

Death: Life's Greatest Mystery



Exhibition Overview

Consider your own “big questions” about death as you explore natural and cultural responses to life’s inevitable conclusion.

Through artifacts, specimens, and immersive media experiences, learn how life and death are part of a universal, continuous, and cyclical process. Experience connections between life and death, growth and decay in an immersive, ever-changing multimedia experience at the heart of the exhibition.



What is death?

If a flatworm is cut in half and both parts become new worms, did it ever die? If a person’s brain stops functioning but their other organs are still working, are they dead? Challenge what you “know” about death.



What will happen to my body?

Investigate the natural processes and human interventions that transform bodies after death. See a fossil slab that reveals how remains can be preserved over millions of years. Consider a recreated Chancay burial chamber from ancient Peru, and discover the wide range of treatments people today choose for their remains, from green burials to gemstones made from cremains.

What happens to the spirit after death?

Questions about the afterlife have been explored by nearly every culture and religion. View depictions of ghosts and spirits from around the world, inspect miniature objects and figures that were meant for use in the afterlife, and experience a colorful and intricate presentation of a Chinese drama, “The Courts of Hell.”

Do I have to die?

Do you want to live forever? Learn how people in China and ancient Rome have thought about immortality, and witness how animals prolong their lifespans with wild adaptations—like a lungfish entering suspended animation or a gecko regrowing its tail. An interactive map reveals the inequalities of our society, and that where you live is often the best indicator of how long you’ll live.



How will my death affect others?

Death—and memories of the dead—shape the lives of the living. Encounter the surprising variety of animals that grieve, including elephants and gorillas. Examine a replication of one of the earliest deliberate human burials, and understand how rituals help people cope with loss, individually and collectively. Take in the sights of a typical Day of the Dead celebration to welcome the return of those who have died, inviting loved ones back into the world of the living.

Exhibition Specifications

Size

7,500 ft² (700 m²)

Ceiling height

12 ft (3.66 m)

Security

Exhibition requires a limited-access, lockable space with security staff during public hours

Shipping

One-way, inbound, paid by host venue

Language

All text in English and Spanish; language may be converted by host venues

Rental fee

Please inquire

Features

- 100 objects and specimens from the Field Museum's Anthropology, Zoology, Geology, and Botany collections
- 5 replications, including reconstructions of ancient burials and a whale fall diorama
- 7 media and digital interactive elements
- Exhibition does not contain human remains

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