

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

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I am going to analyse the work of multiple illustrators in their specific field of work such as book writing and illustration and how they can tackle sensitive and shocking subjects within Childrens books.

Childrens books are widely appreciated and have been a staple in the generations of past and current. The works of illustrators such as Michael Rosens (the sad book), wolf Elbruch (duck, death and the tulip) and the artist Ivan Kramskoi (inconsolable grief)

The aim is to see how different artists and writers interact with the topics they all cover in their children's books that allows it to be shown in some form of way they would be able to understand and convey their artwork into their art style.

The reason for the choice of this question is because the loss of a family member/friend during childhood isn't uncommon and it happens more often than not (Revet et al., 2020)¹ which leads to children experiencing certain levels of grief and depression may come into their life due to this unfortunate event. Some people who have had to deal with such grievances have ways to cope with it and some of them having an interest in literature that have coping resources present in them (Alvis et al., 2022)¹. So due to this, illustrators have had to adapt to the certain circumstances in which would be the problem that is present within their situation.

The duck, death and the tulip is a story about the journey of acceptance and how it the duck accepts its fate in which it allows death to take them to the other side but in this process it shows that death isn't something you should be scared of and more of you should be accepting of it and it allows for the reader to understand that death isn't the end it is also in the story itself shows the progression of acceptance and it is

something that happens to be the process of life. It also shows how people can learn to get over their fears by trying to overcome them with their own understanding.

