

LET'S TALK ABOUT DEATH

Cultural Practices and Expressions





WARNING!



1. This lesson addresses a topic that may be considered sensitive or taboo for some students. Please introduce the topic clearly and respectfully.
2. Students should be informed that participation in discussions is optional, and anyone who feels uncomfortable is free to step back or not share personal opinions.
3. One of the aims of this lesson is to explore how different cultures deal with death and related practices. Encourage students to be respectful when discussing cultural traditions and to avoid prejudiced or judgmental comments.
4. It is important to acknowledge that controversial and delicate topics are part of everyday life and can — and should — be discussed with respect and responsibility.
5. Language classes provide not only the opportunity to learn a language, but also to develop critical thinking and broaden one's worldview by engaging with different cultures and perspectives.

LESSON OVERVIEW



TOPIC

Death and Funeral
Practices Around the
World



SKILLS FOCUS

Speaking, Listenig
and reading



LEVEL

Upper-intermediate
(B2)



LANGUAGE FOCUS

Vocabulary related
to death and
funerals



DURATION

50 minutes



MAIN AIM

To develop speaking
skills through discussion
of cultural practices and
sensitive topics

CLASS CONTENT:



ACTIVITY 1

Listening: Video
about different
cultures



ACTIVITY 2

Vocabulary



ACTIVITY 3

Reading:
pair discussion



ACTIVITY 4

Speaking:
Group discussion



WATCH THE VIDEO

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=QWTGUF4-1G](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWTGUF4-1G)

1 – WATCH THE VIDEO AND MATCH THE CULTURES WITH THE PRACTICE.



a. Madagascar

☐ Exhuming bodies, rewrapping them, and dancing with the corpses around the tomb to live music.

b. Tibet

☐ Leaving bodies to be consumed by vultures based on Buddhist beliefs of impermanence and rebirth.

c. Ghana

☐ They practice endocannibalism, mixing the ashes and bones of the deceased with plantain soup.

d. South Korea

☐ Displaying “death beads” made from cremated remains.

e. Indonesia

☐ Funerals are grand festivals that can last up to a week.

f. Yanomami tribe

☐ Customized coffins representing the deceased's profession.



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- a. Madagascar
- b. Tibet
- c. Ghana
- d. South Korea
- e. Indonesia
- f. Yanomami tribe



- (**A**) Exhuming bodies, rewrapping them, and dancing with the corpses around the tomb to live music.
- (**B**) Leaving bodies to be consumed by vultures based on Buddhist beliefs of impermanence and rebirth.
- (**F**) They practice endocannibalism, mixing the ashes and bones of the deceased with plantain soup.
- (**D**) Displaying “death beads” made from cremated remains.
- (**E**) Funerals are grand festivals that can last up to a week.
- (**C**) Customized coffins representing the deceased's profession.

DISCUSS:

- WHICH OTHER COUNTRIES ARE MENTIONED IN THE VIDEO?
- DESCRIBE HOW THEIR FUNERALS ARE.
- HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ANY OF THOSE PRACTICES BEFORE?



2 - COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE WORDS FROM THE BOX:



murderer	cremation	euthanasia	pass away	graveyard
funeral	coffin	to die	grief	kill
death	ashes	to mourn	die a natural death	to bury

2 - COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE WORDS FROM THE BOX:



1. The family gathered to say goodbye at the _____.
2. After the ceremony, they went to the _____ to visit the grave.
3. It is common to feel deep _____ after losing someone you love.
4. Some people prefer _____ instead of being buried.
5. The body was placed inside a _____ before the burial.
6. They decided _____ their pet in the backyard.
7. After the cremation, the family kept the _____ in a special urn.



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2 - COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE WORDS FROM THE BOX:

8. Many cultures have different ways _____ the dead.

9. The old man _____ in his sleep.

10. The villain planned to _____ the king and take the throne.

11. Some people use the expression "_____" instead of saying "die."

12. The police finally caught the _____ responsible for the crime.

13. In some countries, _____ is legal under strict conditions.

14. Everyone knows that one day we all have _____.

15. The sudden _____ of the young actor shocked everyone.



2 - COMPLETE THE SENTENCES WITH THE WORDS FROM THE BOX:

