

Where do people go when they die?



Annie has seen many bugs and many animals that are dead. When something that was alive is dead, it is not growing, moving, eating, drinking or breathing.

When a bug is dead, sometimes we put the body of the bug in the garbage. Sometimes when animals get hit by cars, their bodies are lying in the street or next to the street.

When people die, sometimes the ambulance takes them to a special hospital to find out why they died. That is what happened with Mary. The ambulance came and took her body away. A special kind of doctor told Richard what happened that made Mary die.

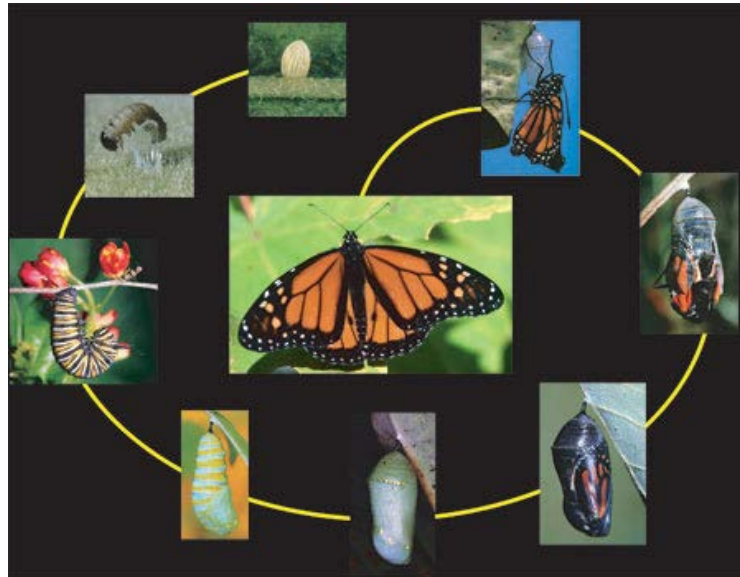
Everything that is alive is born and everything that is born will die some day. This is true for plants, animals and people. Most of the time, people live for many, many years longer than plants or animals. Some trees are hundreds of years old, and some animals, like some turtles and some parrots, live many, many years too.

Sometimes people die when they are very young or when they are middle old or very old. If babies or children or middle old people die, it is usually because there has been an accident, or because they were very, very sick. When people are very, very old, they die because that is natural. It is ok. It is supposed to happen some day to everybody.

When Mary died, it was not a gunshot, not a car accident, and not a fire. Mary's heart was very, very sick. Mary's heart stopped working, and she died. Her spirit went out of her body. The body got very still. No more breathing, or eating, or sleeping, or moving.

Our spirit is something that is always alive, forever. We cannot see our spirits while we are alive. We can feel our spirit. It is the part of us that says, "I am."

The spirit goes out of the body like a butterfly coming out of its cocoon and flying away. We cannot see that kind of butterfly with our eyes.



