Precious Places

Topic Focus
Caring for our environment, being an active citizen and beliefs about death

Overview
The activities in this topic develop children’s appreciation of what makes a burial ground so special, exploring its atmosphere, their feelings towards it and what burial grounds mean to the local community. Children will investigate the ways in which people use burial grounds, how they are cared for as a unique habitat and how they can get involved. The activities also provide children with an opportunity to reflect upon different attitudes towards death and how life is celebrated and remembered.

The activities are: Something Special, Unique Uses, People Power, Making Sense of Life and Death.

Curriculum Links
This topic helps develop children’s knowledge, skills and understanding in English, PSHE & Citizenship and RE.

EYFS
Personal, social and emotional development
Self-confidence and self-awareness
Managing feelings and behaviour
Making relationships

EYFS, KS1 & KS2

Key Skills
Reflecting
Discussing
Empathising
Questioning
Problem Solving
Responding

Key Words
Manage
Conservation
Volunteer
Celebrate

John Muir Award
Discover
Explore
Conserve
Share

Try these activities if you are working towards any of the following badges and challenges:

Rainbows - Look and Learn
Beavers - Creative Challenge Award, Explore Activity, Faith Activity, Global Challenge
Brownies - Culture, Seasons, Wildlife Explorer
Cubs - Community Challenge, Global Conservation Activity
Guides - Community Action, Discovering Faith, Challenge 1
Scouts: Heritage Activity, My Faith Activity, World Faiths Activity, Environment Partnership Award, Community Challenge Award
Making Sense of Life and Death

This activity introduces children to the idea that burial grounds and in particular headstones and memorials contain information about the life of people who lived in their community. They also enable children to reflect upon other people’s beliefs about what happens after death and their own feelings about it.

Learning Outcomes

Children will:
- Consider how they and others feel when a person close to them dies
- Explore different viewpoints about death and life after death
- Investigate the variety of ways in which experiences of death and experiences in life are expressed

Resources

Drawing materials - e.g. crayons, pencils, colour pencils, pastels, paper and sketchbooks, camera.

Making Sense of Life and Death

Signs and Symbols Scavenger Hunt

Key Questions

Why/how do we celebrate life when somebody has died?
What do different people believe happens after a person has died?

Introduction

In the burial ground we are surrounded by words and symbols that represent people’s beliefs about what will happen after a person dies. Look at several examples such as: now at rest, safe in God’s keeping, RIP, departed this life.

Walk around the burial ground and collect more inscriptions and symbols that describe what happens after death. Use one side of the making sense of life and death sheet. Children could collect them by copying down the words, sketching, taking photos or even doing careful rubbings. Remember to look at seats, gates, windows, furnishings, trees and gardens. Many things in and around the burial ground may be in memory of someone. You can use the signs and symbols scavenger hunt to get started. Print double sided to have the meanings of the symbols on the back.

Activity Ideas

We are also surrounded by words and symbols that celebrate and honour the lives of the people buried here. Inscriptions that celebrate what they did when they were alive and how people felt about them. We are going to look again – can you search for words and symbols that celebrate life? Show children an example; trusted friend, in loving memory, beloved husband.

Again children could collect them by copying them down or sketching them using the other side of the making sense of life and death sheet. You can also take photographs, tick them off from the signs and symbols scavenger hunt or make carefully rubbings.

Plenary

Discuss what the words and symbols reveal about attitudes to life and death. What do the children think?

Back at School

- Different religions have different answers to the question ‘What happens after someone has died?’ Investigate the views of different religions.

EYFS – Copy from headstones or take photos or careful rubbings – collect the alphabet sounds, whole words and names from the headstones.

Learning Outcomes

Children will:
- Consider how they and others feel when a person close to them dies
- Explore different viewpoints about death and life after death
- Investigate the variety of ways in which experiences of death and experiences in life are expressed
Making Sense of Life and Death

How are they different?

Tell your partner what you have found out
Signs and Symbols Scavenger Hunt

Star of David  
Lamb  
Ship  
Crescent and star  
Dove  
Book or scroll  
Cross  
Hands  
Urn  
Ivy  
tools of the trade  
Wreath  
Flowers  
Angel  
ISH  
Oak leaves or tree
**Signs and Symbols Scavenger Hunt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crescent and star</strong></td>
<td>This is a symbol of Islam as is the name of god or the greatest name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ship</strong></td>
<td>A ship or a boat could mark the grave of a sailor, it is also a symbol for taking a journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lamb</strong></td>
<td>Jesus as the lamb of God, also a symbol of gentleness and innocence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Star of David or 6 Pointed Star</strong></td>
<td>This is a symbol of Judaism or a Masonic symbol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hands</strong></td>
<td>Hands clasped means a close bond like a marriage. Hands pointing down is thought to mean a sudden death and pointing up means heaven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross</strong></td>
<td>You may find different types of cross but they all symbolise a strong Christian faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book or scroll</strong></td>
<td>This could symbolise faith or a scholar. The book may be a bible symbolising a religious person or a prayer. A scroll is a symbol of life and time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dove</strong></td>
<td>This is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and of the release of the soul after death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wreath</strong></td>
<td>This is a symbol of victory over death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tools of the Trade</strong></td>
<td>You may find a symbol that shows a job or hobby. An anvil or hammer could be the symbol of a blacksmith. A violin could be a symbol for a musician and miner's lamp a miner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ivy</strong></td>
<td>Ivy has many meanings including memory, immortality, friendship, faithfulness, undying affection and eternal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urn</strong></td>
<td>This is a Greek symbol of mourning, symbolising sadness. An urn was originally used to put the ashes of the dead in ancient times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oak leaves or tree</strong></td>
<td>The oak tree has many meanings including hospitality, stability, strength, honour, eternity, endurance and liberty. It is believed to have been the tree from which Jesus Christ's cross was made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISH</strong></td>
<td>This is Latin for Jesus Hominum Salvator which means Jesus the Saviour of Man. IHS are also the first 3 letters of the Greek word for Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angel</strong></td>
<td>Angels are the agents of God, often pointing towards heaven. They could symbolise the guardians of the dead and spirituality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flowers</strong></td>
<td>They are often found on gravestones and mean many different things including love, beauty and hope. The lily is an ancient Greek symbol of motherhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>