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Susan Reising

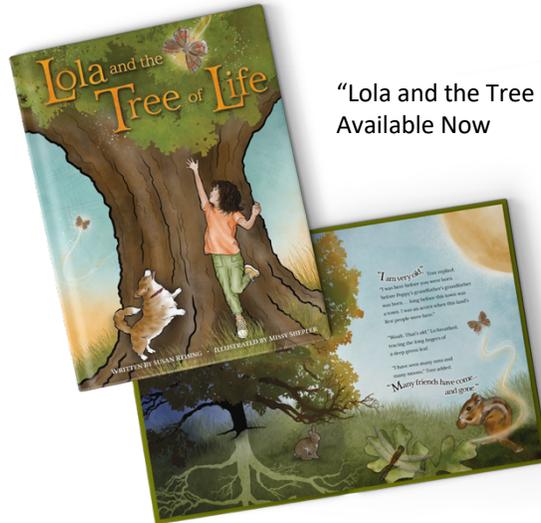
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“Lola and the Tree of Life”
Available Now

Central Illinois Author and Illustrator Create Book to Help Children Prepare for Loss

EAST PEORIA, IL – “Lola and the Tree of Life” offers a message of hope, even in the face of loss, to children ages 4 to 8. Written by Susan Reising and illustrated by Missy Shepler, both based in Central Illinois, the richly illustrated story of young Lola, her dog Skye, her beloved friend Tree and her ailing grandfather, can help a child:

- Prepare for the death of a loved one or pet before it happens.
- Understand that while death is permanent, memories, meaning and connections live on.
- Learn about natural cycles in the web of life.

Available as an 8½”x11” full-color hardcover or e-book, “Lola and the Tree of Life” is intended to help parents, child psychologists and counselors, teachers, and others who care for children help them feel safe and reduce anxiety, even as they prepare for loss. Reising notes, “While many books are available to help children with grief, few are focused on preparing children for loss before it happens.”

The Story Behind the Story

“I first envisioned the story more than 20 years ago as an homage to the healing power of nature in general and trees in particular. Then it sat on a shelf,” Reising says. “It (or I) wasn’t quite ready for the world. But this little story never let go of me.”

Not long after she and her husband suffered the unexpected loss of their beloved dog Lola, the COVID-19 pandemic hit—amid other deep disconnections around the world. “I knew it was time to revisit the story of a moving friendship between a sensitive child and a wise old burr oak,” she says. “I wanted to help lessen the grief and trauma children experience when the world stops making sense.”

As she updated the tale to feature a girl named Lola, in honor of her lost pet, and Lola’s dog Skye (inspired by Reising’s own corgi of the same name), she says she also worked through her own grief. “Reconnecting with my longtime friend and colleague Missy Shepler to work on this project together also was a fantastic gift,” she adds. “Missy’s amazing artistry brought the story to life in such beautiful, intricate detail.”

Says Shepler, “Working on this book with Susan let me remember what it was like to talk to trees, to be still, silent, and more connected to green growing things. I've tried to put a little bit of that on each page, and I hope this story helps children find that same peace for themselves.”

Praise for Lola and the Tree of Life

The book already is gathering praise from mental health professionals, teachers, parents and other authors.

“This beautifully illustrated and written book sensitively describes life, death, the interconnectedness of all that is living, and the ongoing connectedness to that which has passed on before. **‘Lola and the Tree of Life’ provides a comforting message to children who are facing grief and loss. A highly recommended read!**” says Mary Fristad, PhD, ABPP, Nationwide Children's Hospital Division of Child & Family Psychiatry.

Laurie Friedman, author of the Mallory McDonald series and dozens of other books for young people, says, “‘Lola and the Tree of Life’ is a lovely, well-told, story that will help children understand loss and the circle of life. **With gorgeous illustrations, this gentle tale works to reassure young readers and leave them with a feeling of hopefulness,** even if they have lost someone special.”

About the Creators



Susan Reising, professional development coach and trainer, writer and champion question-asker, is on a lifelong quest to better understand—and bring hope to—our world and the diverse people who inhabit it. She loves animals of all kinds, our magnificent planet, people with big hearts, sunshine and a good hard laugh with friends. She lives in East Peoria, Ill., with her husband and two beloved dogs.



Missy Shepler, designer, author and illustrator, is always looking for ways to blend her love of nature with her design, illustration and writing skills. Most of her days are spent creating projects, writing patterns and pushing pixels around the screen for clients in the quilting and sewing industries. She lives in Chillicothe, Ill., with her husband and far too many cats.

Book Details

“Lola and the Tree of Life” hardcover edition is now available at **Bookshop.org**, **BarnesandNoble.com** and **Amazon.com**. The e-book also is available on Amazon.com. Visit **lolaandthetreeoflife.com** for more information, additional resources for adults and children and links to ordering options.

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