
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Fancy dress funerals

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NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello, I'm Neil and welcome to 6 Minute English, where today we bring you a serious topic and six items of vocabulary.

Rob

And hello, I'm Rob. Now, here's a serious question for you, Neil. Have you thought about what you'd like to happen when you die?

Neil

Interesting way to start the show, Rob... No, I haven't.

Rob

Well, nobody really likes to talk about death, do they?

Neil

Well, it isn't a fun topic. So, can we talk about something else, please?

Rob

Afraid not. Because today's topic is funerals – a **funeral** is a ceremony we hold for a dead person.

Neil

And a **ceremony** is a formal event performed on special occasions – like a wedding or a graduation – or in this case, a funeral.

Rob

OK. Well, let's start with a quiz question. According to a UK survey, how many of us would like our funerals to be more of a party or celebration? Is it...

- a) 5%,
- b) 25% or
- c) 50%?

Neil

Well, I think it's 25%. I hadn't thought about it before – but I'd definitely prefer my funeral to be a celebration. With my favourite music playing – and definitely nobody wearing black...

Rob

Well, strangely enough, a friend of mine went to a funeral recently where the funeral director was dressed as Darth Vader from Star Wars!

Neil

Hmm. That sounds wrong. But I guess people are choosing to move away from the traditional funeral – you know, in church, people dressed in black, all very quiet...

Rob

Darth Vader does wear black, at least! Anyway, let's hear from Shonnie Sullivan here in the UK talking about the fancy dress funeral she and her sister organized for their mother.

INSERT

Shonnie: It was quite unusual as we turned up in fancy dress.

Interviewer: Had your mum left instructions about how she wanted her funeral to be?

Shonnie: Only that we don't cry, and we... to have a party to celebrate her life. Be happy, don't be sad... I was a witch.

Interviewer: How did you look?

Shonnie: Oh, it was just a little black dress and I just had, like, a little fancy witch hat on – the same as my sister. And we had a very close friend of the family come as Beetlejuice – which was absolutely amazing. He really did go all out for that.

Rob

So **fancy dress** - special clothes you wear to an event – to look like a famous person or character from a movie. Another word we use is **costume** – which is a set of clothes you wear to look like somebody else.

Neil

Shonnie and her sister chose a Halloween theme for the funeral and wore witches' costumes – little black dresses with special hats.

Rob

A close family relative dressed as Beetlejuice ... Did he dress as a squashed insect, Neil? I'm confused here!

Neil

No, Rob. He dressed as Beetlejuice, the main character in a popular 1980s movie. Beetlejuice is a ghost who wears crazy clothes, and has scary hair and make up.

Rob

Hmm. I haven't seen the film. But what does Shonnie mean when she says her relative went 'all out' with his costume?

Neil

To go all out means to make a big effort – and this guy's costume involved not only special clothes, but special hair and make up too.

Rob

Like me.

Neil

What do you mean, 'like me'?

Rob

Well, I go all out to get my clothes and hair just right for 6 Minute English.

Neil

Yes, and, well... you look great, Rob. But unfortunately nobody sees us... do they?

Rob

Yes, good point. But it's important to make an effort.

Neil

So have you had any thoughts about the sort of funeral *you* would like to have?

Rob

Oooh... Yes, I like the thought of my friends and family saying their final goodbyes to me on a beach with a beautiful sunset, listening to Stairway to Heaven by Led Zeppelin...

Neil

OK, well, before you get too carried away with ideas for your own funeral, let's have the answer to today's quiz question.

Rob

To get carried away means to get very excited and lose control of your feelings! I never thought I would get excited about my own funeral... But anyway – yes, back to today's question! How many of us would like our funerals to be more of a party or celebration? Is it... a) 5%, b) 25%, or c) 50%?

Neil

And I said 25%.

Rob

No, it's actually 50%. The market research company ICN found that half of us here in the UK would prefer something different to the traditional funeral.

Neil

More than I expected. OK, shall we look back at the words we have learned today?

Rob

Yes. First up – 'funeral' – a ceremony we hold for a dead person. The plural is funerals – "Fancy dress funerals aren't everybody's cup of tea." The adjective is – funereal – notice the stress on the second syllable – "Who chose this funereal music? Can we change it to something more cheerful?"

Neil

'Not my cup of tea' by the way, is something you don't enjoy doing.

Rob

OK – 'ceremony' – a formal event performed on special occasions.

Neil

"I didn't go to my sister's graduation ceremony."

Rob

"In the UK, the opening of Parliament is a ceremonious occasion." Ceremonious is the adjective.

Neil

Number three – 'fancy dress' is special clothing you wear to an event – for example, to look like a famous person or character from a movie.

Rob

"I've been invited to a fancy dress party."

Neil

Who are you going to go as, Rob?

Rob

It's a secret, Neil!

Neil

Number four – 'costume' – a set of clothes you wear to look like somebody else. "Rob is going to go to the fancy-dress party in a Superman costume."

Rob

Good guess. Right. Number five – 'to go all out' means to make a big effort.

Neil

"We went all out this year with our Christmas decorations – with a life-size flashing Santa Claus and sleigh."

Rob

Way to go, Neil! Number six – the phrasal verb 'to get carried away' – means to get very excited and lose control of your feelings!

Neil

"She got carried away and painted the whole house pink."

Rob

That must be Barbie's house...

Neil

Yup – and fancy dress is definitely Barbie's cup of tea! OK, that's all for today. But please remember to check out our Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube pages.

Rob

OK. Bye-bye!

Neil

Goodbye!