

Year 9 – Is death the end?

Subject content

You will learn that different religions have different views about life after death. You may relate religious viewpoints to non-religious viewpoints.

Key words

Heaven – a place of paradise and reward for those who have followed the religious beliefs and way of life. Believed to be reunited with God

Hell – a place of punishment for those who have committed sins in their lives or non-believers of the religious beliefs.

Purgatory – A Roman Catholic Christian belief of a place between heaven and hell where some people go after death who are destined for heaven, but need further purification or cleansing from sin before entering heaven

Reincarnation – the belief of being reborn in to a different life form. This can be any form of life

Rebirth – The belief that an individual is reborn into another human life

Nirvana - It is the ultimate spiritual goal in Buddhism and marks the release from the cycle of rebirths

Deceased – a recently dead person

Burial – When a body is buried in the ground

Cremation – When a body is incinerated by fire to ashes

Tachrichim – Simple white shroud

Tallit – Prayer shawl

Bardo - an intermediate or transitional, state between death and rebirth

Karma - The Buddhist belief that every action has a consequence in the form of good or bad karma

Key beliefs

- Christian, Muslims and Jews believe there is life after death. Each religion has differing ideas on the topic but all share the general belief that God will judge each individual based on their actions in life, and they will be either rewarded with heaven or punished with hell.
- Hindus and Buddhists have a similar belief about life after death. Both religions believe that an individual will be born again in a different life form. Hindus call this reincarnation and Buddhists call this rebirth. An individual's new life form depends on the actions of their previous life.
- The Humanist view is that there is a lack of evidence to justify belief in a God, a soul or life after death.

Funeral practices:

- Christians have a variety of funeral services. Most commonly, a church service is held to pay respects to individual and reflect the belief that their soul will move on to the afterlife. This will be followed by the burial or cremation of the body.
- Muslims try to bury the deceased as fast as possible and certainly within three days. The deceased's body is washed and wrapped in a white cloth. Muslims prefer not to use a coffin but in some countries, such as the United Kingdom, this is not allowed. Bodies are buried facing Makkah.
- Jews try to bury the deceased as quickly as possible. The body is washed and dressed in tachrichim. Men are also wrapped in their tallit (prayer shawl). The fringes are cut off the tallit to show that he is now free of the religious laws. The body is put in a plain wooden coffin which is sealed. From the time of death until burial, the body is never left alone.
- Hindus keep the body at the home until it is cremated, which is usually within 24 hours after death. The ashes are typically scattered at a sacred body of water or at some other place of importance to the deceased. At the service, referred to as a wake, mourners may dress casually
- In Buddhism after death, relatives wash the body. They then place the body in a coffin surrounded by wreaths and candles. The funeral often takes place a few days after the death to allow the first bardo state to happen. This is the time when the dead person becomes conscious of being dead and the next form of rebirth is decided.