



I Miss My Daddy

Jill Pike

Cady Driver, Illustrator

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This heartfelt work will be helpful to any family dealing with the loss of a parent.

I Miss My Daddy by Jill Pike is a sad but honest examination of what it is like for a child to deal with the loss of a parent. As the unnamed protagonist moves through normal daily events, the absence of his father is keenly felt, and everyday occurrences, from school assignments to playing ball to going to bed at night, trigger his sorrow.

The little boy tries to cope with his father's absence. He thinks about all of the things they used to do together, and he sleeps in one of his father's shirts. He also acts out at school, lies to and fights with his friends, and witnesses his mother trying but failing to hide her own grief. With patience and understanding, the adults in his life are able to help him begin to process his loss.

I Miss My Daddy is simply presented. There is no dialogue, and there are few details to flesh out the story. The father's absence is not explained; it remains unclear whether he has passed on or has simply moved out of the boy's life. Despite the limited glimpse into the child's circumstances, his pain is clear on every page, and it is impossible not to grieve along with the him as he longs for his father.

The book offers a wonderful tool for discussing loss with young children who may not have the emotional awareness to cope with it on their own. The boy describes one day: "I shoved Tommy and knocked him down when he stepped on my foot, even though deep down I knew he didn't mean to. I threw my lunch money on the floor and said a bad word."

Such behaviors are in no way condemned in the story, and it is understood that the boy is acting out of his sadness. Rather than getting angry with him, his mother helps him to focus on positive memories and to hold on to the love he feels for his father.

Illustrations by Cady Driver support the text with soft watercolors that express anger, grief, frustration, and love. The edges of some illustrations fade into white, which creates a soft and distant quality, much like the memories they represent.

I Miss My Daddy is heartfelt and will be helpful to any family dealing with the loss of a parent. The ambiguities in the story draw focus to the emotionality of loss, and children and adults alike will find an opportunity to express their own loss and explore ways in which they might help one another handle their grief.

CATHERINE THURESON (January 5, 2017)

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