8. Many cultures have different ways to mourn the dead.

9. The old man died a natural death in his sleep.

10. The villain planned to kill the king and take the throne.

11. Some people use the expression "pass away" instead of saying "die."

12. The police finally caught the murderer responsible for the crime.

13. In some countries, euthanasia is legal under strict conditions.

14. Everyone knows that one day we all have to die.

15. The sudden death of the young actor shocked everyone.



3. READ THE FOLLOWING SHORT STORY

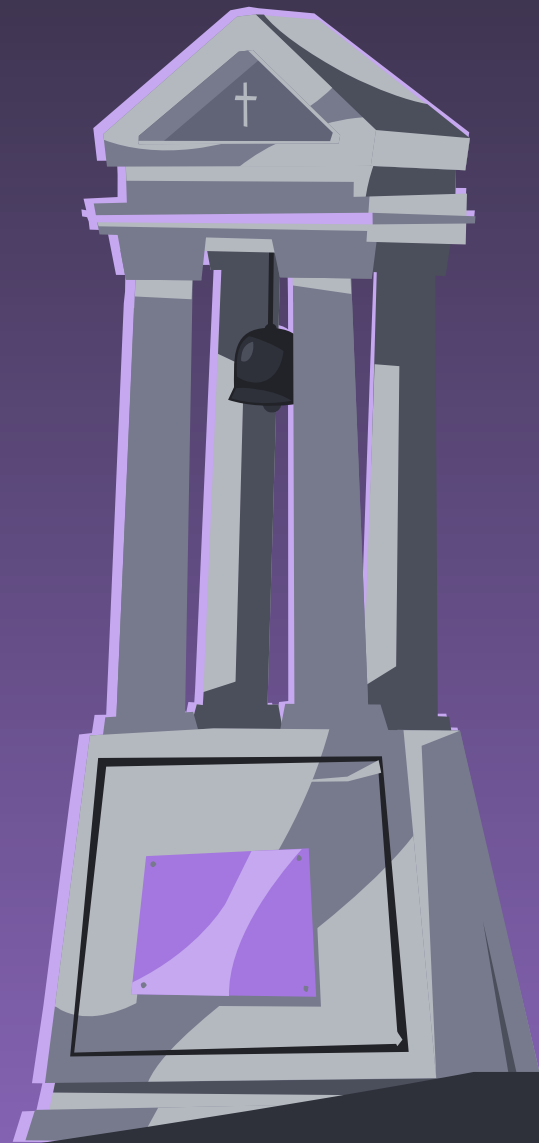
Fonte: Taboo and Issues: Photocopiable Lessons on Controversial Topics, chapter 1: Death, pag. 4.

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Family and friends at the funeral of George Ramsbottom in Honley, West Yorkshire, were stunned when his brother, Frank, stood up in the church and told everyone that his brother would not be missed.

Describing his brother as the meanest man he had ever met, he went on to list all the people who would be glad to know that George had died, and gave the reasons why. He claimed that George was a liar, a cheat, a womaniser and a drunk. "He owed money to half the people in the village; he had ruined a number of marriages; and he was often incredibly rude for no good reason. No one will be sad that he has gone." said Frank Ramsbottom.

Mr Ramsbottom's unexpected speech was followed by complete silence. Eventually Margaret Dudley, the minister in charge of the service, stood to say, "Let us give thanks for George's life with our final song." She then sang on her own while everyone else stood in silence. The service ended shortly afterwards.



DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS BELOW IN PAIRS:

1. Was Frank Ramsbottom right to make the speech?
2. "You should never speak ill of the dead." Do you agree?
3. What would you like people to say about you when you die? And what do you think people will actually say about you?
4. Do you think it is important to be remembered after death? Why or why not?
5. How would you feel if someone spoke badly about you at your funeral?
6. In your opinion, what is the best way to honor someone's life?
7. Have you ever been to a funeral? What was it like?
8. Why do you think people avoid talking about death?
9. Do you think Frank was brave or disrespectful? Why?
10. Is it better to be honest or kind in sensitive situations?



***GET TOGETHER IN GROUPS AND DISCUSS
THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW.
THEN, SHARE WITH THE CLASS.***



- You have to tell a close friend that a mutual friend of yours has died. You know that they were very close. How would you start the conversation?
- A friend of yours (a rather unreliable one) has just died, owing you a lot of money. After the funeral his sister comes to talk to you. Would you bring it up?
- If the only work available was working with dead bodies - for example as an undertaker or a pathologist - what would you do?
- Do you have similar idioms in your language? Do you know these idiomatic expressions?
He's kicked the bucket. He's popped his clogs. He's gone to meet his maker.



- How do you feel when the subject of death comes into the conversation? Do you think it is a taboo? Why or why not?
- Is it OK to joke about death?
- Have you ever thought or talked about what you would like to happen after you die? Would you prefer burial or cremation? Would you donate your organs? What about your funeral: music, clothes, location, type of ceremony, who would speak, or how you would like to be remembered?
- Some cultures celebrate death rather than mourn it. Do you think this is a better way to deal with loss? Why or why not? How do you deal with loss?



- How do social media and technology change the way people react to death today (e.g., online tributes, posts, digital memorials)?
- Do you think talking more openly about death can help people deal with it better, or does it make things more uncomfortable? Explain.
- What is your opinion on euthanasia? Do you think it is fair or acceptable in cases of terminal illness? Would you consider it for yourself if you were suffering from a serious, incurable disease? Why or why not?
- Imagine your funeral had to be a celebration of your personality. What would it be like? (music, food, decorations, people, vibe)



- If your life were turned into a movie after you died, what kind of movie would it be? Who would play you?
- What song would you definitely want to be played at your funeral? Why?
- What would you like your epitaph to say?
- You have to tell a close friend that a mutual friend of yours has died. You know that they were very close. How would you start the conversation?
- A friend of yours (a rather unreliable one) has just died, owing you a lot of money. After the funeral his sister comes to talk to you. Would you bring it up?



THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

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REFERENCES

MACANDREW, Richard; MARTÍNEZ, Ron. **Taboo and Issues:** Photocopiable Lessons on Controversial Topics. 1. ed. ELT, 2001.

BEST PRICED FUNERALS. 12 Strange Funerals And Traditions. 2 en. 2024. 2:33. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWTgUfp4-1g> Acesso em: 11 abr. 2026.



THANKS!

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