

Dealing With Grief, Loss And
Feelings Of Sadness
KS1 Lesson Plan



Overview

Two book options provide distinct lesson plans and can be used independent of each other. However, to reinforce learning opportunities they can be used as separate, but thematically linked, lessons.

Purpose

- Talking about loss is important not only in its acknowledgement of those feelings, but also in the language and space it provides children with which to manage their own experiences.
- Using books as a launch pad for discussion and activities can help children make sense of their own emotions. It can also offer a non-confrontational exploration of the theme through characters' experiences, providing an opportunity for self-reflection, which isn't mandatory for the lesson's value.

For Parents/Carers

- It is important to keep parents and carers informed when tackling tricky, potentially triggering emotions. You may wish to adapt the [Letter Home](#) and send home prior to this lesson.
- Consider having a conversation with parents or carers, particularly if there has been a recent bereavement, to establish if they're comfortable with their child being part of the lesson.

Lesson Context (2 mins)

[Relationships and Health: Pupils should know that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life; understand that there is a normal range and scale of emotions; recognise and talk about emotions, including a varied vocabulary when talking about feelings; know that it is important for children to discuss their feelings]

- Explain to children that you will be reading a book about someone dying, which some might find a bit sad. Acknowledge that some may have experienced the death of a loved one, but that loss isn't always about people dying. We can feel loss when our lives change dramatically, or when people move away.
- We can feel loss for family, friends, pets, places, etc. and it's important to talk about difficult feelings.
- Encourage children to understand that feelings of sadness, loneliness and fear are things we all share.

Reading Focus (10 mins)

Badger's Parting Gifts by Susan Varley (published by Anderson Press) is the story of how Badger's friends come to terms with the sadness of his death. It is a gentle look at death in old age.

Mum's Jumper by Jayde Perkin (published by Book Island) and *Missing Mummy* by Rebecca Cobb (published by Macmillan) both look at the death of a girl's mother and how hard it is to understand and make sense of the sudden emptiness, and the things and feelings that are left behind. It is an honest and frank look at sudden, unexpected death and its impact on a child.

Badger's Parting Gifts

- Read the book in full.
- Draw children's attention to the "Long Tunnel" and make sure they understand that this represents death.
- Recap what Badger's "gifts" are, making the distinction between gifts that can be touched and played with, and gifts which are happy memories or experiences that exist in your mind or heart.
- Together look at some of the language used to describe the animals' feelings: Badger "felt free", he had "fallen out of his body", his friends "gathered anxiously", Mole felt "lost, alone and desperately unhappy". Make sure children are familiar with all the vocabulary, define and discuss any new words.

Mum's Jumper / Missing Mummy

- Read the book(s) in full.
- Draw children's attention to the phrases "She's gone" (*Mum's Jumper*), "I am not sure where she has gone" (*Missing Mummy*) and make sure they understand what this means – that Mum/Mummy has died.
- Explore the idea that some people die when they're old and others die when they're much younger and that can feel quite shocking, frightening and hard to understand.
- Check that children understand what "grief" means (*Mum's Jumper*), e.g. a feeling of extreme sadness.
- Highlight some of the descriptions of feelings: "It didn't feel real," "It was cold. I felt tired. But I couldn't sleep," "My body ached," "I felt so alone," "I even felt angry." (*Mum's Jumper*) / "I feel so scared," "I feel angry," "I am worried," "It's not fair." (*Missing Mummy*). Make sure children are familiar with all the vocabulary, define and discuss any new words.

Talk About It (10 mins)

[English, Reading comprehension: Pupils should be encouraged to link what they read or hear to their own experiences; make inferences on the basis of what is being said and done; participate in discussion about books; taking turns and listening to what others say]

Badger's Parting Gifts

- Ask children why they think Badger felt light and free when running down the “Long Tunnel”. Talk about whether he seems happy or sad, and what that might mean, e.g. *his spirit is free from his tired, old body, and he's no longer held back by what he can't do.*
- Encourage children to think about whether they've ever felt like Mole does when Badger dies.
- Talk together about how Badger's friends start to feel less sad about Badger's death, e.g. *by remembering all the lovely things they did with Badger and how lucky they were to have known him.* Ask children whether they have any good advice for someone who is feeling really sad and lonely.
- Talk about the change in seasons, and how Spring brings some happiness to Badger's friends. Encourage children to talk about how the different seasons make them feel.

