the road to recovery by helping them deal with their fears.</p>
<p><u>Hair for Mama</u> by <u>Kelly Tinkham</u></p>	<p>This book follows the story of a young boy and his mother who loses her hair while undergoing chemotherapy treatments for cancer.</p>
<p><u>Champ's Story: Dogs Get Cancer Too!</u> by <u>Sherry North</u></p>	<p>This book helps children understand cancer, whether it affects themselves, a loved one, a friend, or a pet. It follows a young boy who discovers a lump on his dog, leading to a diagnosis of cancer.</p>



SENSITIVE TOPICS

DIVORCE

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Mommy's New Friend by Shelley Tougas</u></p>	<p>Perfect for exploring all the mixed feelings that come as a parent starts to date someone new. Wonderful for blended families.</p>
<p><u>Thursday by Ann Bonwill</u></p>	<p>After her parents' separation and divorce, Thursdays no longer feel the same for the main character. Her stuffed unicorn comforts her, joining her on imaginative adventures and offering support during difficult emotions. Over time, she begins to reconnect with the changing world around her, gradually finding a way for Thursdays to feel like just Thursdays again.</p>
<p><u>Was It the Chocolate Pudding?: A Story For Little Kids About Divorce by Sandra Levins</u></p>	<p>This is a favorite for talking with kids who fear that they are to blame for a divorce.</p>
<p><u>Two Homes, One Heart by Jessica Young</u></p>	<p>For children navigating the adjustment of living in two homes due to a separation or divorce, with a message that while families change, love is constant.</p>
<p><u>Fred Stays With Me! by Nancy Coffelt</u></p>	<p>Told from a young child's perspective, this story follows a girl and her dog, Fred, as they move between her parents' homes. Through simple language, it highlights her need for stability, the comfort of her bond with Fred, and a cooperative resolution between parents.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS

GRIEF

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>The Hole by Lindsay Bonilla</u></p>	<p>The story about the death of a sibling, this wonderful book uses the “hole” to represent tough feelings of missing your loved one. This one reminds us that talking about our deceased loved one can bring comfort to us.</p>
<p><u>The Heavy Bag by Sarah Surgey.</u></p>	<p>Enid’s grandpa has died, and she carries her grief in a heavy bag filled with special things that remind her of him. As she walks, the bag grows heavier, and her feelings become overwhelming. This bag goes on a journey through the 5 stages of grief.</p>
<p><u>The Goodbye Book by Todd Parr</u></p>	<p>This beautiful picture book is funny and colorful, making it easy to talk about such a hard topic. It's generic enough that it's perfect for all types of grief- pet, family, friends, etc.</p>
<p><u>The ABC'S Of Grief by Jessica Correnti</u></p>	<p>Each letter of the alphabet is related to the grief process. You can connect each letter with a different activity.</p>
<p><u>Just What To Do by Kyle Lukoff</u></p>	<p>Read this book with the class or friends of the person who has experienced a loss. It’s a gentle reminder that we all grieve differently, and sometimes the best support we can give is to listen and respect what that individual needs.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS DEPLOYMENT

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Deployment: One of Our Pieces is Missing by Julia Cook</u></p>	<p>This book explores how a family adjusts to a new routine during a parent's deployment and navigates the emotions that come with returning home. It also includes guidance for adults to help children understand and discuss the challenges of deployment and reintegration.</p>
<p><u>Coming Home by Greg Ruth</u></p>	<p>This story focuses on a boy reuniting with his military mother, as well as other reunions (and dogs!).</p>
<p><u>I Love You Near and Far by Marjorie Blain Parker</u></p>	<p>This heartfelt rhyming story reminds children that loved ones can remain close at heart, even when far away.</p>
<p><u>Hero Mom by Melinda Hardin</u></p>	<p>This book compares military mothers to superheroes, highlighting their important jobs in the armed forces and reassuring children that their love is still felt even during deployment.</p>
<p><u>The Invisible String by Patrice Karst</u></p>	<p>This book is perfect for anyone who is missing someone they love- whether it be grief, deployment, or just back to school. For anyone seeking assurance, this book has the message that love transcends and will always be there even when there is distance between us.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>The Big Bad Wolf in My House</u> <u>by Valérie Fontaine</u></p>	<p>A young girl compares her mom's new partner to the big bad wolf—charming at first, but soon frightening, unpredictable, and abusive. Note: This ends with the mother and daughter leaving and finding safety, which may not reflect what your students are experiencing.</p>
<p><u>The Strongest Thing: When Home Feels Hard</u> <u>by Hallee Adelman</u></p>	<p>This story follows a family as they navigate a father's temper and anger. It explores feelings of fear, sadness, and anger as well as recognizing and breaking cycles of hurtful behavior.</p>
<p><u>My Quiet Ship: When They Argue</u> <u>by Hallee Adelman</u></p>	<p>This story is about a boy finding a quiet and safe place in his home when his parents argue. Note: It also encourages self-advocacy and the courage to talk to your family about feelings related to their arguments.</p>
<p><u>A Terrible Thing Happened</u> <u>by Margaret Holmes</u></p>	<p>This book is wonderful because you can adapt it for any loss or traumatic situation. Helps children open up in ways other than talking- like art.</p>
<p><u>Hope</u> <u>by Jayneen Sanders</u></p>	<p>This beautifully illustrated book offers hope to children affected by family violence. Through Jonathon's story, it encourages children to share their fears with trusted adults and reminds them that the violence is never their fault.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS FOSTER CARE

Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Two Ways Home: A Foster Care Journey by Marion Rhines</u></p>	<p>10-year-old Levi has recently joined a foster family and shares his experience adjusting to a new home. The story highlights positive aspects of foster care and can help children better understand and feel more comfortable in similar situations. Note: experiences in foster care vary widely.</p>
<p><u>Murphy's Three Homes: A Story for Children in Foster Care by Jan Levinson Gilman</u></p>	<p>Murphy, a Tibetan Terrier puppy, shares the emotional challenges of moving through multiple foster homes and unfamiliar settings before finding a caring home where he feels safe, valued, and comfortable again.</p>
<p><u>Stellaluna by by Janell Cannon</u></p>	<p>Knocked from her mother's safe embrace by an owl, Stellaluna, a baby fruit bat, falls into a bird's nest. Adopted by the nest's inhabitants, she adjusts to their unfamiliar bird behaviors while trying to find her place in a very different world.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS INCARCERATED FAMILY MEMBER

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For me</u> by <u>Daniel Beaty</u></p>	<p>A timeless award-winning story about an absent father and the love he leaves behind.</p>
<p><u>Visiting Day</u> by <u>Jacqueline Woodson</u></p>	<p>In this moving story, a young girl and her grandmother prepare for their monthly visit to see her father in prison. The book highlights the love, anticipation, and connection that remain strong despite separation.</p>
<p><u>My Daddy Is In Jail</u> by <u>Janet M. Bender</u></p>	<p>This book includes a discussion guide and group activities for helping children cope with the incarceration of a parent or loved one.</p>
<p><u>My Brother Is Away</u> by <u>Sara Greenwood</u></p>	<p>When a young girl's older brother is incarcerated, she struggles with the mix of sadness, anger, embarrassment, and love that comes with his absence. A long-awaited visit reminds her that although life has changed, their bond remains strong.</p>
<p><u>Milo Imagines the World</u> by <u>Matt de la Peña</u></p>	<p>As Milo travels to visit his incarcerated mother, he imagines the lives of the people around him. Along the way, he learns that appearances can be misleading and that every person has a story others may not see.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS SUBSTANCE ABUSE/PARENTAL ADDICTION

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Something Happened to Our Mom: A Story About Parental Addiction</u> by <u>Ann Hazzard PhD</u></p>	<p>This story addresses topics of parents struggling w/ addiction (opioid use), family changes after a car accident, support, and community.</p>
<p><u>A Kids Book About Addiction</u> by <u>Nicole Lendo</u></p>	<p>A nonfiction book for kids aged 5-9 understand what addiction is, and to help all readers cope with and validate the many feelings that come when experiencing someone else's addiction.</p>
<p><u>Louis Undercover</u> by <u>Fanny Britt</u></p>	<p>A graphic novel about a boy navigating life between his alcoholic dad and worried mom, while trying to find the courage to talk to his crush, Billie—with help from his best friend.</p>
<p><u>Sometimes Stormy</u> by <u>Amanda Davis</u></p>	<p>This story follows Ezra as he navigates life with a parent struggling with alcohol use disorder. With support from caring adults, he learns that he is not responsible for his parent's challenges and discovers healthy ways to cope.</p>
<p><u>All the Pieces: When a Loved One Dies from Substance Use</u> by <u>Hallie Riggs</u></p>	<p>This compassionate book helps children grieve the loss of a loved one due to substance use. It explains addiction as a disease, reassures children that the death was not their fault, validates complex emotions, and encourages them to remember and cherish their loved one.</p>

SENSITIVE TOPICS

NATURAL DISASTERS

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Book/Author

Notes

When the Storm Comes
by Linda Ashman

This reassuring story walks children through preparing for, experiencing, and recovering from a storm. It highlights how people and animals stay safe during difficult weather and reminds readers that storms eventually pass.