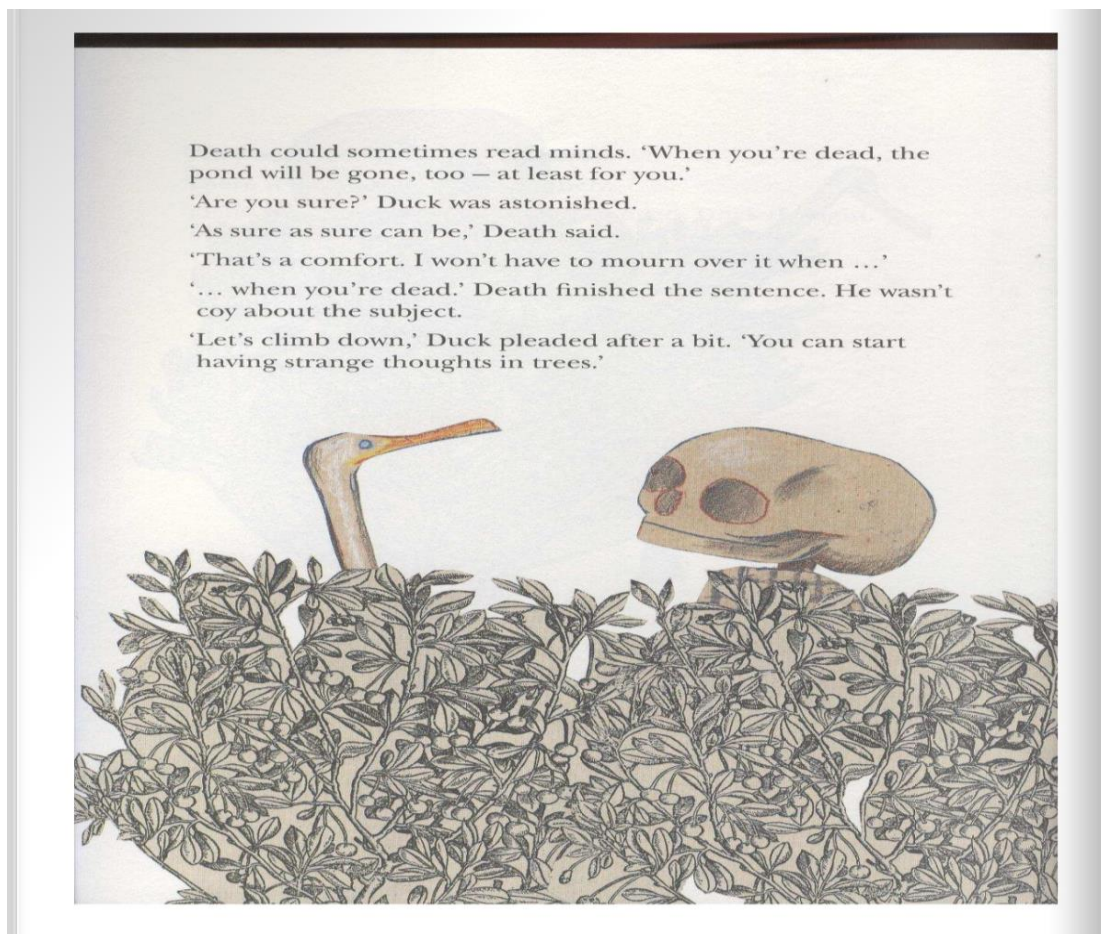


figure 1: Elbruch, W (2006) "*Duck, death and the tulip* "

The use of the imaging being used in figure 1 is being brought to the centre of attention, pulls the reader into the actual design of the and the use of the mute tones with the use of brown inside of the actual imaging which is warming in a sense, and it has an off white background in which as I stated prior that it gives a warming atmosphere. The colour brown is known for its friendly yet serious, down to-earth colour that relates to security, protection, comfort (Chaudhary, R K(2019))² which the book itself is giving off the effect of safety and warmth and some form of comfort within the pages of the book.

The primary design of the pages also draws the readers into the book in which it shows all of the life and the unique style/details in which the artist has incorporated into his work and still makes use of the mute brown cool textures in his work.

Within figure 1 there is also the use of a lot of green foliage that is present at the bottom of the page and a common misconception of death is that he can't touch any living things and that is because he is the living personification of death but in this the foliage is still alive only with a hint of browning in which has been mentioned to be seen as a sense of security and protection within this story (Chaudhary , R K (2019))² he isn't actually evil as pre thought.

