



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

### Conversation Preparation Guides

**Title: Mourning Ceremonies**

**Topic: Life Events**

**Level: Intermediate**

#### Practice on Your Own

Mourning for the dead is an important aspect of social life in many cultures. However, there are significant cultural differences in the rituals that are performed after a person's death. Here you are going to learn about mourning rituals in the country/ies where the language you are learning is spoken.

- Read online about mourning ceremonies in the country/ies where the language is spoken. This will give you some ideas about what vocabulary you will need. Are there different traditions associated with different religions or different parts of the country?
- Now look up words that are used to talk about the rituals performed after a person's death, such as mourning, ritual, burial, funeral, graveyard, church/mosque/synagogue/other places of worship, to die/pass away, to cry, to dance...
- Try to use these terms in some sentences, both in writing and out loud.
  - He is dead./He died.
  - We went to the graveyard./He is buried in the graveyard.
  - People go to the church/mosque/synagogue/... They mourn there. It takes three days.
  - The priest/imam/rabbi/... performs the ceremony. He/she recites the prayers for the dead person.
  - People dress in black./People dress white./...
  - They burn the dead. They bury the ashes...
- Now create a dialogue about a mourning ceremony.
  - **First Person:** How are you?
  - **Second Person:** A friend of mine passed way/is dead/died.
  - **First Person:** I'm sorry. Were you close friends?
  - **Second Person:** We were. Tomorrow is his funeral. It is in the town church...
- Prepare some questions using the target language to ask your conversation partner about mourning ceremonies in the country/ies where the language is spoken.

- Is the mourning ceremony important? Who goes to the ceremony? How long is it? Is it expensive? ...

### **Practice in Conversation Session**

- Show the terms you have listed to your conversation partner to see if they are spelled correctly. Now pronounce them out loud for your conversation partner.
- Read the sentences in which you have used the terms for your conversation partner. Pay attention to your pronunciation and your intonation in reading these sentences. Correct them if you have formed sentences incorrectly.
- Ask your conversation partner the questions that you have prepared. This is a good time to compare and contrast mourning rituals in the U.S. and in the country/ies where the language is spoken.
- Role play the dialogue you have come up with about the mourning ceremony for your friend.