

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.

For many living beings on this planet, death is the greatest mystery of them all. The ways we experience it, celebrate life, and wonder about what’s next are part of what makes us human—yet the subject of death is often pushed aside. Through artifacts, specimens, interactives, and immersive media experiences, discover amazing animal adaptations for survival and learn how various cultures commemorate life. Reflect on death as part of the cycle of life, and leave with a profound new understanding of life’s most universal experience.



What is death?

What will happen to my body?

What will happen to my spirit?

Do I have to die?

How will my death affect others?

Before I die I want to...

Perspectives on

- Afterlife
- Ancestors
- Animal grief
- Burial practices
- Celebration
- Decay
- Ecosystems
- Embalming
- Faith
- Family
- Fossilization
- Immortality
- Lifespan
- Memorials
- Mummification
- Reincarnation
- Sacrifice
- Shrines
- Spirits
- Survival



Exhibition Views | Death: Life's Greatest Mystery



Ecosystems

A whale's carcass at the bottom of the ocean can feed many other species. This full-scale replication of a minke whale is 11 x 3 x 3 ft.



Green burial

A special pod is designed to nourish a tree while decomposing a body.



Lifespans

Tardigrades can survive dehydration, starvation, and other life-threatening scenarios. Our replication is 4,000x actual size!



Memorials

Ofrendas invite loved ones back into the world of the living. Artist Norma Rios-Sierra dedicated this one to her family from Guanajuato, Mexico. Size: 9 x 10 x 9 ft.



Take action

Artist Candy Chang's participatory chalkboard installation asks visitors to fill in their "bucket list" wishes for before and after death.

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

Languages

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, and Geology collections
- 5 replications, including a whale fall diorama and ancient burial reconstructions
- 6 media and digital interactive elements
- Projectors, speakers, electronics, cabling, and AV technical support
- Companion book available for sale: *Beyond Death: Beliefs, Practice, and Material Expression* (paperback, 160 pages, 66 images)
- Exhibition does not contain human remains



Contact

travelingexh@fieldmuseum.org

312.665.7119

www.fieldmuseum.org/traveling-exhibitions