

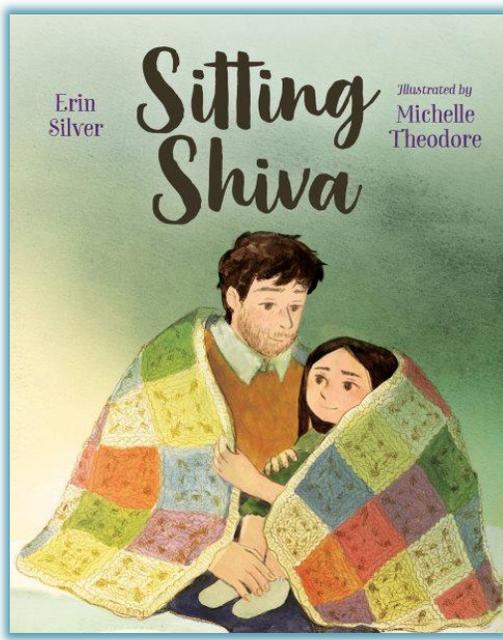
Erin Silver is a children's author and freelance writer with 20 years of professional industry experience. Her books include *Rush Hour: Navigating Our Global Traffic Jam*, *What Kids Did: Stories of Kindness and Invention in the Time of COVID-19* and *Proud to Play: Canadian LGBTQ+ Athletes Who Made History*. Erin's work has appeared in everything from *Good Housekeeping* to *The Globe and Mail*. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in creative nonfiction from the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a postgraduate Journalism degree from Ryerson University and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto. Erin lives with her family in Toronto. *Sitting Shiva* is her first picture book. Learn more about her below.



Credit: Justine Apple

Q. Your new picture book, *Sitting Shiva*, is a moving story of a young girl who learns about the Jewish practice of sitting shiva after her mother dies. What inspired you to tell this story?

A. My stepdaughter lost her mother to cancer when she was just three. I kept thinking about how sad this was, but also about all the people—family, friends, neighbors—who offered support and nourishment during her time of need. I remember looking at the tools my husband used to explain grief to her when she was little, and I didn't see anything that reflected her experience in a book kids would want to read. It was all mostly non-action how-to guides for parents. I thought there might be room for me to write something that would be valuable, meaningful and relatable to other kids and families put in this terrible situation.



Q. Talking about death and grief can be so difficult. Why did you decided to tackle this topic in picture book format for young readers?

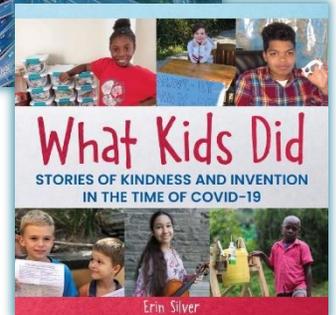
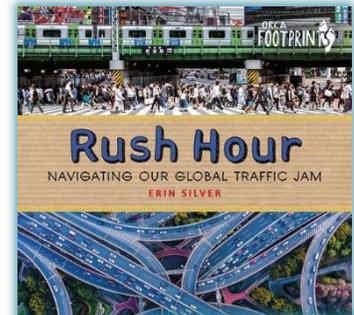
A. Grief is a difficult topic, even for adults, but I know of several other families who have lost a parent at a young age. It's absolutely heart-breaking. As a writer, I try to make sense of my feelings through words, and I thought this book was a chance for me to address loss and grief in an age-appropriate way for kids. At the same time, I wanted it to be hopeful for families. The book isn't just about how one culture deals with loss, it's also about the power of community and the beauty of tradition. It's about realizing how many people in your life care for you and support you. This book is dedicated to any child who has ever suffered a loss.

Q. In the back of the book, you include a note with more details about the tradition of shiva and how some other religions approach death. You mention that “what every faith has in common is the idea of community”; what does community mean to you?

A. I’m Jewish and wanted to share a part of my culture that is beautiful and meaningful. While I was researching, I realized that a story about sitting shiva could be useful for other religions, too. We all come together to support and care for one another in good times and in bad. The groups that make up our society have more in common than we might realize. This book is about being human.

Q. You have written a novel and several nonfiction books for kids including *Rush Hour: Navigating Our Global Traffic Jam* and *What Kids Did: Stories of Kindness and Invention in the Time of COVID-19* but *Sitting Shiva* is your first picture book. Did you find the writing experience very different?

A. In a lot of ways, nonfiction books for older kids are easier for me to write than picture books. In a picture book, you really have to get into the mind of a young child and make sure every word counts. It took me years to write and revise and re-write. I entered it in contests and sent it around to publishers to consider, never knowing if anyone would want to publish it. I’m grateful to Orca, a mainstream publisher, for recognizing the importance of all cultures and tackling such a difficult topic in a picture book. I hope it will be useful for families experiencing grief.



Q. What is next for you? Do you have any other books in the works?

A. I’m working on several other children’s nonfiction books and proposals. I also just finished a manuscript for a middle grade novel. I always tackle projects that will make a difference, so stay tuned for more!

Sitting Shiva releases on May 17th. Preorder in [hardcover](#) on TitleSource 360, and learn more about the author at erinsilver.ca.