Comforting Reads for Difficult Times

Year of the Jungle
In this memorable story, Suzy’s father leaves for the Vietnam War, and she spends her first-grade year waiting for his return. When her father’s postcards stop coming, she struggles with understanding what it all means.

The Forgiveness Garden
Two children, weary of generations of fighting and violence between their villages, take a courageous step toward peace at a garden together. Inspired by the actual Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon.

Sunny Side Up
This graphic novel tells the story of 10-year-old Sunny, who is spending an unplanned summer vacation with her grandfather in Florida. A new friend, some comic books, and a loving, supportive Grams help Sunny find the strength to be able to work through her feelings surrounding her older brother’s substance-abuse problems.

Adoption
Jeremiah lives to play baseball. His dreams of playing are put on hold when he learns not only that he has a heart condition but also that he and his adoptive father must relocate for a temporary job for his father.

Just Like Me
Three very different girls who were adopted from the same orphanage in China meet at a summer camp where they are to journal their bonding experience for the camp counselor.

Home at Last
Lester is happy when he is adopted by Daddy Albert and Daddy Rich however, at night he finds he cannot fall asleep because he is alone and wonders when he will feel truly at “home.”

Bullying
Eddie the Bully
This young bully gets a second chance at making friends when the new student Carla shows him some kindness.

Lila and the Crow
Lila has just moved to a new town where she is teased about the color of her hair and skin. An encounter with a crow helps her to embrace her true self.

Rhyme Schemer
This novel in verse explores bullying from the bully’s point of view: as the bully is caught and comes to terms with what he has done wrong and how to make amends.

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**Divorce/Simple Parent**

Rayme Nightingale
By Kari DeCanio
In order to draw her father, who abandoned the family, back home, Rayme enters a beauty contest: simply to do this, she has to do many good deeds, and along the way, she befriends two other contestants in the contest who have also lost someone close to them.

**Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend**
By Karen Stanton. Illus. by the author
Traveling between his mother’s house and his father’s house causes confusion for Henry Cooper and his dog, Pomegranate. Which is “home”?

**Weekends with Max and His Dad**
By Linda Urban. Illus. by Kari Kait
In order to adjust to their new lifestyle, third-grader Max and his dad spend quality time on weekends going on small adventures.

**Grief**

Where Do They Go?
By Julia Alvarez. Illus. by Sabra Field
Told in poetic form, this book provides answers to many tough questions children ask about death.

The Question of Miracles
By Elana K. Arnold
Sixth-grader Iss is looking for just one miracle in the gloom that surrounds her after moving to rainy Oregon and grieving the death of her best friend. What she finds is a life that is surrounded by small miracles.

My Brother’s Shadow
By Tom Avery
Eleven-year-old Kaia isolates herself after her older brother’s suicide. The mute wild boy who mysteriously appears outside her boarding school helps draw Kaia out of her mental funk as she begins to work through her grief.

The Distance to Home
By Jose Bubuy
Her beloved older sister’s death changed everything about baby-fanatic Quillin’s life. In a story that goes back and forth between last summer and present day, the reader finds out what happened on that terrible day and why Quillin quit baseball.

The Dead Bird
By Margaret Wise Brown. Illus. by Christian Robinson
One day while playing in the park, a group of children find a bird that has just died. They bury the bird and grieve its passing together.

**Summerlost**
By Aly Condie
Still reeling from the death of her father and younger brother in a car accident, Cedar and her family move into a quiet summer house to grieve and heal. An unexpected friendship and an intriguing mystery help Cedar move forward through her sadness one day at a time.

Nest
By Esther Earl
Set in the summer of 1973, Naomi “Chirp” Orenstein’s mother is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; rather than face the disease, and the throes of depression, Chirp’s mom chooses to end her own life. Chirp and her family must stick together to find a way through this tough time.

The Secret Hum of a Daisy
By Tracy Holczer
After Grace’s mother’s sudden and unexpected death, Grace is sent to live with the grandmother she has never known. She doesn’t want to be there with this stranger, but in spite of herself, Grace becomes attached to the small town where her mother grew up and all of the people that knew and loved her parents.

**Illness (Catastrophic)**

The Desperate Adventures of Zeno and Alya
By Jane Kelley
Alya, desperately ill, finds hope when an orphaned African grey parrot, Zeno, comes to her window.

What a Beautiful Morning
By Arthur A. Levine. Illus. by Katie Kath
Things are different with Grandpa when Noah comes to visit this summer. Although it is difficult when Grandpa cannot remember simple things, and scary when he does not even recognize Noah, Grandma gently reminds Noah to focus on what Grandpa still has and not on what he has lost.

Crenshaw
By Katheriine Applegate
When Jackson was a little kid, he had an imaginary friend: a cat named Crenshaw. Crenshaw appeared about the time that Jackson’s mom was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He was his best friend. He was his whole world. Yet he is also a universal story of leaving, losing, and, ultimately, hoping for a better future.

**Flood**

The Bell in the Bridge
By Tod Kooser. Illus. by Barry Root
This wordless picture book shows the devastation caused by a natural disaster, as well as the resilience and hopefulness of a family whose home has been destroyed.

The Invisible Boy
By Trudy Ludwig. Illus. by Patrice Barton
A shy boy who feels invisible uses art and drawing to keep from feeling lonely, until a new student in class befriends him.

Snowfall’s Fall
By Patricia MacLachlan. Illus. by Steven Kellogg
Written as a tribute to the lost in the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut (without mention of the event), this picture book uses the uniqueness of snowflakes, the rhythm of changing seasons, and the promise of dawn after darkness to offer uplifting comfort.

**Resilience**

The Rhino Who Swallowed a Storm
By LeVar Burton and Susan Schaefer Bernardo, illus. by Courtenay Fletcher
A young mouse who once lost her home to a hurricane finds hope when an orphaned African grey parrot, Zeno, comes to her window.

Kindness
By Cammie McGovern
Fourth-grader Benny is struggling. His father is ill, his best friend moved away, and school isn’t going well. He is not his best to be a good person, student, and brother, but no one seems to be noticing.

**Kindness**

If You Plant a Seed
By Kadri Nelson. Illus. by the author
A rabbit and a mouse learn the sweetness found when they plant seeds of kindness.

Each Kindness
By Jacqueline Woodson. Illus. by E. B. Lewis
After her teacher gives a lesson on kindness, Chloe and her class realize that they have treated the new student, Maya, poorly.

**Natural Disaster**

The Journey
By Francesca Sanna. Illus. by the author
“Last year our lives changed forever,” so begins one family’s heartbreak journey as refugees. This is one family’s story, and yet it is also a universal story of leaving, losing, and, ultimately, hoping for a better future.

The Piece of Home
By Jeni Watts. Illus. by Heyewon Yun
Hee Jun and her family are slowly adjusting to their new home in America. It is difficult when everything is different and new. Learning that a rose of Sharon is the same as a Korean mungwahg blossom ties their two homes together and helps to make things just a little bit easier.

What Do You Do with a Problem? By Kobi Yamada. Illus. by Mae Besom
A child who has witnessed a hurricane and is afraid to confront it when he finally does, learns it is not exactly what he expected.

Another Kind of Hurricane
By Tamara Ellis Smith
Two boys, both grieving terrible losses, somehow connect with each other in the chaos after Hurricane Katrina.