What to Bring
by Lorna Schultz Nicholson

This story follows a family displaced by a wildfire, and the tough choices they must make when disaster strikes.

A Hat for House: One Storm, Many
Helpers by Audrey Perrott

The story of a house and a community rebuilding and coming together after a tornado.

Golden Threads
by Suzanne Del Rizzo

Following a storm, this story of friendship and Kitusugi (the art of repairing cracked pottery) is a testament to resilience.

The Longest Storm
by Dan Yaccarino

When a long storm keeps a family indoors, tensions rise and conflicts emerge. Together, they learn new ways to connect, solve problems, and navigate challenges as a family.

SENSITIVE TOPICS

VIOLENCE/NATIONAL NEWS

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>The Breaking News</u> by <u>Sarah Lynne Reul</u></p>	<p>When troubling news impacts her community, a young girl notices the adults around her seem distracted and overwhelmed. This versatile story explores how children may respond to difficult events and changes that affect the people they depend on.</p>
<p><u>The Talk</u> by <u>Alicia D. Williams</u></p>	<p>This story follows a family displaced by a wildfire, and the tough choices they must make when disaster strikes.</p>
<p><u>The Rhino Suit</u> by <u>Colter Jackson</u></p>	<p>A girl overwhelmed by the world builds a protective "rhino suit" to shut out pain, only to discover it also blocks out joy and connection. The story follows her journey toward finding balance and openness.</p>
<p><u>What to Do When the News Scares You</u> by <u>Jacqueline B. Toner</u></p>	<p>This interactive guide helps children understand current events and manage their emotions. Part of a workbook series, it can be used chapter by chapter to provide ongoing support.</p>
<p><u>After: A Survivor's Story</u> by <u>Hallee Adelman</u></p>	<p>This story has many talking points: gun violence, trauma/PTSD, grief/loss, activism/advocacy, community, and current events.</p>

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PET LOSS

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Wonderful Goodbyes</u> by <u>Kelly Wu</u></p>	<p>The story of a girl and her dog as they know the end grows near.</p>
<p><u>Where Are You, Brontë?</u> by <u>Tomie dePaola</u></p>	<p>The story of the losing a beloved pet, this book is the final completed book written by beloved creator Tomie dePaola <u>Partner with my pet loss book.</u></p>
<p><u>Where Lily Isn't</u> by <u>Julie Paschkis</u></p>	<p>This book makes me cry every time I read it! It's a tender reminder of the emptiness we feel after losing a pet. From under our feet to next to us in bed, their memory is always in our hearts.</p>
<p><u>The Invisible Leash</u> by <u>Patrice Karst</u></p>	<p>Just as "The Invisible String" helps remind readers of our invisible connect, this one is specifically for pets.</p>
<p><u>Dog Heaven</u> and <u>Cat Heaven</u> by <u>Cynthia Rylant</u></p>	<p>This set offers gentle, comforting visions of what it might be like for beloved pets after they die. These tender stories help children process grief and remember their animals with love.</p>

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Book/Author	Notes
<p><u>Saturday at the Food Pantry</u> by <u>Diane O'Neill</u></p>	<p>The story of a girl and her dog as they know the end grows near.</p>
<p><u>Why Would Someone Want to Die?</u> by <u>Rebecca C. Schmidt</u></p>	<p>This story + workbook discuss the loss of a loved one associated with suicide. It includes a story, plus resources such as a parental permission form and counseling activities.</p>
<p><u>The Flock We Found</u> by <u>Mary Uhles</u></p>	<p>This story is wonderful for any child living with an unreliable parent who may not be fully present. It addresses addiction & mental health.</p>
<p><u>Something Happened to My Dad: A Story about Immigration and Family Separation</u> by <u>Ann Hazzard</u></p>	<p>The story of a young girl as she tries to stay connected with her Papi, who has been detained due to his immigration status. Also available in Spanish.</p>
<p><u>Jane, the Fox and Me</u> by <u>Fanny Britt</u></p>	<p>This graphic novel-meets-picture book is about bullying, body image, and the transformative power of fiction.</p>
<p><u>The Cot in the Living Room</u> by <u>Hilda Eunice Burgos</u></p>	<p>A young Dominican American girl in New York City grows from jealousy to empathy as she learns about her parents' caregiving for children whose families work overnight shifts. The story highlights community care, perspective-taking, and understanding others' experiences.</p>