

2101322

Word count: 2,300

Chris Harrendence

Research in context

Analyse the work of illustrators and, particularly, author illustrators who tackle difficult, sensitive and sometimes shocking themes.

While it might be second nature to try to shield kids from the harsher realities of life and scary news, it's proving difficult to avoid big society issues. (Savage Quoted Enderle, 2022) that adults are more equipped to process than children who are possibly facing these societal issues for the first time. Children can feel but they cannot analyse their feelings (Tucker Quoted Bronte, 1990) due to this child have a challenging time understanding emotions – when these emotions are tied to larger complex issues such as death or grief they may not understand how to cope or process these feeling which can lead to issues later on in life where an adult may not be able to healthy cope or self-regulate when they are expensing intense complicated emotions.

young children are still at an early stage of social, emotional and language development. They can't always communicate their needs and feelings (Australian government, department of social service, 2022) because of this, children may have Tantrums as they become to overwhelmed by their own emotions as they cannot express to us in words how they are feeling. This can be seen more in children who showed symptoms of autisms such as lack of perspective-taking. It is believed that exposing children to books that tackle more difficult topics such as death, illness and disability it will aid the child's development and help tackle the stigma around certain issues. As well as provide the child with a greater understand of the world around them.



This is me being sad.
Maybe you think I'm being happy in this picture.
Really I'm being sad but pretending I'm being happy.
I'm doing that because I think people won't
like me if I look sad.

Fig 1. Michael Rosen, p1 (2004) *sad book*.

It is believe that children who appear with symptoms of autism can benefit from reading book accompanied by visual aids They are thinking in picture most of the time (K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014. Quoted Grandin 1995) as the visuospatial system has been viewed as intact in people with Autism (K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014. Due to this a child would understand that this person who is narrative within this text is who appears on the page in front of them. Fig 1. Could be considered vital to the development of perspective-taking within children due to the writer explaining that the way he feels may not match how he is appearing to the viewer – as well as style of writing puts the reader within Michael Rosens metaphorical shoes. It could be believed that fig 1 would also aid in the empty development within children as

The storybook contains prompts for adults' scaffolding and frequent use of meta-language with cognitive verbs (e.g., think, remember and believe) ... indicates higher empathy potential.

(K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito ,
M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014.)

Then I look like this.
And there's nothing I can do about it.



What makes me most sad is when I think
about my son Eddie. He died. I loved him
very, very much but he died anyway.

Fig 2. Michael Rosen, p2 (2004) *sad book*

Childrens books are considered an essentials vehicle for emotions and feelings (K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014. It could be believed that the illustration has shown the deep emotional heaviness that comes along with losing a loved they have done this by using various washes of dark ink or watercolour If you mean to represent great darkness, it must be done by contrasting it with great light (Fabre Quoted da Vinci 1990) this can be see within the illustration as Micheal Rosens has almost a spot light on him surrounding him with the darkness – this emotional heaviness that can surround losing

a loved one can be harder to explain in times of Grief so it makes It easier for the child to follow a picture book story, making sense of what's going on by recalling previous pages (Tucker 1990) the dark ink used may be considered colour association which is hard to generalise as the colour black means different thing in different cultures as historically the Egyptians considered themselves part of a red race ... yellow was for Asiatics, white for the people of the north and black for the Negros (F. Birren 1978) historically colour association stems from racial identity however, In many western traditions black is associated with death and mourning whereas in china the colour white is associated with death (kaya N, Epps h 2004) due to this the western culture would be able to understand more that fig 2 is connected to a mournful time rather than the overall population which makes illustrations harder to generalise or decode in different cultural settings. Due to this fig 2 could be misinterpreted amongst different cultures which would have an overall effect on the core messages.



Fig 3 pat thomas p 19 (2000) *I miss you*

Children's active participation in drama, role-play and pretend play ... more effective context for empathy building (K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014. Because of this story books that have a form of interactivity e.g. Fig 3 will aid in the development of empathy within children more effectively than storybooks/ children's literature without along side that

empathy-inviting environment ... The family structure provides a natural environment for parent–child conversations about in-group members' feelings and perspectives.

