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Chris Raschka

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In disarmingly simple and direct language, accompanied by evocative potato print illustrations, Raschka in conjunction with Children's Hospice International (CHI), creates a moving, sensitive book that is also a phenomenally useful tool to talk about death. The message of the book is clear: talking about dying is hard, dying is harder, but there are many people in your life who can help.

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The Purple Balloon Details

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Author : Chris Raschka

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From Reader Review The Purple Balloon for online ebook

Carol Jen says

There's no way to know what this book is about when you pick it up ... so I can see many people opening it and being surprised by the content. Very simple text and illustrations about dying and more specifically children dying. Certainly a hard topic and this book presents it with gentle directness. As someone who has been through the death of a child with my family I can 100% see this book being a valuable resource for many families, hospitals, classrooms, etc.

Grace Willits says

I have never felt so touched by a picture book before, the first reading gave me goosebumps. The Purple Balloon discusses dying and how we can help those who are sick or dying, young or old. The words are accompanied by balloon people, which are balloons with faces that show emotions. The story explains that when someone is dying everyone does what they can to help but that it is hard. Friends and family can help to make dying less hard and their good will help the experience. At first, Rashcka shows an old man balloon dying, then he shows how young people die sometimes too. When a balloon person is dying, their string is bent into wings; it's interesting how Raschka uses "good" in place of "god", making the story comforting for everyone. The final page explains how you can help when someone is dying. This story would be useful in a classroom where a student becomes extremely sick, or does die, to help students understand what has happened and what they can do. I've never read a picture book about a topic so real, and confront the topic in such a mature way.

Jess Brown says

I accidentally pulled this book as a potential for a display I was doing called "Up, Up, and Away!" about balloons, kites, and other things that "fly." Though the title suggests a carefree subject matter, it is actually much weightier than that. According to the preface, oftentimes terminally ill children will draw a purple or blue balloon as a representation of how they feel about themselves (once they become aware of their own mortality and impending death). The book then discusses the process of death on basic terms, what it means to the people going through the process and left behind. It is gentle and simple and intended to make the ordeal a bit softer, I think. It made me feel both sad and hopeful, and might be useful to a teacher wanting to discuss the death of a student with the class or anyone wanting to bring up death and dying with a young child. Overall, a very nice, helpful book.

Kyra Calnan says

Ring! Yo? is the dialogue from one side of a phone conversation. The boy is on the phone with another boy who is shown on the page prior to the title page. His phrases never exceed two words, for example, "Then?" or "Uh-huh". The reader is able to understand what type of voice inflection to use based on the boy's facial expression and posture. At the end of the phone conversation, Chris Raschka asks, "Hey! What just happened there?", exactly what the reader is thinking. He then provides a potential second side to the conversation. Students will have fun coming up with their own possible idea for the conversation. The class

can work with a partner to come up with what the boy on the other line was saying to warrant the main boy's responses, as a fun way to practice writing skills. Punctuation is very important in this story, and students can focus on using punctuation to help show emotion.

Rebecca says

I picked up this book from the library not knowing what it was about. It teaches children about dying. Interestingly enough though, in a note from the writer before the story begins, she explains that terminally ill children who are asked to draw how they are feeling will often draw a purple or blue balloon taking off into the sky. This is known to happen across cultures and religions.

Jessica Gilligan says

Raschka, Chris. (2007). *The Purple Balloon*. New York: Schwartz and Wade Books.
Picture Book Soak

I thought *The Purple Balloon*, by Chris Raschka, would be a great book to use with a class when you want, or need, to deal with the heavy topic of death or illness. I remember having a few students during my time in elementary school who were terminally ill and passed away, and it was really hard to deal with the grief that it brought me and others, as nobody really wanted to open up and talk about it. This book is about how hard talking about dying can be, but that it's really important to face the issue, because people who are dying— young and old—need others around them to help them face what's yet to come. At the end of the book, the author inserted some things a child can do for someone else who may have an illness. I definitely think this is one book every classroom needs, because you never know what people are going through or have been through already.

Samantha says

A book about a very difficult subject: the impending death of a child. The author opens with an anecdote from Elisabeth Kubler-Ross about how when children who are faced with coming to terms with their death and are asked to draw their feelings they often represent themselves as balloons.

The text describes all of the people who help loved ones during their final days and demonstrates how readers should treat someone whom they love as they live out the remainder of their time.

Potato and wood block prints of watercolor balloons comprise the artwork. The range of emotions displayed on the faces of the balloons is really helpful for readers because it shows how everyone processes things differently, especially at different moments. This book spans a wide age range because of how relatable it is, but the simple text and artwork makes it most suitable for sharing with young children.

