

# ON THE NEWS

Our First Talk About Tragedy



THE WORLD  
AROUND US

Dr. Jillian Roberts

Illustrations by Jane Heinrichs

# On the News: Our First Talk About Tragedy

Author: Dr. Jillian Roberts

Illustrator: Jane Heinrichs

February 14, 2023

Using illustrations, full-color photographs and straightforward text, this nonfiction picture book introduces the topics of tragedy and disaster to young readers.

## FORMATS

10 x 8.5"

32 pages

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## KEY SELLING POINTS

- This book offers an age-appropriate and straightforward introduction to tragedy.
- The World Around Us series discusses difficult topics through a conversation, starting with a common observation and continuing with follow-up questions that would naturally come from a young child.
- Sidebars define larger concepts for further discussion with older and more curious children.
- The author is a practicing child psychologist who is well known for her Just Enough series and the rest of the World Around Us series, and she is a regular contributor to *HuffPost*, Global News and CBC.
- *On the News* was an OLA Best Bets Honourable Mention.



Photo credit: Joshua Lawrence

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Jillian Roberts** is a renowned child psychologist, author, professor and parent. Considered a go-to child psychology expert for journalists, Dr. Roberts has had her work published in the *New York Times* and the *Toronto Sun*, and she is a regular contributor to *HuffPost*, Global News and CBC. She is the author of two bestselling and award-winning series of children's books: the Just Enough series explains topics like birth and diversity to children ages 3–6, while the World Around Us series introduces kids ages 5–8 to issues like poverty and online safety. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia.



Photo credit: Bridget Wise

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Jane Heinrichs** is a children's book writer and illustrator. She is the author/illustrator of the hybrid graphic novel *Every Home Needs an Elephant*. Jane starts her day at a clear desk with her huge sketchbook (for books) and her tiny sketchbook (for daily drawings) but usually ends up sitting on the floor, surrounded by a collection of paints, pencils and papers. She lives in the UK with her family.

## PRAISE FOR *ON THE NEWS*

“Handles a sensitive topic with kindness, compassion and empathy.” —*Booklist*

“A timely introduction to, and conversation starter on, tough current events for children. Hand to counselors and caregivers.” —*School Library Journal*

“Well-intentioned, ambitious and heartfelt.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

## PROMOTIONAL PLANS INCLUDE

- Print and online advertising campaigns
- Promotion at national and regional school, library and trade conferences
- Blog and social media promotion
- Outreach in Orca newsletters

## BISACS

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## RIGHTS

Worldwide

## AGES

6–8



The World Around Us series introduces children to complex cultural and social issues in a straightforward and accessible way. These illustrated nonfiction picture books tackle global concerns and initiate conversations about subjects that are difficult, sad or overwhelming with school-aged children who are just beginning to observe the world around them.

## PUBLICITY

For more information or a review copy, please contact Kennedy Cullen at [kennedy@orcabook.com](mailto:kennedy@orcabook.com)

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# ON THE NEWS

Our First Talk About Tragedy

Dr. Jillian Roberts    Illustrations by Jane Heinrichs

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

*This book is for my stepfather, Val, who as a firefighter dedicated his life  
to the service of his community as a first responder.*

—J.R.

*For Mark, who is my anchor in both calm and stormy seas.*

—J.H.

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When you observe the world around us,  
maybe by watching or listening to the news,  
you may see or hear about things that are scary and  
confusing. Many good things happen in our world, but  
sometimes bad things happen too. It is okay to  
ask questions when you do not understand why  
something bad has happened in the world.





I saw on the news today that something  
bad had happened in the city. Many  
people were hurt, and some were killed.  
I felt so sad and scared.

I understand how you feel. I feel the same way when I see or hear things like that on the news. The world can be a complicated and confusing place. It is hard to accept that sometimes very bad things happen in the world around us.



An ambulance responds to an emergency call in Manhattan, New York.  
CLARI MASSIMILIANO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

What do you call  
something bad that  
happens?



A wildfire burns on a mountainside  
near Bailey, Colorado, 2002.

ISTOCK.COM/MILEHIGHTRAVELER

People are tested for COVID-19 during the global pandemic in 2020.

DREAMSTIME.COM/POJOSLAW



When something bad happens, we often call it a “tragedy” or a “disaster.”



*Tragedy* and *Disaster* have similar meanings. Both are used to describe something bad that happens. *Disaster* is most often used to describe a major event itself—an earthquake, tsunami or flood, for example. *Tragedy* is usually used when we talk about the people involved in the event.

For example, it was a global disaster when the COVID-19 virus spread around the world in a pandemic that began in 2020. Millions of people lost their lives in this tragedy.

“Every year, close to 160 million people are affected by natural disaster worldwide.”\*

—World Health Organization (WHO)

\*That’s almost half the population of the United States and more than four times the population of Canada.



What causes a  
tragedy or disaster?

Sometimes they are acts of nature, which means they are caused by changes in the natural world around us. Sometimes they are caused by people.