(K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014 Quoted Bertrand et al 2018)

Fig 3. Is intended to be read within an empathy-inviting environment as it is meant to spark conversation between caregivers and children so they can build an understanding of how the issue has effective them. parents nurture children's theory of mind by discussing the feelings and beliefs of siblings. (K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014 Quoted Dunn and Kendrick 1982) it could be believed that discussions of different thoughts and feelings on a difficult subject such a death could lead to a better understanding of other views point on this topic. Which would aid in the development of cognitive empathy within children.

Fig 3. Shows a little girl in different positions with different facial expressions – it could be believed that fig 3 perpetuates gender stereotypes by only showing a female protagonist as Stereotypically females tend to be more emotional then there male counterparts. When it comes to a sensitive topic such as death it is quite important that we do not perpetrate stereotypes such as this as it could lead to a wider gender bias which will continue to push these stereotypes within our society. In addition to this

A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives. United nations 1996-2022

It could be perceived that authors and illustrators need to take stereotypes into consideration when writing or illustrating books for children. especially if they are intended to be learned from and or promoting development- this could be key when informing the younger generation to help break toxic stereotypes such as toxic masculinity which fig 3 could be unintentionally promoting as the only protagonist that is see is female.

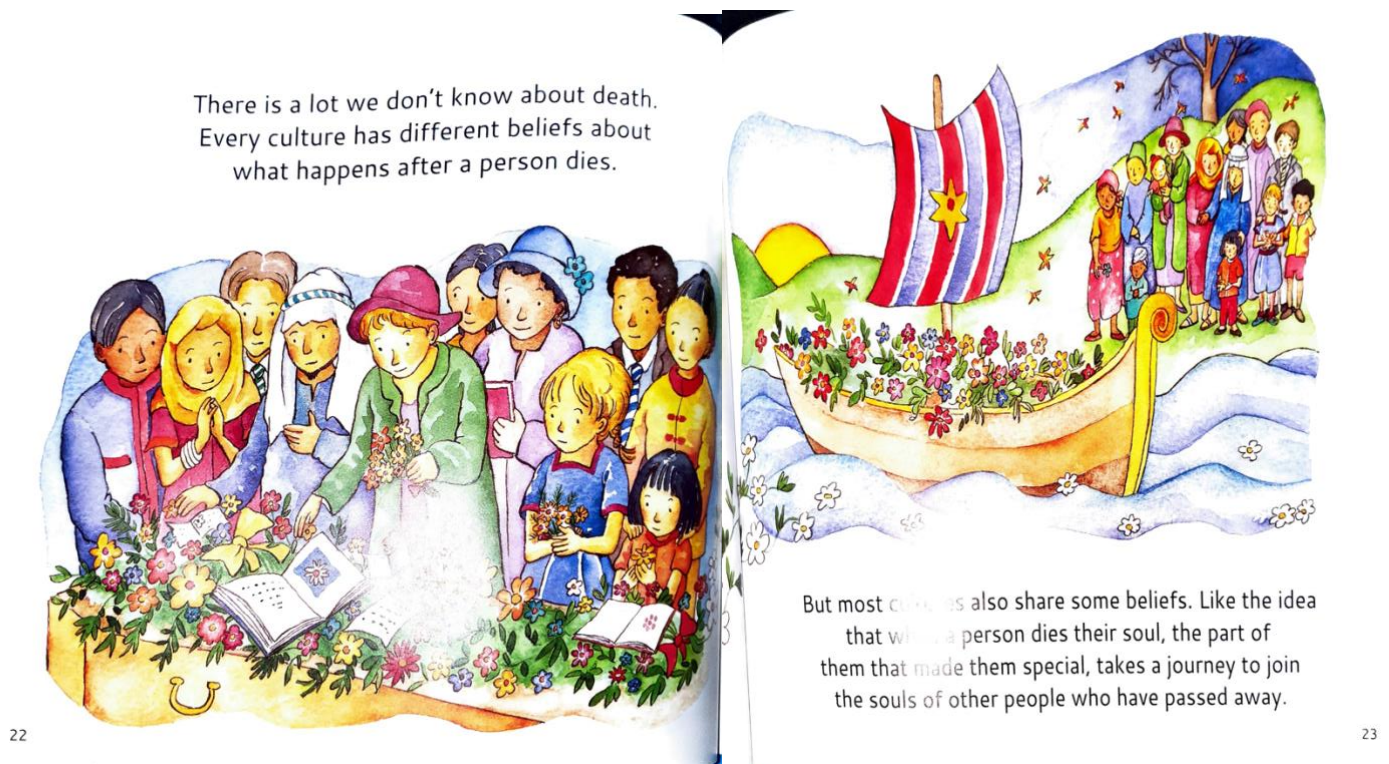


Fig 4 pat Thomas p22 & p23 (2000) *I miss you*

Fig 4 shows a multicultural image of people in different religions garments and some without it could be believed that the author and illustrator included this to help bridge the gap between cultural differences around death as it can be almost impossible to generalise how different

cultures practice around grieving and death however, by including shared beliefs in the accompanying text could help diminish the possible bias of social in and out groups.

