Life After Death

Teacher's Key | Level B2 | EnglishBridges.com

Sections follow the student handout. Delete a section here when you delete it from the handout. The handout uses the short (quick) version of the reading.

Vocabulary: Fill in the Blank

1. grapple with
2. destination
3. stress
4. transition
5. liberation
6. cremated
7. permanent
8. ancestors
9. memorial
10. rituals
11. consciousness
12. bleak
13. legacy
14. blurred / blurry

Word Partners

Part A. 1 h 2 g 3 a 4 b 5 c 6 d 7 e 8 f

Phrases: grapple with a difficult question; a smooth transition; a permanent job; honor your ancestors; a memorial service; a bleak future; leave a lasting legacy; lose consciousness.

Part B. 1 liberating 2 permanently 3 conscious 4 ancestral 5 transitional 6 cremation

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1. *What three scenes does the writer describe at the start?*
Elderly Hindus spending their final days beside the Ganges in Varanasi, Mexican families building altars with candles and flowers, and a humanist funeral with music and stories but no prayers.

2. *What do Christians traditionally believe happens after death?*
They traditionally believe that the dead will be raised and judged by God, and that heaven or hell is their final destination.

3. *In Islam, what happens on the Day of Judgment?*
Each person's good and bad deeds are weighed. Until that day, the soul waits.

4. *What does the reading say about Judaism and life after death?*
It speaks of a world to come, but it has no single official picture, and many rabbis stress that how you live now matters most.

5. *What is the final goal for Hindus, and why is Varanasi important?*
The goal is liberation (moksha) from the cycle of rebirth. Many Hindus believe that dying in Varanasi and being cremated beside the Ganges frees the soul.

6. *How is the Buddhist idea of rebirth different from the Hindu idea?*
Buddhists also speak of rebirth, but they teach that there is no permanent self.

7. *Give two examples of how families honor the dead as ancestors.*
Any two: Japanese families hold a memorial service 49 days after a death; during Qingming, people burn paper money, which is believed to reach the dead; in Mexico, the souls of the dead are thought to come home for a few days each year.

8. *How do many people with no religion see death, and what did Epicurus argue?*
Many see death as the end of consciousness. Epicurus argued that death should not frighten us, because we will not be there to experience it.

9. *Why do you think so many cultures have rituals for the dead? Give two reasons.*
   Open answer. Strong answers might mention that rituals comfort the living, help families share their grief, keep the memory of the dead alive, or give people something to do at a difficult time.
10. *True, False, or Not Given: "Judaism has one official teaching about what happens after death." Explain your answer using the reading.*
    False. The reading says Judaism has no single official picture of life after death.
11. *Yes, No, or Not Given: "The writer believes that a survey can show which answer about death is right." Explain your answer using the reading.*
    No. The writer says that no survey can tell us which answer is right.
12. *Author's purpose: Why does the writer mention Epicurus? Is it (a) to give a non-religious argument that death should not be feared, (b) to prove that there is life after death, or (c) to describe an ancient Greek funeral?*
    (a) To give a non-religious argument that death should not be feared.

True or False

1. **T.** The reading says they together make up more than half.
2. **F.** The soul waits in barzakh until the Day of Judgment.
3. **F.** The goal is moksha, liberation from the cycle of rebirth.
4. **T.** The reading says Buddhists teach there is no permanent self.
5. **T.** This is when, in traditional belief, the next life is decided.
6. **T.** Paper money is believed to reach the dead in the next world.
7. **F.** They make up roughly a quarter.
8. **F.** He argued that death should not frighten us.
9. **F.** It was 85 percent in Indonesia and 38 percent in Sweden.
10. **T.** The reading says nearly two-thirds of the religiously unaffiliated in Peru said this.

Language Focus: Talking About Beliefs: Believe In, Believe That, and Be Believed To

Model answers. Accept any answer that uses the form correctly and makes sense.

1. When I was a child, I believed in ghosts and was afraid of the dark.
2. One thing I strongly believe in is giving people a second chance.
3. Many people in my country believe that drinking cold water after a meal is bad for you.
4. I used to believe that adults always knew the right answer.
5. In many places, certain foods are believed to bring good luck at New Year.
6. Yes, I believed in fairies and left them small gifts in the garden.
7. Many people believe that we use only 10 percent of our brains, but that is not true.
8. Four-leaf clovers are believed to bring good luck.
9. Dolphins are thought to be among the smartest animals, and I agree.
10. I believe that a good friend is honest with you, even when it is hard.

Accept believe that with or without that. In Part B, accept be thought to or be said to for be believed to.

Notes on the Evidence

Survey figures (paragraph 6): Pew Research Center, "Beliefs about the afterlife" and "Believing in spirits and life after death is common around the world" (both May 6, 2025), and "Many religious nones around the world hold spiritual beliefs" (September 4, 2025). Fieldwork 2023 to 2024; more than 50,000 adults. Pew pages variously refer to 35 or 36 countries (some questions were not asked everywhere), so the reading says "more than 30 countries". Life after death (definitely or probably): Indonesia 85 percent (highest), Sweden 38 percent (lowest), India 43 percent. Reincarnation in India: 48 percent.

Unaffiliated adults in Peru: 65 percent ("nearly two-thirds"); the range for nones across 22 countries was 19 percent (Hungary) to 65 percent (Peru). The reading's explanation for the India result (that rebirth may not count as "life after death" for many respondents) is the writer's suggestion and is labeled as untested; Pew does not offer it.

World population shares: Pew Research Center, "How the Global Religious Landscape Changed From 2010 to 2020" (June 9, 2025). For 2020: Christians 28.8 percent (about 2.3 billion), Muslims 25.6 percent, religiously unaffiliated 24.2 percent (about 1.9 billion, "roughly a quarter"), Hindus 14.9 percent, Buddhists 4.1 percent. Christians and Muslims together: about 54 percent ("more than half"). The unaffiliated are not all atheists; the reading says "many atheists and humanists".

Religious teachings are summarized at a general level and vary within each tradition. Christianity: resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell (purgatory, mainly Catholic, was cut for length). Islam: barzakh, the Day of Judgment, deeds weighed, Jannah and Jahannam (RE:Online, "What are Islamic beliefs about life after death?"). Judaism: "world to come" (Olam Ha-Ba) and resurrection, never formally systematized, with an emphasis on how one lives (ReformJudaism.org). Hinduism and Buddhism: samsara, karma, moksha, anatta, nirvana; the flame-and-candle image is a traditional Buddhist comparison. Humanist view: Humanists UK.

Practices: Varanasi hospices and the belief that dying and cremation there free the soul from rebirth (AFP via Gulf Today, September 4, 2024). Japanese 49th-day service (shijuukunichi), when the next rebirth is traditionally believed to be decided (Japanese Buddhist dictionary entry, tkgje.jp). Qingming: April 4 to 6; food offerings and burning of joss paper and paper replicas believed to serve the dead (Wikipedia). Day of the Dead: late October to early November; souls believed to return, guided by petals and candles; UNESCO list since 2008. Marigolds are a well-known Day of the Dead flower but are not named on the UNESCO page. Epicurus lived from about 341 to 270 BCE ("more than 2,000 years ago").