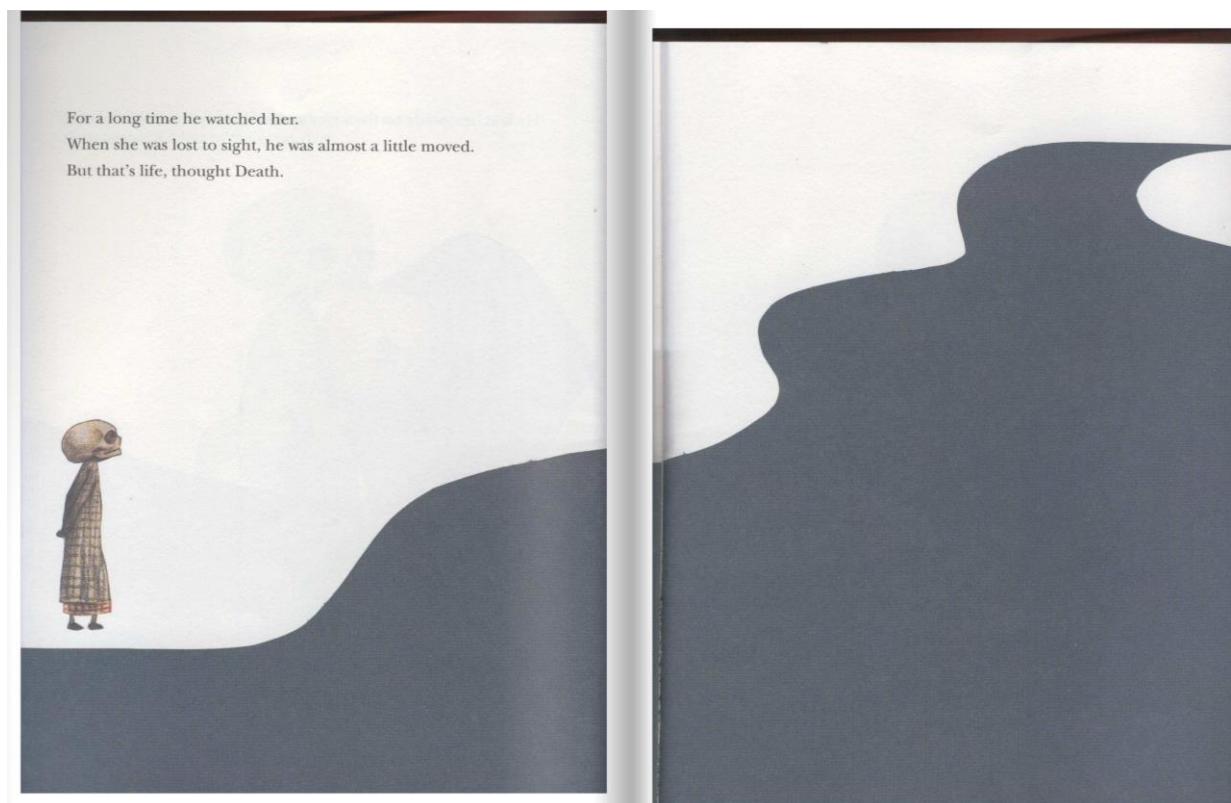


Figure 2: Elbruch, W (2006) *"duck death and the tulip"*

The use of blue in figure 2 has a great significance in which it shows Blue being the colour of trust and peace (Chaudhary, R K (2019))² that she finally trusted and allowed death to take her to the afterlife and now that she is at peace.

The main signifier in figure 2 is the river and the character death just standing on the edge of the banks, as well as this the use of white as the background can be considered as how he has clarity in the fact that the realisation is that life starts and comes to an end and it's not the actual end its just a new beginning.

This book has many factors in which allows the readers to understand through the themes in which are present may be difficult, but it also opens up your understanding of death and bereavement and all it would take is for you to be accepting of it and shouldn't fear it because it will ultimately lead to peace. In my opinion this book has a warm atmosphere about it and it gives people a way to see a soft side of a character that is usually described as scary and evil but in actuality he is just a guide to the afterlife.

Michael Rosens (the sad book)

The story behind this book is about how people can and will put a mask on in which it hides how they truly feel and its more endangering tot the mental state in which they are currently already dealing with a compromised mentality. People mainly attempt to put om a façade in which they would pretend to be happy to disguise their true emotions.(Claire Burke Drauker(2005))³

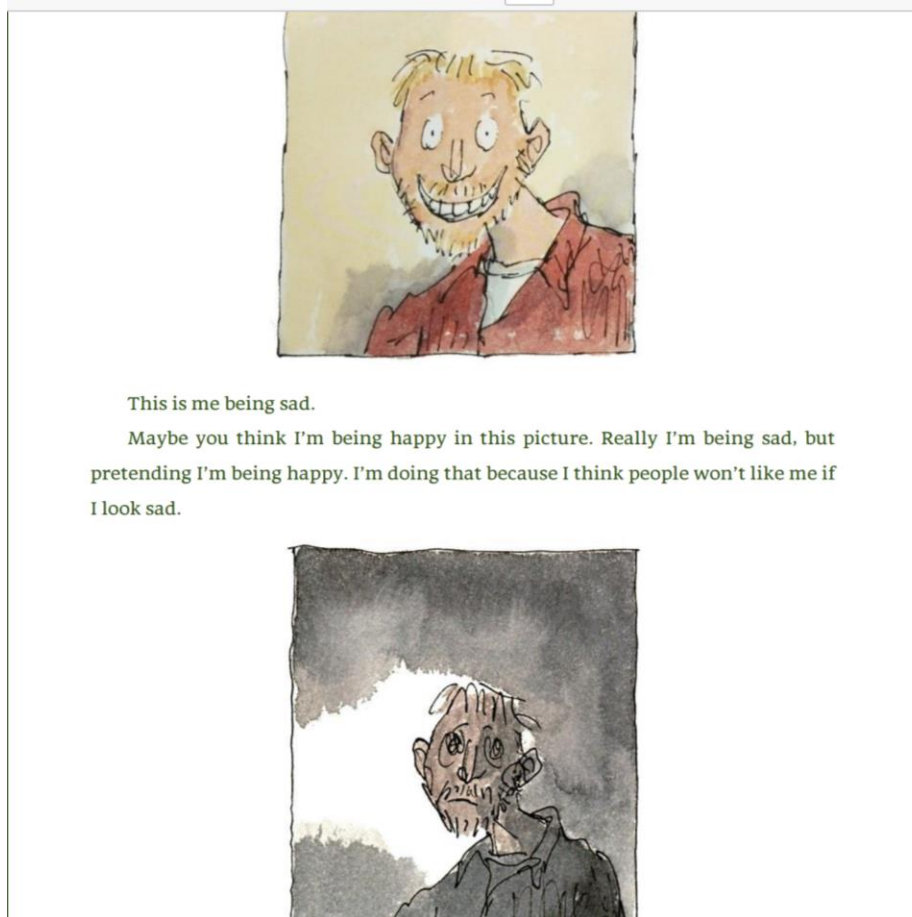


Figure 3: Rosen, M & Blake, Q(2005)"*the sad book*"

The use of the imaging in figure #3 shows the difference between showing and putting up a façade within the imaging showing happy and warm colours with the face being visible and you see a smile and then underneath that you see the imaging of his face being distorted and all dark and gloomy in which shows that he has obscured his emotions for too long and now it has come back and affected him even more negatively.

