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English 112B

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 Death and Loss

 Jessi, Kirby. *Things We Know by Heart.* New York: Harper Teen, 2015. Print.

 **Summary:** Quinn Sullivan is devastated by the loss of her high school sweetheart, Trent, and in hopes for some closure she contacts all his donated organ recipients’. She receives responses from all of the recipients except for the one that has Trent’s heart. Quinn tracks down the heart recipient, nineteen-year-old Colton Thomas, and in their first accidental meeting they have an instant attraction to each other and begin dating. Quinn learns to start living life again as she falls in love with Colton Thomas, the recipient of Trent’s donated heart. **Commentary:** *Things We Know by Heart* demonstrates a few of the Exeter Qualities, which include three, four, and seven. Quinn is a strong female protagonist and the characters reflect experiences of teen readers as described in quality number three. Quinn learns to overcome her grief and begins living, which embodies quality number four, characters that go beyond typical experiences so that readers can learn and develop in their own lives. This story can help teens learn to move forward after losing a loved one and also the importance of the family bond especially during difficult times and this reflects Exeter Quality number seven, themes that allow growth with personal issues.

John, Green. *The Fault in Our Stars.* New York: Penguin Books, 2012. Print.

 **Summary:** Depressed teen Hazel Grace who is

living with cancer meets Gus Waters, also living with cancer, in a support group for

Cancer. The teens fall in love. Gus reads Hazel’s favorite book and uses his wish to

travel to Amsterdam to meet the author of *An Imperial Affliction* in hopes that the

author will tell them the ending of the book. While in Amsterdam Gus confesses his

love for Hazel and also that his cancer has come back and it’s aggressive. Gus

eventually passes and Hazel is left to deal with her grief.

**Commentary:** This book shows teens how fragile life can be and no matter how

hard life seems you should try to stay positive and enjoy it. After Gus’s death, Isaac

and Hazel spend time talking about Gus and this can help teens open up to their

friends because talking helps one heal. This novel has Exeter Qualities three, four,

and seven. Although Hazel starts out being depressed, by the end she is the strong

female protagonist in Quality number three. Readers that are dealing with a loved

one with cancer or another terminal illness can use this fictional experience to learn

and develop in their own life as described in Quality number four. Lastly, Hazel

exemplifies emotional and intellectual growth through her relationship with Gus

which is Exeter Quality number seven.

https://youtu.be/GDaQQp1Dm\_g

 Matt, De La Pena. *We Were Here* New York: Random House, 2009. Print.

 **Summary:** Miguel ends up in a group home and makes friends with Mong and Rondelle. Mong invites Miguel to escape with him to Mexico and Rondelle decides to tag along. Miguel had no idea that Mongs intention was to kill himself and he didn’t want to do it alone. Rondelle and Miguel live on the streets until they decide to return back to the group home to live out their sentence. Miguel finally tells us at the end that he killed his only brother on accident.

**Commentary:** I chose this novel because it can help teens see how they can survive the death of a friend. When Mong ends his life, Rondelle and Miguel honor him in a ceremony and choose to celebrate Mong’s life. Although Miguel doesn’t deal with the death of his brother that well, other teens might learn that they are not alone in having the same reactions or feelings as Miguel.

Exeter Quality two describes this novel as Miguel keeps his secret until the very end of the story. This story contains themes that allow emotional and intellectual growth through the boy’s journey as they learn and mature which is Exeter Quality number seven.

Jennifer, Niven. *All the Bright Places.* New York: Ran, 2015. Print.

 **Summary:** Written from the perspectives of Violet and Theodore, the novel deals with the stories of two very different suicidal teenagers. Violet, the popular girl, dealing with the death of her sister in a tragic car accident that she feels responsible for and Theodore, a less popular boy dealing with an undiagnosed bipolar disorder. As fate would have it, the two meet coincidentally, as they choose to end their lives, an attempted jump from the bell tower on the same evening. A relationship forms as the two travel around their state to see important or unusual sites for a school project. On this trip, Violet starts to heal with the help of Theodore’s mentoring and counseling. Theodore appears to worsen the highs of manic impulsivity to the lows of lethargy in his depression. Tragedy strikes when Violet’s parents forbid the relationship; unable to deal with the loss of his girlfriend, and one of the few bright spots in his world, Theodore spirals. After one unsuccessful suicide attempt, and an explosive argument with Violet, Theodore runs away from home and drowns himself at the Blue Hole.