Alyssa Pierce says

This book is beyond touching. It is so sweet and handles the topic of death with such grace that it is more

heart warming than sad. This book explains how hard it is for anyone to pass away or head in that direction, especially when it is someone young. An emphasis is placed on the importance of people when someone is dying. There are always people there to help and it is a time when friends are needed more than anything. This book is amazing for being able to explain that when losing someone it is a time to come together and support each other to the best of our abilities. I think it is also able to relay the message that it is not the end of the world to lose someone, that it is possible to recover from the loss and that friends and family are there to help you through the process. In addition to the words, the pictures help the story greatly. The emotions are clearly shown on their faces and I think the fact they are balloons and not actual people helps make the book a little more approachable; it is relatable without hitting too close to home.

Amanda Casteel says

Author/Illustrator: Chris Raschka

Year Published: 2007 by Schwartz and Wade

Reading Level: Early

Issues Addressed: Death and Dying, Grief, Severe Illness

Classroom Uses: Read Aloud, Individual Reading

Summary: The story about death and dying as well as the support needed for those affected by death and dying is told by balloon people. The illustrations are very child-friendly and can help children deal with this difficult topic.

Literary Devices: Personification,

george says

I picked this up in the Bookmobile without any knowledge of the subject matter--dying. It begins with an introduction that explains: "When a child becomes aware of his or her pending death and is given an opportunity to 'draw your feelings,' he or she will often draw a blue or purple balloon, released and floating free. ..this is true regardless of a child's cultural or religious background." The book uses drawings of balloons to represent people and starts by discussing how sad it is when an old person dies, and then does on to discuss the sadness related to a child's death. The book explains that there are many people needed to help--family, doctors, nurses, teachers, etc--that "good help makes dying less hard."

This is more of a book for the friend of a dying child than the actual dying child. It presents the tough subject matter in an easy-to-understand way and includes a list of things to do when you find out your friend is sick at the end of the book. The balloons, though simple, are pretty effective at demonstrating the emotions. I don't know that any book could actually help a child dealing with this on her own, but this can be a good start for dialogue on the subject.

Ilse Espino says

This book is very different from a lot of children's books because it is about death. Death is a topic that is very hard to talk about for, both, adults and children, but it must be talked about because it is inevitable. In the book, the author talks about how when someone is dying, it is important to show your support towards that person as much as possible. The author talks about older people dying as well as about young people dying. The illustrations show emotions which may be felt when someone is dying such as sadness, empathy, peacefulness, and love. Also, the characters in the book are balloons. I think the decision to make the characters balloons and not humans makes the concept of death easier to explain because that way kids won't focus only on the people. As a child, I remember not truly understanding the concept of death when my grandfather passed away, and I think that this book could really help explain that to kids going through a similar situation. The theme of this story is that death is natural and not something to be afraid of, and I think that it's important for children to understand that. I recommend this book to anyone who knows a child experiencing the death of a loved one for the first time. This book can open up a conversation between the adult and the child about how the child is dealing with the death of a loved one and clear up any questions they may have about the process.

Emily Whitmer says

Such a sad read but it gets the point across about support being needed to help a person who is dying!

Kaylin says

"The Purple Balloon" is a Caldecott award winning picture book, and it is appropriate for all ages. This book is important because it talks about dying, and how sometimes young people die too. It explains how having good people in your life, like family and friends, can make dying less hard. The pictures are of all different colored balloons, and they have varying facial expressions. At the end, the purple balloon flies away, which is a metaphor for death. There is a very mature theme to this book, which might be hard for some students to handle, but it is a light-hearted way to talk about a serious topic. There is a page at the end of the book that gives tips on how to act if one of your friends are sick, including not making a big deal of it and letting them know you're there. There are also ways listed to keep in contact with someone who has been absent from school or in the hospital, like sending a card or an email, visiting if you can, and keeping your friend informed on what is going on in school, with other friends, etc. If I were teaching this book, I would read this page to my students. I would also ask if anyone would like to share a personal story about death or a hardship they are experiencing. I would even make myself available to talk in private with anyone who feels the need since it is a heavy topic.

Christy says

When a child becomes aware of his pending death (children tend to know long before the rest of us even want to consider it), and is given the opportunity to draw his feelings, he will often draw a blue or purple balloon, released and unencumbered, on its way upward. Health-care professionals have discovered that this is true, regardless of a child's cultural or religious background and researchers believe that this is symbolic of

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Sarah says

A book for young children who are experiencing grief. People are represented as different colored balloons. We learn that many people have roles meant to help a person who is dying and there are other roles meant to help those who have lost a loved one. This book addresses the death of a young person and emphasizes that hope can eventually come after much pain.
