

Title		Badger's Parting Gifts			
Author (Text & Illustration)		Susan Varley			
Publication Year		1984	Publisher	HarperCollins	
Translated Versions		Japanese translation available			
Words	988	Pages	32	YLLevel	3.1
Synopsis					
<p>In the forest where all the animals live in harmony, lived a gentle badger whom everyone loved. As he got older, he realized that the time when he would have to say goodbye to his beloved friends was drawing near. However, he was worried that the younger ones would not be able to accept this. So occasionally, Badger would tell the animals in the forest not to be sad when the time comes.</p> <p>One autumn day, Badger brought his walking stick and went out to the hills with Mole and Frog. Badger was too old to keep up with the youthful frolicking of Mole and Frog, but he was happy to watch them running around.</p> <p>That night, Badger had a dream unlike anything he had ever dreamt before. Usually, he was unable to walk without his walking stick, but in this dream, he ran down a long, long tunnel just like he was young again. As he ran, his entire body lifted off the ground and he felt as if he was separated from his body.</p> <p>The next morning, his friends from the forest gathered around his door, concerned because he had not come out. Fox found a scribbled note, which read: "Going down the Long Tunnel. Bye Bye, Badger." and everyone understood that Badger had died.</p> <p>Along with grief, the forest was covered in snow. Even though they were already beginning to feel the signs of spring, they all continued to gather together to remember Badger and talk about everything he had taught them. He had taught them so many things, like skating on a frozen pond, tying a necktie and making gingerbread. By the time spring arrived, they realized that every moment they had spent with Badger and everything they had learned from him were irreplaceable gifts.</p> <p>On a breezy spring day, Mole went to the hill where he had spent time with Badger and murmured, "Thank you, Badger." and he knew in his heart that the badger heard him.</p>					

## Introduction

At some point, some children become aware about the existence of death and feel indescribable fear. My friend's son lost his beloved grandmother when he was very young, but he never talked about it. After some time had passed, however, he let out all his bottled-up emotions one day and started crying, talking about how sad he really was.

Such ordeals are unavoidable, both on the part of those who are dying and those who have to say goodbye to their loved ones. Just like the forest where this story is set, seasons change; plants that lay dormant throughout the winter sprout, blossom, and bear fruit; and we gradually inherit wisdom from our families and those close to us so that we may live each day meaningfully. What we learn from others eventually becomes a part of us, and ultimately, we will pass this on. This story depicts the passing on of wisdom among the forest friends who are of different species. It reminds us that even for humans, such activity is not necessarily limited to relatives. It is figures like Badger that shape the "roots" of people.

Needless to say, this is a heavy subject; however, it is positively portrayed through light and beautifully colored imagerys. This book teaches young children who do not understand the concept of death (i.e., that they will have to say goodbye to their loved ones one day) and provides children (and adults) who have experienced such painful farewells with the emotional support to accept and overcome them. This is a useful book for grief support. Despite being written in simple language, it also helps adults to reflect on life's mysteries.

A Japanese translation of this book under the title *Unforgettable Gifts* has been included in numerous elementary school Japanese language textbooks and is loved by many.

## Notes

A portion of this text is a substantially revised version of the draft frontispiece, "Seeking Inspirational Picture Books" [Ehon o Sagashini] [12] from *English Teachers' Magazine*, March 2020 (Vol. 68, No.13), TAISHUKAN Publishing Co., Ltd.

(Text: Yuka Kusanagi)