As the text suggests in figure 3 it would seem as if people think they won't be liked if they appear sad so they feel as if they have to put up the façade in which no one actually knows what is actually going on in their life. The use of the dark shades of

grey and verging on black hints towards the writer feels as if he was constantly being followed by rain and storm clouds.

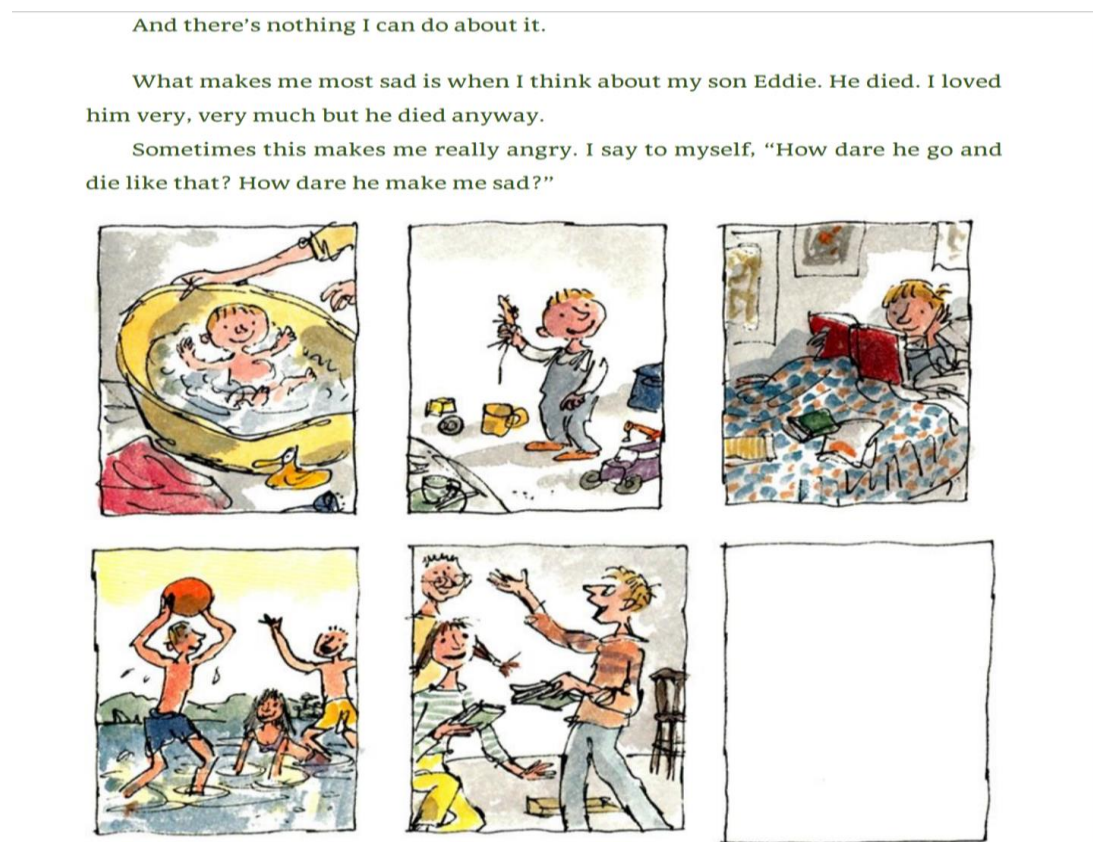


Figure 4: Rosen, M & Blake, Q(2005)"the sad book"

Within figure 4 the colours that are present within the panels of the book have bright and vibrant colours and with this it shows that the main object (his son) is his happiness and was in truth his world. The use of the vibrant yellow and reds suggest that there was happiness and warmth when his son was around (Chaudhary, R K(2019))². Though the use of red within this shows that there was always a form of danger within his life that there was underlining and going to affect it badly.

