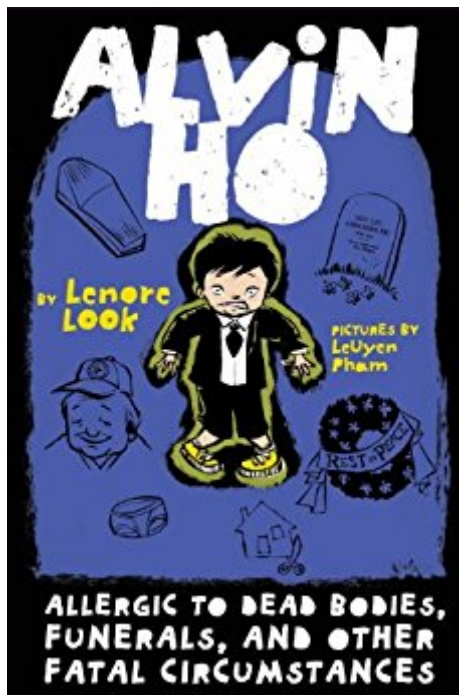


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# Alvin Ho: Allergic To Dead Bodies, Funerals, And Other Fatal Circumstances



## Synopsis

Here's the fourth book in the beloved and hilarious Alvin Ho chapter book series, which has been compared to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and is perfect for beginning and reluctant readers. Alvin, an Asian American second grader who's afraid of everything, is facing something truly scary: the idea that someone he loves might die. When Alvin's GungGung loses his best friend, Alvin (gulp) volunteers to go with him to the funeral. From Lenore Look and New York Times bestselling illustrator LeUyen Pham comes a drop-dead-funny and touching series with a truly unforgettable character. • Shares with *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* the humor that stems from trying to manipulate the world. • "Newsday" • Alvin's a winner. • "New York Post"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In many books, the more the reader connects to the main character(s), the more they are likely to appreciate the book. At least that is true in my experience, but not always. Sometimes the author makes the character so real that you can sympathize even without having similar experiences. Alvin Ho is one such character. His fears and good intentions make him a very sympathetic character,

even if one does not have numerous fears as does Alvin. In this fourth book especially, it is easy to relate to Alvin. Losing a loved one is difficult for anyone, adult or child. Alvin's fears make him especially susceptible to superstitions about death. Even though the book deals with death, it does so in a sensitive way without losing the trademark humor that make these books enjoyable to read. Some of the most humorous parts involve misconceptions about death and funerals that Alvin and his friends have. For example, when Alvin finds out that his GungGung's friend has died, he tells his sister, "When you die, you're dead...Then you go to heaven on the bus." Later, a friend tells him a wake (viewing) is "when you sit around and wait for the dead person to wake." This reminds of how easy it is to get wrong ideas, that is one reason for getting an education. Adults are not however, immune to 'wrong ideas,' they can be found everywhere. In addition, Alvin's situation becomes radically worse when his teacher and others at school assume the funeral Alvin is going to is his GungGung's and he doesn't correct it. This reminds me of my own tendency to make situations worse for myself without meaning to. In the end, it is Alvin's weaknesses that make him such an easy character to relate to and when he succeeds at something, however small, the reader cheers for him. This series is perfect for young readers who must face their own fears every day. Highly recommended.

We also reviewed the 5th book in the Alvin Ho series (Allergic to Babies, Burglars, etc.), which is my 6-year-old's favourite. This one (Allergic to Dead Bodies, etc.) is my personal favourite, though my kid also enjoyed it as well. What I appreciated about the book was that it treated the subject of death and aging in a sensitive -- yet hilarious -- fashion. I also very much enjoyed the way the main conflict in the book was resolved (Alvin was afraid to go to his grandfather's friend's funeral) and found the ending very moving. And, as always, we enjoy Alvin's neuroticism and quirkiness. Again, please note that there is a glossary in the back of the book that explains in a humorous way various concepts, including Chinese cultural concepts, so you should consult the glossary while you read the book. We look forward to future installments in the Alvin Ho series.

My son received the first Alvin Ho book at a book exchange at a birthday party. He absolutely loved the first book, and couldn't wait for the next. This is the fourth in the series, and while it's still Alvin Ho, this one is not as funny and quirky as the previous three. This one is about a young elementary school aged boy named Alvin Ho, and his first, indirect encounter with the death of someone he knows (his grandfather's old friend) and the mishaps and attention that come from not correcting a growing misperception that Alvin's grandfather is the one who died. The other books are much more

funny and light hearted and downright silly. Alvin's view of the world is clearly that of an innocent youngster who is woefully afraid of just about everything in life, and who relies on big brother Calvin, little sister Annibelly, and friend Flea (a girl with an eye patch and one leg longer than the other) to survive. Oh, and don't forget the Shakespearean curses he learns from his dad. I definitely recommend the Alvin Ho series, especially for boys 4-10. This one, while still pretty good, is our least favorite of the four.

My daughter recently finished all of the Ivy & Bean series but hadn't found a new character to love. Alvin Ho is totally working for her. After this one we talked a lot about some serious illnesses in the family. Encountering it through Alvin's experiences made her more inclined to discuss her own fears. The book reminded me a little bit of *Beezus & Ramona*. (Both of my kids rejected Beverly Cleary's works.) Kids want books written in their own voice, with contemporary situations they can identify with. I think Alvin Ho really hits that nicely - giving kids a light story that has deeper emotional undercurrents. The only thing the girls complained about was the glossary. It's nicely done, cute definitions in the voice of the main character but as one daughter put it "I was just enjoying this book to read, you know, fun reading not school reading, and now I have to learn things?" Oh, the horror.

I've read another Alvin Ho book, and loved it. I remembered Alvin Ho's humor and quirky dark side, both of which are present here, but this novel felt a lot deeper to me. Perhaps because the subject matter is more serious, the tone followed. Alvin's GungGung's (grandfather's) best friend Charlie has died. Feeling sorry for him, Alvin tells GungGung that he'll go to the funeral with him -- but then he immediately regrets that decision when he starts thinking about how scary funerals are. He's never even been to a funeral, but he finds out more than he wants to know about them from his school friends. And in the process of him discussing the upcoming funeral with his friends, they misunderstand and think that it's actually his grandfather who has died. This little mixup definitely provides the comic relief to the novel, going as far as a memorial at school hosted by the other grandparent library volunteers! Confronting this issue has 7-year-old Alvin thinking about death. Not just Charlie, who was his friend too, but especially with the mixup, he worries about GungGung's death. I think that the death of an old person who is not directly related to the child is a very healthy way to explore it -- both for the fictitious Alvin and the child reading it. I enjoyed seeing this more thoughtful side of this 2nd grader. It felt slightly less neurotic, because kids will definitely relate to it, which made it a more real and less quirky story -- which worked for me just as well as the others.

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