Emergency crews work to secure a building in Kyiv, Ukraine, that was damaged in an explosion caused by a gas leak, 2017.

REVIEW NEWS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Children row a makeshift boat through a flooded street in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2017.  
SK HASAN ALI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



What kinds of  
tragedies are caused  
by nature?

Tragedies caused by nature are often called *natural disasters*. They include such events as forest fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, floods, droughts and tsunamis.

A young woman walks by wreckage from the Port-au-Prince earthquake in Haiti in 2010.  
ISTOCK.COM/1001NIGHTS



## A Little Bit More About Natural Disasters

The World Health Organization states that natural disasters have an immediate impact on people's lives and often cause the destruction of people's homes and communities. These disasters may affect people's health, their jobs, their families and how they live their lives for a very long time.

The 21st century has seen major natural disasters such as these:

- An earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2010 affected more than three million people.
- The Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, caused by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean with a moment magnitude of 9.1 to 9.3, completely washed out parts of Sumatra.
- Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005 and is considered the most destructive hurricane of the 21st century.



# What kinds of tragedies are caused by people?

Fire crews work to put out a forest fire in Portugal.  
STEVE PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM





Italian firefighters fly a Canadair CL-215 over a forest fire in Perugia, Italy, 2017.  
SERPEBLU/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

People cause many different kinds of tragedies. For example, they may cause fires by accidentally or intentionally setting grass, brush, trees or even buildings on fire.



Workers in hazmat suits clean up a crude-oil spill in Prao Bay, Thailand, 2013.

JUKURAE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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Sometimes people cause tragedies with their cars, or with boats, trains or tractors. They may do this by accident or by being irresponsible.



## Technological Disasters

happen when systems break down or the people controlling them make mistakes. These types of disasters include nuclear-reactor meltdowns, oil tanker and pipeline spills and train derailments.

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen technological disasters such as these:

- In 2013, an unattended freight train carrying crude oil rolled into downtown Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, and derailed. The train cars caught fire and exploded, destroying 30 buildings and killing 47 people.
- The BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 was the largest marine oil spill in history. An estimated 205 million gallons of oil spilled into the gulf over 87 days. Over 30,000 people came together to collect oil, clean up beaches and take care of animals.
- The Chernobyl disaster in 1986, in what is now Ukraine, was the most catastrophic nuclear power plant incident in history. The economic, environmental, cultural and health impacts of this disaster are still being felt today.



Firefighters work to help drivers involved in a car accident in Roseburg, Oregon.  
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Police officers patrol the Trocadéro gardens  
near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.

BLACKMAC/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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Stores were ransacked during riots in Seine-Saint-Denis, France, in 2017.  
JACKY D/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

And sometimes people cause tragedies on purpose, such as when people commit crimes. Sometimes you hear about terrorism or terrorists on the news.



**Terrorism** is the calculated use of violence against innocent people in order to make them afraid. *Terrorists*, the people who commit crimes of terrorism, often target people who have different cultural, religious or political views.

Here are some of the major terrorist attacks that have occurred in the world:

- On September 11, 2001, nineteen men hijacked four American commercial airplanes and intentionally crashed them into buildings. There were 2,977 people killed in New York City, Washington, DC, and outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania.
- On November 13, 2015, attacks across Paris killed 130 people and wounded hundreds of others.
- On January 29, 2017, a terrorist attacked a mosque in Quebec City, killing six worshippers and injuring many others.
- On August 12, 2017, a terrorist drove his car into a crowd in Charlottesville, Virginia, killing one person and injuring 19 others.

# Why do tragedies happen?



Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage site, was severely damaged after an earthquake in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 2015.

DUTOURDUMONDE PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



No one knows for sure why tragedies occur. Part of understanding tragedies is accepting that most of the time we cannot control them.



### Did You Know?

Sometimes people are really mixed up. They don't understand the difference between right and wrong. It's wrong to hurt other people on purpose. When something bad happens, we should always look for ways to help those who are hurt.

What is it like  
for someone  
who experiences  
a tragedy?



A child helps collect clean water after the earthquake in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 2015.

THINK4PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Temporary shelters for victims of the 2015 earthquake in Kathmandu, Nepal.  
DUTOURDUMONDE PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

It is very, very difficult for people who are affected by a tragedy or disaster. People in these situations experience a lot of different emotions. They can feel sad, scared and angry. As a child psychologist, I help children by talking with them about these feelings. And I want you to know it is normal to have strong emotions when a tragedy or disaster happens, even if you are just hearing about it on TV or the radio. It is also normal to worry about yourself and your family. Everyone is different, and we all react differently to tragedies and disasters.





*Noula!* In Haitian this means “We are here. We survive.” This saying was used frequently after Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

“Bad things do happen in the world, like war, natural disasters, disease. But out of those situations always arise stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.”

—Daryn Kagan,  
former broadcast journalist



Children walk beside a building that collapsed after a 2015 earthquake in the Kavrepalanchok District of Nepal.  
SOMJIN KIONG-UGKARA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

I have my own ideas about why bad things happen from time to time. Perhaps tragedies happen to give people a chance to be strong.

