

# [George bernard shaw essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/george-bernard-shaw-essay-sample/)

Ashes to Ashes
In an excerpt taken from a letter by George Bernard Shaw, Shaw displays much lighthearted irony through his use of biblical allusions, merry diction, and varying syntax in order to mirror his ironic perception of death. In contrast to the public, death to Shaw does not signal an eternal end, but instead a glorious transition from life to an ethereal world. Throughout the excerpt, his admiration for his mother is also glorified, allowing Shaw’s readers to comprehend the close relations Shaw shared with his mother.

Many perceive death as frightening, fearful of its vast emptiness. However, through Shaw’s cheerful word choice and detail, it becomes apparent that the author views death to be a lovely continuation of life. Shaw states his mother’s coffin “…sprang into flames all over; and my mother became that beautiful fire.” Shaw explains the transformation his mother undergoes, initiating the start of her new beginning. Many allow death to separate them from their deceased loved ones; however, Shaw has a different view point that he chooses to express throughout his passage. “ Mama herself being at the moment leaning over besides me,” this visionary detail infers that although death itself is inevitable, it is unable to affect the relationship shared between Shaw and his mother.

In this excerpt, Shaw repeatedly adds a sense of cheeriness when describing the cremation of his mother, contributing to the passage’s overall irony concerning death. Shaw compares the crematory to “…a roomy kitchen, with a big cement table and two cooks,” and continues on saying that “ Mama would have enjoyed [watching the process] enormously,” expressing that death is not a dreadful event, but instead suggests that it can be enjoyed and brought about in an optimistic light. It is obvious that Shaw’s opinions regarding the cremation process deviate from society’s normal perception of death, and it is readily incorporated in this passage through Shaw’s colorful word choice and detail.

As life and death is often associated with religion, it seems only fitting that Shaw incorporates biblical allusions in his excerpt to help present his ironic insight of death. He starts off the passage with an reference from the Common Book of Prayer, “ earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” only to show that Shaw believes there “ was a little alteration of words to suit the process.” In this case, the “ process” refers to the cycle from which ones born till death, concluding that death is a part of an incessant cycle or the circle of life. Shaw later ends the excerpt with another biblical allusion, “ O grave, where is thy victory?” to defend his claim that death has not won, nor has it defeated him or his relationship with his mother. As Shaw so thoroughly notes, death is not something to be feared, instead admired.

One would normally expect death and anything associated with death to be dreary, dark, and unpleasant; however, Shaw continues to oppose this common misconception with his use of ironic syntax. He defies all usual expectations of death when stating that at his mother’s cremation there was, “ No heat. No noise. No roaring draught. No flame. No fuel.” Shaw even continues on to describing the furnace that was incinerating his mother was, “ cool, clean, and sunny,” not something one would expect to see. Shaw uses concise, short sentences to emphasize that death is the opposite of what society would anticipate. Death is not the end, but merely a beginning, where his mother may flourish in her new transformation.