There are negative consequences for both in- and out-group biases and there is evidence that White ethnic 3–4-year olds favor their ingroup members and show prejudice toward members of minority ethnic groups, with a decline for some children across middle childhood (K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka 2014. Quoted Aboud, 2008).

As by sharing different practices about death we gain respect and empathy for those around us which may help lessen prejudice that minority groups face.



Fig 5 Michael Rosen p5 (2021) Stick McStickstick

Fig 5 shows a frail man learning how to walk again getting help by hospital staff, this is not something that is seen a lot by children as when a family member gets hospitalised or requires physical therapy it may be second nature to shield them from the truth of what may be

happening. These potentially traumatic experiences are referred to as ACEs, or adverse childhood experiences. M. G. Quirke these ACE's can have profound effects on the child as the trauma can change their nervous system from constantly being in a state of fight or flight which raise cortisol levels.

when researchers examined portrayal of characters with disabilities in media, deafness, similar to other disabilities, was stereotyped as a person, "needing to be fixed," "isolated," "angry," "in danger," and/or "unable to function in daily life" (D. B. Golos and A. M. Moses 2013 quoted., Carlisle, 1998).

It could be believed that these attitudes are harmful to the person with a disability and the family around the person as they may already been under tremendous amounts of stress and in some casing grief. How ever fig 5 portrays disabled as a struggle but not making the protagonist appear completely powerless and helpless. Which helps de-stigmatisation disabilities.

The colours used within this image are cold and bleak it could be believed that this was intentional to portray the atmosphere of being within a clinical setting as within western colours association the colour white tends to be associated with something being pure, clean or sterile. Along side that the Pyjamas worn by the protagonist include the colour blue within western colours association the colour blue is connected to negative emotions such as sadness, it is believed that this colour associated dates by to the Greeks as Zeus was concerned, whenever he was angry he would create a storm but whenever he was sad or crying, he would make it rain A. Mehrotra 2017



Fig 6 Michael Rosen p 15 (2021) Sticky McStickstick

If children learned about a cause-effect relation from a story that depicted a boy who participated in realistic activities (e.g., having a picnic) they were more likely to use that causal information to explain a real life event than when they were exposed to a story about a boy who had a more fantastical experience (e.g., talking to a tree). This study indicates that the “proximity” of the story context to the real world affects the extent to which children transfer content from the book to reality (P.A. Ganea, C. F. Canfield, Kadria Simons-Ghafari and Tommy Chou 2014)

Due to this there is a possibility that Fig 5 is less effective at de-stigmatising disabilities due to the use of anthropomorphic picture in fig 5 the protagonist’s walking stick is anthropomorphised with eyes, this could lead to a lack of understanding at the fundamental level as what the child has learnt from fig 5 is less transferable to reality.

Everyone watched to see if I could climb the stairs.

They watched to see if I could get to the toilet by myself.

I could!

They watched to see if I could make a cup of tea.

I could!



Fig 7 Michael Rosen p24&25 (2021) Sticky McStickstick

Hope is a human phenomenon; an elixir that is self-generated from within. Regardless of our differences as human beings, hope remains perhaps our most powerful tool for coping with the many challenges that life presents. The editors 2021

It could be believed that showing a person and or a child that things can get better or change will provide the motivation and increase hope which can be a very important coping tool to have in life. Within fig 7 it shows the protagonist doing everyday activities that could have seemed impossible due to his illness/ disability this provides a form of reassurance to the reader who may be experiencing an uncertain time in life. It could be believed that helping someone gain hope in themselves or the people around them can help change their outlook on their life and their experiences, which may ultimately help them get through their difficulties.



