

Burial Alternatives



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you want to be cremated?
2. Have you ever been to a funeral?
3. How do you feel about sea burials?
4. What alternatives to traditional burials are there?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| ___ 1. coffin | a) a vase for the ashes of a dead body |
| ___ 2. urn | b) to follow the rules |
| ___ 3. memorable | c) a long box where a dead body is placed for burial |
| ___ 4. scatter | d) to send into space, to start something new |
| ___ 5. comply | e) what is left of a person or animal after death |
| ___ 6. avid | f) to send or go in different directions |
| ___ 7. cremated | g) to give money or things to support a good cause |
| ___ 8. remains | h) to wrap in cloth for preservation |
| ___ 9. launch | i) showing interest or enthusiasm |
| ___ 10. mummify | j) burned and reduced to ashes |
| ___ 11. donate | k) leaving a person with a strong memory |

Reading

BURIAL ALTERNATIVES

What will be done with your remains?

1. Planning ahead for one's own burial typically involves two main choices. Do I wish to be buried in a **coffin** or in an **urn**? If you haven't chosen your gravesite, there are plenty of alternatives for **memorable** burials.
2. Some people want to be buried at sea. **Scattering** ashes into a local ocean or lake is common. Sometimes whole bodies are lowered into the sea. In 2011, Osama bin Laden was reportedly buried at sea within hours of being killed by US forces. Officials said his body had to be buried within 24 hours in order to **comply** with Islamic tradition. Was a sea grave the only safe option for the world's most wanted man? John F. Kennedy Jr. had a sea burial after his plane crashed. He was an **avid** swimmer and sailor, and the water burial brought closure to those who loved him.
3. Do you know that you could also be buried in space? Pay the big bucks and *Celestis* will launch your **cremated remains** into earth's orbit or deep space. The cremated remains of Star Trek creator Gene Roddenbury were **launched** into space in 1997.
4. Maybe your relatives would rather climb to the top of a mountaintop and hang your coffin off a cliff. This was the tradition of the ancient Bo people in southern China.
5. It is more likely your loved ones will search for a memorable alternative on the Internet. They might discover how to turn your precious ashes into a gem or a vinyl record. Some people plan for environmentally friendly burials, such as coffins made from recycled paper. You can also be frozen in liquid nitrogen and turned to powder.
6. There are also those who choose a safe alternative. They pay to have their bodies **mummified** just in case scientists discover how to wake humans from the dead. Speaking of science, have you considered **donating** your body to research? You're already dead, so why not save a life?

"When I die, bury me on the golf course so my husband will visit."

—Author unknown

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. How did the sea burials of Osama bin Laden and John F. Kennedy Jr. differ?
2. What is the tone of the reading passage?
3. Why does the reading mention Star Trek?
4. Why are some people paying big bucks to have their bodies preserved?
5. How does the reading conclude?

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Which one word from the vocabulary list will fit into all three blanks?
You may need to change the original word form.

1. a) We _____ my mother's ashes on my birthday.
b) The thieves _____ our belongings all over the house.
c) I'm feeling _____ today. I need to organize my life.
2. a) Will you be _____ your new website this month?
b) The rocket will be _____ at 2:00 pm sharp.
c) I'm _____ a line of environmentally friendly cosmetics.
3. a) His reasoning for quitting _____ to be understood.
b) We buried her _____ in the garden.
c) The only task that _____ is unpacking the good dishes.

B. Matching

Can you connect the words and phrases?

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------|-------------------|
| _____ | 1. velvet-lined | a) the remains |
| _____ | 2. memorable | b) golfer |
| _____ | 3. scatter | c) ceremony |
| _____ | 4. comply | d) into space |
| _____ | 5. avid | e) urn |
| _____ | 6. launch | f) your organs |
| _____ | 7. mummify | g) with the rules |
| _____ | 8. donate | h) coffin |
| _____ | 9. vase-like | i) by wrapping |

C. Word Stress

The following sentence has different meanings depending on where you place the word stress. Work together in pairs or as a class to discuss the different meanings.

1. Was a **sea grave** the only safe option for the world's most wanted man?
2. **Was** a sea grave the only safe option for the world's most wanted man?
3. Was a sea grave the only safe option for the world's most wanted **man**?

Discussion

1. Do you feel comfortable talking about death and funerals?
Have you talked about burial options with your loved ones?
2. What happens when a widow or widower gets remarried?
Should his or her remains be buried with the first spouse?
3. If you could choose any location for your
“final resting place,” where would it be and why?
4. Why do you think US officials buried Osama bin Laden at sea?

Optional Activity

Work with a partner. Write a dialogue between a parent and his/her adult child. The parent will explain to the child his/her wishes for a final resting place. The child will disagree.

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

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6. There are also those who choose a safe alternative. They pay to have their bodies _____ just in case scientists discover how to wake humans from the dead. Speaking of science, have you considered _____ your body to research? You're already dead, so why not save a life?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about and discuss burial options. This lesson includes optional video and role-play tasks.

LEVEL: Int – High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, burial, burial alternatives, death, dying, grave

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Have students compare the words *memorable*, *memorial*, and *memorandum*.

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. k | 5. b | 7. j | 9. d | 11. g |
| 2. a | 4. f | 6. i | 8. e | 10. h | |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 5. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

- Osama Bin Laden had a sea burial based on necessity (according to the US officials) and John F. Kennedy Jr. had a sea burial because he loved the water.
- The tone of the reading passage is casual. Even though “death” is a serious topic, the author attempts to keep the passage lighthearted.
- The reading mentions Star Trek because the creator of this TV series wanted his remains launched into space.
- Some people are paying big bucks to have their bodies preserved in case science ever allows us to wake up from the dead.
- The reading concludes with a question to ponder. Why not save a life when you die?

Vocabulary Review

A. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. scattered | 2. launching | 3. remains |
|--------------|--------------|------------|

B. MATCHING

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. h | 3. a | 5. b | 7. i | 9. e |
| 2. c | 4. g | 6. d | 8. f | |

C. WORD STRESS

- Or were there other types of burials they could have used in order to comply with the tradition?
- Suggests that the speaker or writer has doubt in a previously mentioned claim or statement.
- Could be used if there had been a previous discussion about the world’s most wanted *woman*.

Are there any other possible meanings based on other words taking on the nuclear stress? Try stressing the word “only” or “safe.”

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Discussion

Answers will vary.

Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Optional Activity

Place students in pairs (or small groups) and have them complete the activity. Ask students to perform their role-plays for the class.

Listening

1. coffin, urn, memorable
2. scattering, comply, avid
3. cremated, launched
4. tradition
5. alternative, environmentally
6. mummified, donating