Even though the images that are present within figure 4 look as if it is a happy topic the text actually mentions that the memories at that present time were happy memories but in the overall circumstances the writer is actually in disbelief and he

doesn't want to come to the understanding that his son has gone (Archer, J & Freeman, H (1999))⁴ the fact behind this that he has encountered the 5 stages of grief in which go into the sections of, Denial, anger, bargaining, Depression and then finally acceptance. At this moment in time in the book the author is currently showing the first 2 stages and is slowly progressing through the stages.

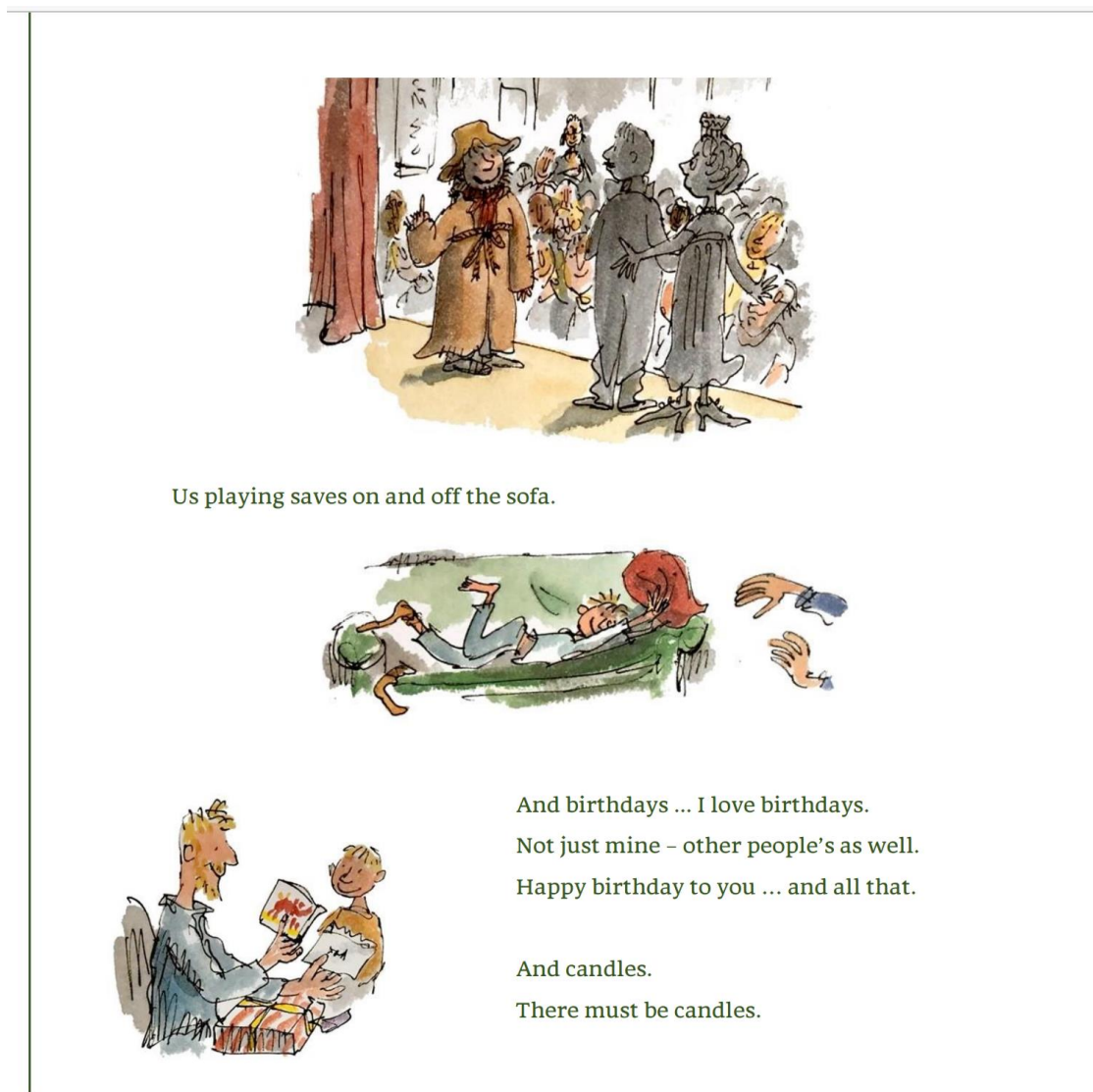


Figure 5: Rosen, M & Blake, Q(2005)"the sad book"