Fig 8 Michael Rosen p28 &29 (2004) *sad book*

Most, but not all, patients pass through five stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) between their awareness of serious illness and their death(Elisabeth Kubler-Ross 1969 *Death and Dying*)

Fig 8 is clearly referring to the last stage of grief - acceptance which some may say is the hardest stage of grief to achieve. It could be believed that fig 8 represents acceptance in a sorrowful way as it is clearly shown that the author is heartbroken over the loss of his son but has come to terms with the painful fact that he will never be able to see him again. Due to this it can be assumed that the image the protagonist is gazing at within fig 8 could be a photo of his son from a happier time.

It is possible that the candle within fig 8 is in reference to the Christian practice of remembrance candles that tend to be lit on anniversaries of a death and can be lit in a church or at the site of the grave to honour a loved one. (Frazer Consultants 2016) This has become common practice within the UK and many other areas of the world it could be due to this fig 8 could be generalised to the wider population not just within western culture surrounding death.

To conclude, children books can be an amazing resource for learning about difficult issues as well as aiding within child development within multiple areas from emotional and cognitive

development but also perspective taking and language development. These books provide coping methods as well as understanding for children who maybe going through ACEs or the loss of a loved one for the first time. These books also open communication between caregiver and child to help build a trusting and strong relationship where the child is aware that they can safely talk to their caregivers about troubling and difficult subjects. These books have the potential to aid children process their emotions so later on in life they can cope with any difficult stressor they may in counter. However it is important to bear in mind that stereotypes and wider social issues can impact the outcome of children's story books in a negative way which then due to cause and effect could be harmful for the child's development and their perspective on society.

Bibliography

A. Mehrotra (2017) *Have You Ever Wondered Why The Colour Blue Is Associated With Sadness?*

Available at: <https://www.scoopwhoop.com/life/why-blue-is-associated-with-sadness/>

Accessed on: December 2022

C. Savage. Apnews (2022) *Demand soars for kids' books addressing violence, trauma*

Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/gun-violence-entertainment-shootings-0e1694116023f1d2120eae1901024da>

Assessed on: November 2022

D. B. Golos and A. M. Moses (2013) *Rethinking the portrayal of deaf characters in children's picture books*

E. Kubler-Ross (1969) *Death and Dying*

Figure 1: Michael Rosen, p1, (2004) *sad book*.

Figure 2: Michael Rosen p2, (2004) *sad book*.

Figure 3: Pat Thomas p19 (2000) *I miss you*.

Figure 4: Pat Thomas p22 & 23 (2000) *I miss you*.

Figure 5: Michael Rosen p5 (2021) *Sticky McStickstick*

Figure 6: Michael Rosen p15 (2021) *Sticky McStickstick*

Figure 7: Michael Rosen p24 & 25 (2021) *Sticky McStickstick*

Figure 8: Michael Rosen p 28 & 29 (2004) *sad book*.

F. Birren (1978) *Colour and human response*

Frazer Consultants (2016) *The history of the remembrance candle*

Available at: <https://web.frazerconsultants.com/2016/09/the-history-of-remembrance-candles/>

Accessed on: December 2022

K.Tsunemi, A.Tamura, S. Ogawa, T. Isomura, H. Ito , M. Ida, N. Masataka (2014) *How Could Children's Storybooks Promote Empathy? A Conceptual Framework Based on Developmental Psychology and Literary Theory*

M. G. Quirke (N/A) *What Are the 10 ACEs of Trauma & How Can You Begin to Face Them?*

Available at: <https://michaelgquirke.com/what-are-the-10-aces-of-trauma-how-can-you-begin-to-face-them/>

Access on: December 2022

N. Tucker (1990) *The Child And The Book*. Canto addition

N.kaya and H.H Epps (2004) *Relationship between color and emotion: a study of college students*

Available at

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA123321897&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=01463934&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7Eb462970b>

Accessed on: December 2022

P.A. Ganea, C. F. Canfield, Kadria Simons-Ghafari and Tommy Chou (2014) *Do cavies talk? The effect of anthropomorphic picture books on children's knowledge about animals*

The Editors (2021) *Why Is Hope so Important in Life?*

Available at: <https://upjourney.com/why-is-hope-so-important-in-life>

Accessed on: December 2022

United Nations (2022) *Gender stereotyping OHCHR and women's human rights and gender equality* available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/gender-stereotyping>

Accessed on: December 2022