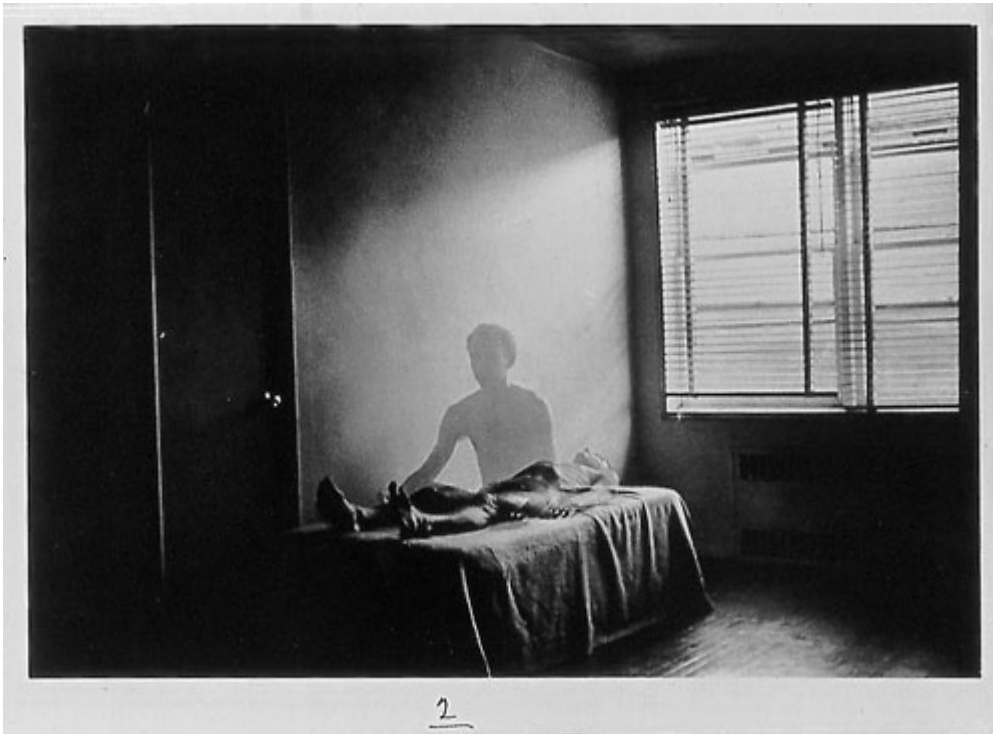
The spirit goes into the light that is always shining everywhere. We cannot always see the light. Sometimes it is night where we live in Florida. But in another part of the world, the light is shining. As the world turns around each day, we see the sun, then we can't see the sun. When we see the sun we call it daytime. When we can't see the sun we call it night time. But the sun's light is always shining just the same. When people die their spirits become part of that light always around us.

We pray for Mary's spirit to be happy, and to be free – we do not want her spirit to be sad or frustrated.

Can the body feel anything after the person dies? No. When someone dies, and the spirit leaves the body, there is no more feeling in the body. There is no hurt, no pain, no sadness. The body is not the person any more. That is why we say the person is dead. When we see animals that are dead next to the road, the spirit is all gone from the animal's body. The life is not in that body any more. The life has gone into all of life in the light all around us. We can't see the animal's life.

We can't see life or spirit. We can only see the things that life makes happen, like moving, breathing and growing.

The picture on the next page can help us understand that the spirit leaves the body at death. We can't see the spirit like this, but maybe this is what it feels like to the spirit when it is leaving the body.



Where does the body go after a person dies?

Sometimes the ambulance takes the body to a special hospital so a doctor can find out why the person died. Mary's body went to that kind of hospital. That is how we know that her heart was very sick. After the special hospital, the body is taken to a funeral home. A funeral home is a special place where bodies are made ready to be buried or to be cremated.

What is being buried? What is being cremated?

Sometimes families have a funeral, and the body is put in a big wooden box called a casket. The casket is put into the ground in a big hole, and then a piece of stone is put on top of that spot with the person's name on it so everyone for many years can go visit that place and remember the person who was alive. That is called being buried.

Some families do not put the person's body in a box in the ground. Sometimes a body is burned. This is called cremation. After the body is cremated, maybe the ashes are buried in the ground, or maybe the ashes go into a jar called an urn and go to the family's house, or maybe the family takes the ashes to a special place and lets the wind carry them away across the special place, like a river or the ocean, or a mountain. The body cannot feel anything when it is burned because the body is dead. The spirit is gone. There is no pain, no hurt.

Mary's body was cremated, and the ashes are in a box. Richard will keep the box at his house.

Mary's spirit is in the sky. We can't see her with our eyes. We can talk to her and tell her we love her. She can't talk back to us in a way we can hear with our ears. We can listen carefully inside our heads and maybe we will hear Mary tell us she loves us, and she knows we will always love her too.