In figure 5 you can see that the author is slowly progressing through the stages of grief and that he has now reached the stage of acceptance and remembering all of

the good times but as the text may then suggest he seems to still be in the stages of depression even though the images that are present are in bright colours and showing signs of happiness though the text isn't proven to be that.



Figure 6: Rosen, M & Blake, Q(2005)"the sad book"

As seen in figure 6 the there is still a semblance of sadness in his life and this is proven by the image in which him doing the candle shows that it brings back the

happy memories though as well as this it also brings back the negative emotions for a short time and this is a common factor in people's lives.

Looking at the work of Michael Rosen and Quintin Blake they have used a mass of spot illustrations with well placed text as well as using warm and emotion filled colours in which to represent the emotion in which they want us the readers to be able to understand what they're trying to emot to us and with this emotion that is being promoted to us by these images it shows different levels of emotions that most people wouldn't normally feel and this can come into context as with the use of fire within the design ultimately signifies that the person in this case his son was the light of his life and that he is truly lost without him present in his life but the memories that he has and all of the good times together. Due to the positioning of the images its as if they are thought bubbles.

Focusing on bereavement and death the artist Ivan Kramskoi did a piece known as 'Inconsolable Grief' in which portrays a Victorian woman in which is grieving.



Figure 5 : Kramskoi I (1884) "*inconsolable grief*"

Within the image of this artist works there is a group of flowers in which noteworthy of these flowers are the rosemary and the roses in which the use of rosemary is the significance in which means remembrance (roux, J ((2020))⁵. As well as this there is the use of roses in which indicate love, (roux, J ((2020))⁵ and this can be used for us to try to identify that it was someone that this woman had loved and with that information you would know she is grieving over the loss of a loved one.

The face of the woman in the image is showing that she is still in the grieving process in which can be identified with the fact that she is visibly crying and as well as this her eyes have a red inflamed area on the skin as well as having the tissue in front of her face.

in my personal observations the death of the person she must be mourning was fairly recent and for her to be captured within this painting at this moment of time shows that the dark and dreary colours of the room she is situated in and the dress that she is currently wearing in the image even though the flowers that are present seem to be colourful they all represent different emotions that have then been all incorporated into one whole composition in which shows this woman grieving. The way that the artist you can say helps tackle difficult topics is by the flowers themselves for example with the use of snow drops in which represent hope and daffodils with the accompanying clovers which means the hope for change (roux, J ((2020))⁵ which you could interpret that things will come to an end and things will change and for the better.

As well as the use of forget-me-nots depicted on the chairs and then the larkspurs depicted on the carpet of the painting actually representation for remembering the good times (Roux, J ((2020))⁵ so even though they may be gone they will still live on in your memories.

This artist's work is a unique take on tackling difficult topics and situations is unique in the sense that the main focus of the art piece is the current and the time of mourning though if you look beyond the portrait of the woman you will see the objects around her have the intent on showing that things will change and it won't always be the same.

In conclusion :

With the artists and book authors I have looked at they have all shown many different styles of depression and bereavement and they have all used many styles of art and colour theory within them as well as symbolism that has postmodern meanings and as well as using design tactics in which showed off the style of work. Though they all have the same thing in common with each other and that is the use of colour pallets and the styles in which they have designed their books,

“duck, death and the tulip” and *“the sad book”* follow common styles in which the colour pallets inside of them follow the use of dark blues, navy, browns and oranges all common colours in which are normally associated with emotions and more commonly depression, warmth, security, resent and then in some circumstances happiness.

All of the works in which have been spoken about and researched all have a common focus in which is bereavement and depression and they have all shown how they have to cope as well as showing the different levels of grief. in which all of the artists I have forementioned have shown all of the different levels of grief in which helps people understand the process of grief.

In which now I understand that all work that is related to death and bereavement follow similar styles and stages in which they show different levels of grief and the stages in which follows it.

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