

# What happens when we die? (Part 1)

## Religion and Worldviews | Years 5 & 6 | Spring Term 2025-26

### Theology

Many Christian, Jewish and Muslim people believe every person has a soul which is a gift from God.

Humanists do not believe in a soul and consider there to be one life: when people die, they are remembered for the things they did but nothing happens to them.

Some Jewish people believe in Gehinnom, where a soul will spend time being purified after a person dies.

Many Muslim people believe in a heaven-like place called Jannah, where they believe the soul will go after judgement. The Qur'an describes this as a paradise with flowing rivers and plentiful fruit and shade. There is also a place called Jahannam where some souls will go to be purified.

### Social Sciences

Dia de los Muertos is a Mexican celebration of the dead where many people believe souls return to Earth to visit every year. This can be a comforting time full of food and festivities.

*Some ideas about death have evolved over time due to traditions and cultural customs. Not all ideas are found in religious texts.*

Yom Kippur is considered by many to be the holiest day of the Jewish year; it is a time when many Jewish people seek out forgiveness for the year ahead.

### Philosophy

Many people believe in atoning for their sins; they want to make amends for the wrongdoings they have done in their life.



Some people do this to be forgiven by God whereas others do this to lead a good life for themselves and others.



*For some people, funerals are a time to say goodbye and reflect on memories. For others, it can be a time to prepare the person for their life after death. Some people take comfort in the belief that their souls will meet again one day.*

### Vocabulary

**Abrahamic:** religious groups (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) who believe God made the first covenant with Abraham.

**Portrayal:** how a person, character, event or concept is represented or described.

**Atonement:** making amends or seeking forgiveness for wrongdoings or sins.

**Purgatory:** a place of waiting where souls are believed to be purified after death.

**Interpretation:** an explanation or understanding of what something means.

**Reconciliation:** Restoring friendly relations or making peace after a disagreement.

**Jannah:** the concept of paradise or heaven in the Muslim worldview.

**Soul:** what some people believe to be the emotional, non-physical part of being human.



**Olam Ha-Ba:** a Jewish word referring to the world to come or life after death.

**Yom Kippur:** the Jewish Day of Atonement; a holy day of prayer and fasting.

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**Key Learning: To interpret different sources of wisdom and beliefs about what happens when people die.**

-  **1 Why do some people believe in a soul?**  
Investigate how the soul can affect people's beliefs about the afterlife. Recognise the significance of the soul in people's beliefs about the afterlife and its role in Abrahamic worldviews, identifying key vocabulary related to the afterlife. Read scripture to find out about people's beliefs about what happens when we die and discuss various ideas about the afterlife, including religious and non-religious views.
- 2 How do some people make up for bad deeds?**  
Explore some Jewish beliefs about death through the concept of purgatory, discussing the significance of the Jewish Yizkor prayer. Make links between Jewish ideas about purgatory and actions in life. Consider what purgatory means to different people and create artwork to express personal interpretations.
- 3 If there is a Heaven, what might it be like?**  
Describe the concept of Jannah (Heaven) and explore descriptions of this in the Qur'an to understand some Muslim ideas about heaven. Sequence the events of a soul's journey from death to the eternal afterlife as believed by some Muslim people. Make links between some Muslim beliefs about life after death and the 99 names of Allah. Create own artistic interpretation of Jannah based on readings from the Qur'an (Muslim holy book).
- 4 What is the purpose of a funeral?**  
Consider how funerals can both differ and share similarities across different worldviews. Explain what funerals can mean in different worldviews and identify the different parts of a funeral from these worldviews. Discuss the significance of certain funeral rituals and customs. Reflect upon and discuss own perceptions and expectations of funerals.
-  **5 How do some people seek forgiveness in their lives?**  
Explore the role of forgiveness for some people in different worldviews. Reflect on the importance of atonement in life and in preparation for the afterlife. Discuss why some people from different worldviews may seek forgiveness. Reflect on events and decisions in our own lives and consider our personal efforts to make things right.
- 6 How do some people remember those who have died?**  
Investigate ways people remember the dead in different cultures. Recognise the significance of Dia de los Muertos for some Catholic people, identifying the religious and cultural origins of this day. Compare and contrast Dia de los Muertos with other remembrance practices, reflecting on how different remembrance practices can provide comfort and support during times of mourning.