Perhaps tragedies happen to give people a chance to be brave.

Rescue teams search a building that was destroyed in an earthquake in Van, Turkey, 2011.  
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Perhaps tragedies happen to bring people together.

Tragedies and times of sadness and grief can be turned into opportunities to teach compassion.

Perhaps tragedies happen to give people a chance to be kind and caring.



## When An Entire Town Came Together to Choose Kindness

During the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the United States closed its airspace, causing about 200 flights in the air to be diverted to other airports. Gander, a tiny town in Newfoundland, Canada, opened its runways, allowing 38 transatlantic flights to land. The people of Gander and surrounding fishing villages filled their schools, community rooms, homes and churches with cots for stranded passengers. They even found a way to care for 17 dogs and cats and two great apes that were aboard the planes. The people of Gander, a town of no more than 10,000, looked at all those planes lined up at the airport and didn't think about terrorism or potential attacks. They just wanted to help.

—Taken from Petula Dvorak's article in the *Washington Post*, September 10, 2016

"Whenever something negative happens, there is a deep lesson concealed in it."

—Eckhart Tolle

## What is Resilience?

It is the ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change.

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

—Elisabeth Kübler-Ross,  
psychiatrist



It is terrible when a tragedy happens. However, it is important to know that life continues after a tragedy. People are resilient.

When people come together during a tragedy, and when people are strong, brave, kind and compassionate, it is easier for them to continue on with everyday life.





Volunteers make sandbags to try to protect Bangkok, Thailand, against flooding in 2011.

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What can we do to help when tragedies or disasters occur in the world around us?

There are many things we can do. For example, we can show our appreciation to the first responders in our community—firefighters, police officers and paramedics. We can also show our respect to members of our community who help during these challenging times, such as doctors, nurses and other health-care workers.

And we can participate in fundraising efforts for aid organizations that do tremendous good for our global community during times of tragedy and disaster—such as Red Cross, UNICEF and Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders. Perhaps when you grow up, you will become a great helper in your community too!



Workers assist people during flooding in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2011.

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## A Note from Dr. Jillian Roberts, Author and Child Psychologist



As a child psychologist I have spent countless hours helping children and families who have experienced tragedies. It is challenging, even as a seasoned therapist, to know what is best to say to little ones in emotional anguish. I have found the following quote by Fred Rogers (better known as Mr. Rogers) particularly helpful and inspiring to my work in these times:

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother’s words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers—so many caring people in this world.

When we look for the helpers, we can see that there is hope in times of great darkness. Helpers shine a kind of light that helps us find our way. We can then see beauty in the totality of the human experience. I hope this book inspires each reader to be a helper, in any way possible, in times of tragedy and disaster. When we come together and show strength, courage, kindness and compassion, we help make the world around us a much better place.

## Resources

### Books for Children

Holmes, Margaret M. *A Terrible Thing Happened*.

Washington, DC: Magination Press, 1993.

Ippen, Chandra Ghosh. *Once I Was Very Very Scared*.

San Francisco, CA: Piplo Productions, 2017.

Roberts, Jillian. *What Happens When a Loved One Dies?*

Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 2016.

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### Books for Parents

Levine, Peter A. and Maggie Kline. *Trauma Through a Child's Eyes:*

*Awakening the Ordinary Miracle of Healing*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2006.

Monahan, Cynthia. *Children and Trauma: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York, NY: Viking Press, 2014.

*I would like to extend my gratitude to my expert readers,  
Dr. Natalee Popadiuk and Dr. Tim Black, who took the time to  
carefully review the words in this book and share their insights.*  
—Dr. Jillian Roberts





**Dr. Jillian Roberts** is a renowned child psychologist, author, professor and parent. Considered a go-to child psychology expert for journalists, Dr. Roberts has had her work published in the *New York Times* and the *Toronto Sun*, and is a regular contributor to *HuffPost*, Global News and CBC. She is the author of the bestselling Just Enough series which explains topics like birth and diversity to children ages 3–6. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

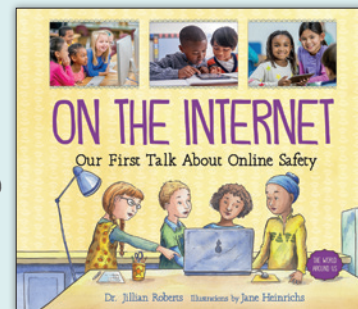
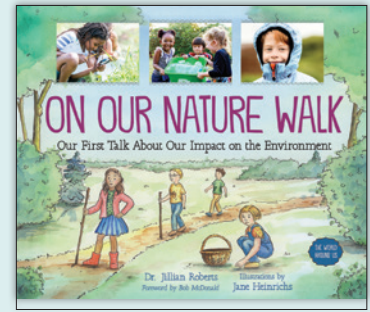
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These inquiry-based books are an excellent cross-curricular resource encouraging children to explore and discuss important issues and **foster their own compassion and empathy.**



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