Mum's Jumper / Missing Mummy

- Ask children why they think Mum's jumper is important to the girl (*Mum's Jumper*) and why the girl carries around her mum's jumper in *Missing Mummy*, e.g. *it provides a physical link to Mum/Mummy.*
- Talk together about how it can be difficult to know what to say when someone dies, and that people might say *I'm sorry*, not because they think it's their fault, but because they're sorry that someone has died, or they're sorry that someone is sad. Ask children whether they think it's important to say something when someone dies, and if so, what they think is a kind thing to say.
- Grief is described as feeling like swimming without getting to the shore (*Mum's Jumper*) – can children explain how that might feel, e.g. *tiring, frustrating, hopeless, lonely...* The girl describes voices as being “distant and floaty”, again, talk through how that might feel, e.g. *isolating, lonely, weird, confusing.*
- Talk together about the concept of living with loss – something that is not to be overcome but accepted. Discuss the strategies that might help with this, e.g. *talking, sharing memories, having something physical to touch (like a jumper).*
- Discuss the idea of feeling lonely even when there are lots of people around (*Mum's Jumper*), and ask children why sadness can feel lonely, e.g. *because it is isolating and can be hard to talk about.*



Get Creative! (15 mins)

[Art & design: Pupils should use drawing, painting, and sculpture to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination]

Badger's Parting Gifts

- Ask children to make a thank you card for someone who has given them a special memory.
- Encourage children to imagine they're one of Badger's friends and to create a poster about their special gift. They could be offering lessons, e.g. in skating or baking, or a show of their special skill.
- Children could make paper dolls representing their friends or family.

Mum's Jumper / Missing Mummy

- Ask children to make a “sorry” card for someone who has lost someone.
 - Encourage children to draw a picture of their family, or someone in their family who is important.
 - Children could draw or make a model of an object that reminds them of someone special in their life.
 - Encourage children to make flowers using pipe cleaners for the stems and different coloured tissue paper for the petals.
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Write It! (10 mins)

[English, Writing composition: Pupils should sequence sentences to form short narratives]

Badger's Parting Gifts

- Ask children to use the **Letter Writing Frame** to write a letter from Mole, Fox, Frog or Mrs Rabbit thanking Badger for his “gift”.
- Remind children of the end of the book when Mole thanks Badger. Encourage children to think about what Badger might say back and to write a short speech from Badger.
- Children could write a flier advertising a party to celebrate Badger's life using the **Flier Writing Frame**, thinking about where and when the celebration might be and what will make it special.

Mum's Jumper / Missing Mummy

- Ask children to use the **Diary Writing Frame** and write a short diary entry from the girl's perspective.
 - Children could write their own story about saying goodbye to someone or something – this doesn't have to be about the death of a relative, but could be about the loss of a family pet, moving house, country, or school, etc. It can be based on real life or be fictional.
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Closing Q&A (3 mins)

- Reflect on how feelings change through the book. Discuss how sadness is initially quite overpowering, but is in the end, accepted and managed.
 - Share strategies that children might have for how they deal with feelings of sadness – this doesn't have to be in relation to loss.
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Extension Opportunities

Badger's Parting Gifts

- **Drama:** Children could read out their speeches from Badger; Groups of children could play the different characters and talk about the “gift” that Badger left them.

Mum's Jumper / Missing Mummy

- **Reading:** Other picture books on loss include *Out to Sea* by Helen Kellock, *Grandad's Island* by Benji Davies, *Grandad's Camper* by Harry Woodgate, *The Heart in the Bottle* by Oliver Jeffers, *The Paper Dolls* by Julia Donaldson.