**Commentary:** This novel can help teens deal with the loss of a family member and again how important friends can be in that journey of healing. It can also help young adults see that getting back to doing what they loved is a helpful healing tool. Exeter Quality one includes differing perspectives and this novel is written through two protagonists in alternating chapters. It also has a strong female protagonist and reflects experiences of teen readers, Quality number three. Emotional and intellectual growth is also demonstrated through Violet in this story so Exeter Quality seven is exemplified in this novel.

Suzanne, LaFleur. *Love, Aubrey.* New York: Random House, 2009. Print.

 **Summary:** Opening in Virginia, Aubrey and her mother, Lissie, deal with the tragic loss of her father and her younger sister, both killed in a collision with a semi truck. Unable to deal with the loss; Lissie abandons her daughter a week later. Demonstrating incredible fortitude we see the resilience of an 11-year-old going about her life, with a roof over her head, Spaghetti O’s and her pet fish, Sammy, until her grandmother rescues her and brings her back to Vermont. After a brief struggle, Aubrey finally settles in to life, school and the experience of holidays without her family. Love, Aubrey shows us how this young girl deals with her life dilemmas, the loss of her mother and the death of her father and sister by writing letters to real people she lost and even to her sister’s imaginary friend Jilly.

**Commentary:** This novel can be helpful in exploring the use of writing in order to get passed the grief of losing a loved one. Change in Aubrey’s life although initially hard seemed to be helpful with her new school and friends. This story embodies Exeter Qualities three and seven. Quality three because of the strong female protagonist and seven because of emotional/intellectual growth through personal issues.

Jeff, Zentner. *Goodbye Days.* New York: Crown Books, 2017. Print.

 **Summary:** Wracked with guilt over the death of his three friends, Mars, Blake and Eli, Goodbye Days tells the story of the remaining member of the quartet, Carver. Carver and the remaining family and other members of the community believe it is his text sent to Mars, and the half written text message response that may have caused the tragedy.  Zentner painstakingly shows there is more grief than malice in this judgment truly allowing both sides of this horrific event to be portrayed. In the midst of the blame and grief, Blake’s grandmother requests a goodbye day with one of her grandson’s best friends, Carver. This relationship and the ones he fosters with his therapist and Eli’s girlfriend Jesmyn help Carver start to slowly peek out from his self-induced isolation.  Heartbreak, tragedy and loss can be found on every page, but the road to recovery is slowly found as Carver starts to accept invitations from the other family members to their own goodbye days. Only time will tell whether these goodbye days will help or hinder his recovery.

**Commentary:** This book is valuable because it reveals how everyone grieves in their own way so it could help a teen realize that although another person is not reacting as they are it is normal. It also explores a different way to help get through the loss of a loved one by having a goodbye day. This novel exemplifies Exeter Qualities four and seven.

Jenny, Torres Sanchez. *Because of the Sun.* New York: Delacorte Press, 2017. Print.

 **Summary:** In her novel, *Because of the Sun,* Jenny Torres Sanchez introduces us to Dani, a seemingly unloved daughter who chooses to handle her circumstance with an apathetic approach to life; who cares. This approach perhaps helps her cope with the death of her mother, Ruby inexplicably killed by a black bear. Ruby appears to be a selfish and neglectful mother.  Art imitates life when Dani chooses to read the book, the Stranger by Albert Camus as summer reading for school; that book’s character also alienated after his mother’s death. Dani navigates her way from her loss when she moves to New Mexico to live with her previously unknown aunt. In New Mexico she meets Paulo and his grandmother Dona Marcela. A glimpse into a life where Dani can reconnect and leave behind her apathy.  The newfound relationships Dani fosters allow her move forward with a slightly more positive and optimistic approach to life, having found love after loss, and in spite of the tragic family secrets that perhaps shaped the way she was treated by her mother.

**Commentary:** This novel can help a teen see how one might deal with the sudden death of a parent that is abusive. The loss of a parent is already to deal with but the added difficulty of the teen hating the parent because the parent is abusive is another added layer of grief. The female protagonist heals through learning the story of her mom’s childhood as she starts to build a relationship with her long lost aunt, Exeter Quality number three.

Adam, Silvera. *They Both Die at the End.* New York: Harper Collins, 2017. Print.

 **Summary:** Set in a futuristic society, where a company called Death-Cast gives individuals notice that their death is imminent providing 24 hours to make amends. Mateo and Rufus meet through the Last Friend app and decide to live out their final 24 hours together.

**Commentary:**  I chose this novel because although this is unlikely to happen it helps teens learn not to take life for granted. It also illustrates empathy for strangers. Exeter Qualities two, four, and seven are embodied in this story as an exciting plot is part of this novel as well as surprises. Quality number four is fictional experiences to learn and develop in ones own lives and this can include the empathetic part of the story as well as Exeter Quality number seven, emotional growth.