Dealing with Death

These icons indicate that teacher’s notes or useful web addresses are available in the Notes Page.

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For more detailed instructions, see the Getting Started presentation.
What do you think happens to us when we die?
Decide which of the answers below you most agree with.

- We go to heaven or hell, depending on how we have behaved while on earth.
- We will be reincarnated into a new life on earth.
- Nothing. Death is the end.
How are deaths commemorated?

When my neighbour died she was cremated.

My grandpa died last year. There was a funeral and then we stayed indoors until the Sabbath.

My grandmother was buried in the churchyard.
Lord, you have been our dwelling-place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You turn men back to dust, saying, ‘Return to dust, O sons of men.’
For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.
You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning – though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.

Psalm 90:1–6
A Jewish funeral

Jews accept death as a part of life. Jews believe everyone is equal in the eyes of God, so a Jewish funeral is always simple.

A group from the synagogue, known as the chevra kaddisha, care for the dying and arrange the funeral. The body is washed and wrapped in a plain white garment called a tachrichim. Someone stays with the body until the burial, which takes place as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours.

Psalms 90 and 91 are often said before a Jewish funeral. Jews are normally buried in a cemetery, called Bet Olam, in plain wooden coffins. There are no flowers. Prayers are recited before soil is placed on top of the coffin.
Mourning the dead

After a funeral the family stay at home for seven days. This period of mourning is called shiva. A candle is burned, and mirrors in the house are covered. The mourners are visited by friends and relatives who bring food and talk about the person who has died.

The following month is known as shloshim, when the mourners do not attend social events. For the remaining eleven months of the year of mourning Kaddish is said every day.

Why do you think the Jewish period of mourning lasts for as long as a year?
Can you match each Jewish term to its meaning?

- **Chevra Kaddisha**
  - a Jewish cemetery

- **Kaddish**
  - a burial committee

- **Shiva**
  - the month after a funeral

- **Tachrichim**
  - seven days of mourning

- **Shloshim**
  - a prayer said by mourners

- **Bet Olam**
  - the funeral shroud
Christian beliefs about death

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 23
Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.’ (John 11:25–26)

Christians believe that their soul lives on after death. Psalm 23 is often read at funerals or to the dying.

Priests and ministers often visit the dying to say prayers and read from the bible. Sometimes a person may wish to confess their sins before they die.

After death, Christians believe the soul has left the body and is with God.
A Christian funeral

There is a church service before the body is buried or cremated.

Christians may be buried in a church graveyard or a public cemetery. A gravestone will be placed on the site, and mourners may leave flowers on the grave.

If the body is cremated a short service will take place at a crematorium after the church service.
Islam teaches that after death there will be a **Day of Judgement** when everyone (not just Muslims) will rise out of their graves. Allah will judge each person and decide what happens to them.

From the earth We have created you, and to the earth We will restore you; and from it We will bring you back to life."

Koran
Muslims funerals take place as soon as possible after death, usually within 24 hours.

The body is washed and wrapped in a simple white shroud. Where permitted the body is buried without a coffin.

The body is carried to the mosque, and prayers are said before it is lowered into the ground. The body is buried with the face turned to the right, facing the Muslim holy city of Mecca.

Find out why Muslims prefer not to use a coffin.

Why do you think Muslims are buried and not cremated?
Test your memory! Have a go at this multiple choice quiz to find out how much you know about different ways of dealing with death.