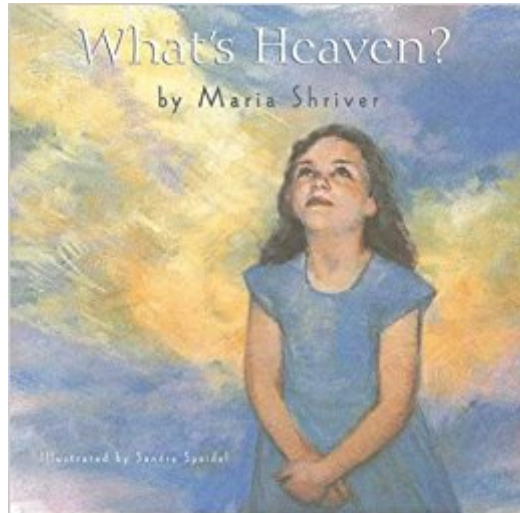




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What's Heaven



Synopsis

This treasure of a book, for people of all faiths, is a starting point for parents who must talk about the difficult topic of death with their children. What should parents say when a loved one dies? Heaven is a difficult subject that always comes up at tough times, and Maria Shriver has written a very special book precisely for these stressful moments. *What's Heaven?* is the story of Kate, a little girl whose great-grandma has just died. She seeks answers, and her mother helps her learn about Heaven. The many questions in this book are real, coming from Shriver's own children, nieces, and nephews when her grandmother Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy passed away. With 900,000 copies of the book now in print, the loving, confident, and ultimately uplifting answers Shriver provides are helping readers' families come together, feel closer to one another, and experience peace during the times when they need it most.

Book Information

Hardcover: 32 pages

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

Borne from actual questions asked by her own daughters, journalist Maria Shriver's *What's Heaven?* is a gentle narrative following the conversations that pass between a mother and a young daughter in the days immediately following the death of the child's special great-grandmother. Initially, young Kate's concern is with the obvious change in her mother. Quickly, one question leads to another. Kate asked, "Mommy, why are you so sad?" Her mom looked at her and said, "My grandma, your great-grandma, has died and gone to Heaven." Kate thought about this for a

moment. "Then she asked, "Heaven? What's Heaven?" Shriver, who was raised Catholic, delivers a simple, traditional definition of Heaven that is rich in imagery but never overembroidered. Heaven, she writes, "is a beautiful place up in the sky, where no one is sick, where no one is mean or unhappy. It's a place beyond the moon, the stars, and the clouds.... Heaven isn't a place you can see.... It's somewhere you believe in." As the funeral approaches and Kate's questions become more pragmatic ("How will she breathe in the box?... Why did Great-grandma look so different?") her mother slowly and clearly introduces the concept of body versus soul, explaining that Great-grandma's best and brightest traits will live on forever in the people she loved. It's hard for Kate to grasp, but by book's end, when she's calling up into the sky to her Great-grandma, it is clear Kate understands. "I know you are up there, and if you can hear me, I want you to know that even though you are no longer here, your spirit will always be alive in me." Generously illustrated with Sandra Speidel's full-size pastel drawings of the characters, the sky, angels, and family photographs, this is a book that can comfortably be read in one sitting. Not that it will only be read once: it's got instant-classic written all over it. (Ages 5 and older) --Jean Lenihan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

According to Shriver, the death of her famous grandmother, Rose Kennedy, and its effect on Shriver's daughters, then five and six, occasioned this book, a series of conversations between a girl named Kate and her mother about the death and funeral of Kate's great-grandmother. The storytelling framework can be bumpy ("[Kate] was the kind of girl whose beautiful eyes sparkled when she talked"), and Speidel's (*Songs for the Seasons*) idealized pastels of mother, child, fluffy clouds and prim angels, while pretty in a conventional way, don't advance the text or open it more widely to children. However, the exchange between fictional mother and daughter is unusually honest and attentive to children's concerns. Kate wants to know just where heaven is ("If heaven's in the sky, then how come I can't see it?") and just how Great-grandma got there ("Do the angels just take you through the ceiling and through the sky?"). Kate's reactions to the funeral are the common ones ("Why are we going to [bury Great-grandma in a box]?... What if she wants to get out?" and "Why did Great-grandma look so different?"), and they are met with sympathetic, reasonably clear explanations about the difference between souls and bodies. Shriver describes heaven in nondenominational terms, with more emphasis on angels than on God, and she leaves plenty of room for other schools of thought ("Some people believe in different kinds of heaven and have different names for it"). If its structure and overlong text make this book awkward for sharing directly with a child, its content serves as an excellent model for parents. All ages. Copyright 1999

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Purchased this for a dear friend who lost her husband unexpectedly after 28 years of marriage. Their Granddaughter, 1st grade, was having a very difficult time in understanding why her Grandpa was not coming home. Having read this to my son when my mother passed away in 2001, I KNEW it would provide an opportunity for my friend, whose own world was turned upside down, to open a dialogue with her Granddaughter. My prayer is that they will BOTH gain a wee bit of insight that will help them both move forward.

This is a sweet book that helps children understand that the loved one they have lost is still with them. It also explains that the body in the coffin is not their loved one. It is only the shell. It explains what a soul is to children. I am an elementary school counselor and I checked this out of the public library to use with a student who had just lost his grandfather to death. After that experience, I decided to purchase the book.

This book was PERFECT for reading to my young daughter when my grandfather passed away. She had grown very very close to him as he spent his final years living in our home. He called her his "Little Goldilocks" for her beautiful golden curls. After his passing, we all grieved the sudden emptiness in our home. I worried most about the questions running through her mind about this place called Heaven that everyone kept speaking of. All she wanted was her Grampa Harry...this book helped answer so many questions and ease her sweet little mind. It discusses delicate topics that even as adults, we may not know how to approach with our children during such difficult times. I would HIGHLY recommend this book (and have done so) for children and their families as well!

During times when things are scary, the beautiful soft watercolor paintings and gentle words bring peace. I found this book and two other titles over 13 years ago, when we lost my 2 year old's father. She had a tough time understanding, but this really helped her. She referred back to this book over the many years since.

This is written very clearly and mostly aligns with my spiritual beliefs. I did skip a bit, when reading it to my child, because I believe you will see the person again after they die. The author does not. However, it is written in a very comforting way and explains hard to understand concepts of death and soul vs. body and heaven. This book really is helping us grieve.

My mother in law recently passed away and this book has helped us explain Heaven and where she is at to our young son.

Very nice conversational book for lower elementary school kids and older, concerned because it uses the phrase "if you are good" as part of the explanation of how you get into heaven. That could create a whole lot of panic and anxiety!

I have shared this book many times with families of young children dealing with grief.

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