

## 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?

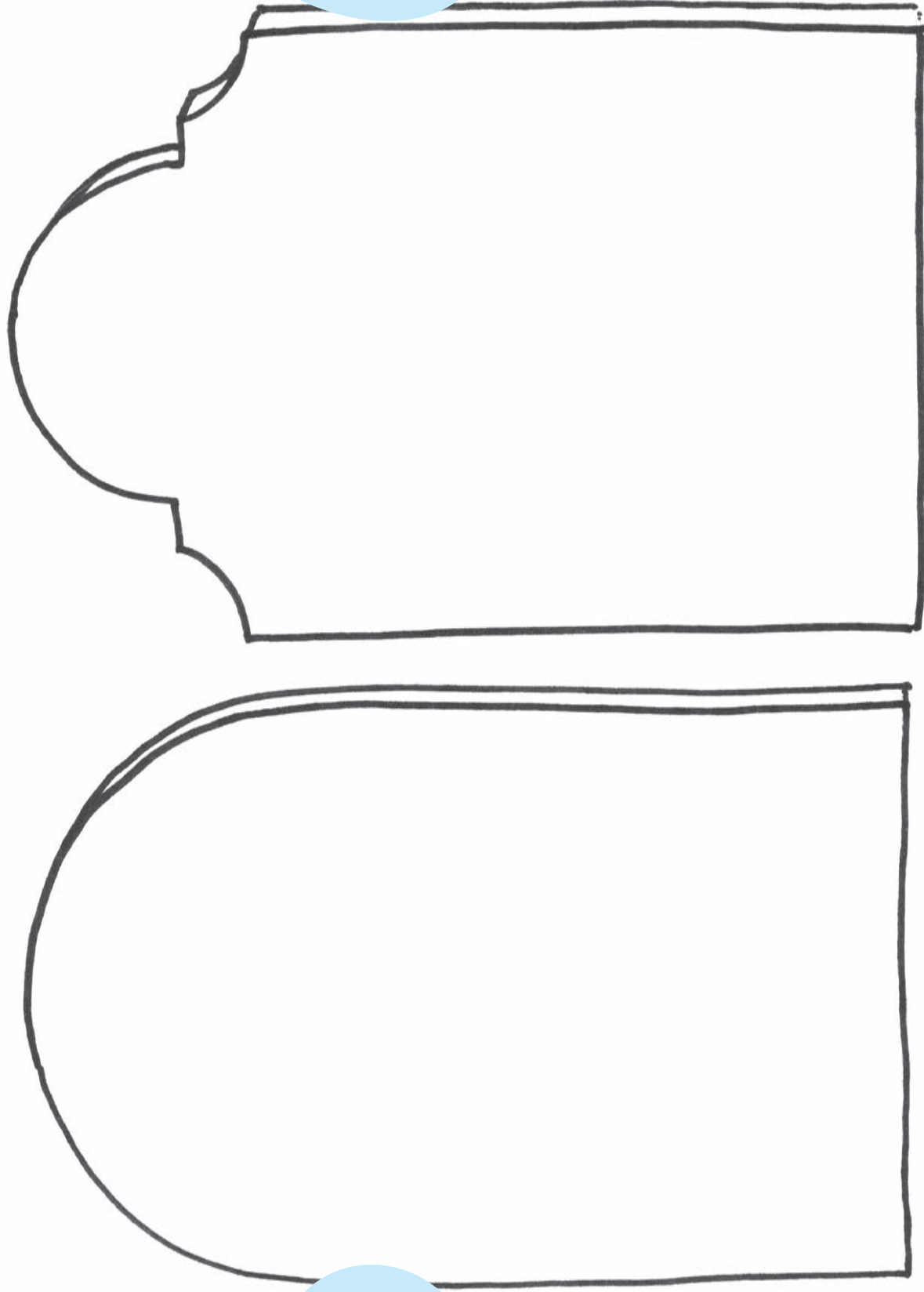
### Back at School

- 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.



# 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



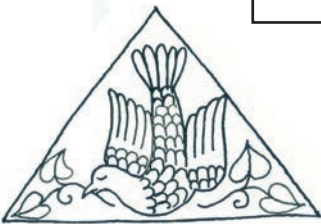
Lamb



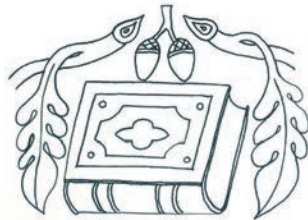
Ship



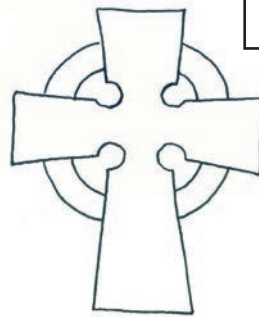
Crescent and star



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

## **Crescent and star**

This is a symbol of Islam as is the name of god or the greatest name

## **Ship**

A ship or a boat could mark the grave of a sailor, it is also a symbol for taking a journey.

## **Lamb**

Jesus as the lamb of God, also a symbol of gentleness and innocence

## **Star of David or 6 Pointed Star**

This is a symbol of Judaism or a Masonic symbol

## **Hands**

Hands clasped means a close bond like a marriage. Hands pointing down is thought to mean a sudden death and pointing up means heaven.

## **Cross**

You may find different types of cross but they all symbolise a strong Christian faith.

## **Book or scroll**

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.

## **Dove**

This is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and of the release of the soul after death

## **Wreath**

This is a symbol of victory over death

## **Tools of the Trade**

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.

## **Ivy**

Ivy has many meanings including memory, immortality, friendship, faithfulness, undying affection and eternal life.

## **Urn**

This is a Greek symbol of mourning, symbolising sadness. An urn was originally used to put the ashes of the dead in ancient times.

## **Oak leaves or tree**

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.

## **ISH**

This is Latin for *Iesus Hominum Salvator* which means Jesus the Saviour of Man. IHS are also the first 3 letters of the Greek word for Jesus.

## **Angel**

Angels are the agents of God, often pointing towards heaven. They could symbolise the guardians of the dead and spirituality.

## **Flowers**

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.

# Sketch Your Own Symbols

