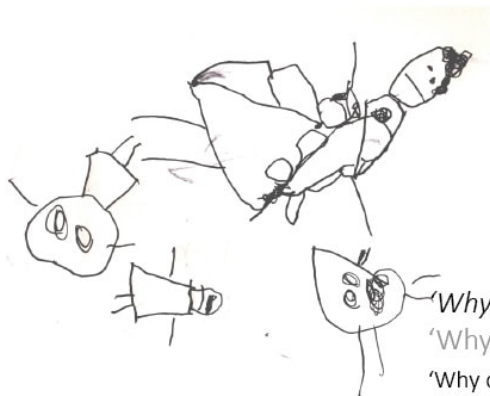


# Exploring life and death →



'Why do we have blood cells?' Lotte (4-10) 'Why do we even have brains?' Sam P (4-9)  
 'Why do you have skeletons in your body?' Flo (4-7) 'How do you die?' Mia O'S (4-3)  
 'Why do we have cheeks and ears and eyes?' Josie (4-5) 'How does our skin cut?' Meg (4-3)  
 'Why do we have eyeballs?' Hanley (4-8) 'How do you dream?' Meryem (4-8)



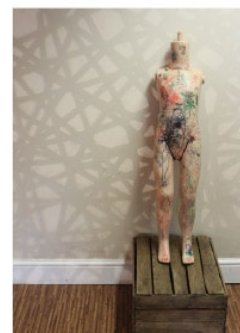
'When you dead you need to have your eyes closed. If you have them open you just asleep.' Josie (4-5)

But I sleep at night with my eyes closed...when you dead your eyes are open.' Idis (4-8)

When we began our nursery-wide *Storying* focus in September 2014, a group of four year old children were deep into an investigation of brains, blood and the body. They were using philosophical discussion, observational drawing and sculpture to explore their ideas, and it was not immediately obvious how stories could play a part. *What kind of stories do bodies and blood tell? Should fiction find its way into a world of 'fact'?* We thought authorship might mean something different for these children. Perhaps they would make their own reference books, recording their research and findings for other children to use, and we began to collect their questions and theories together.

A research visit to Worthing Museum brought a surprise. When the children came across a skeleton in a crypt they imitated its posture, lying on the ground, completely still. In the nursery too we noticed that a group of boys often played a combat game in which they would suddenly drop to the ground and say: 'I'm dead!' before being rescued and standing up again. We began to wonder if this *dramatic role play* might be part of the same enquiry into life, death and the physical body.

We decided to give children more opportunities to 'play dead' with others observing them, photographing their facial expressions and making observational drawings of their bodies. We asked the children: *'What is dead?'* and recorded their responses. We noticed that other games began in which there was sudden illness or emergency, and realised these were a source of factual research as well as drama. And as the year progressed we saw the children pursue both kinds of research, developing a complex language of exploration which combined fact and fiction.



what is dead?

**'You have to be still if you dead'** Jacob (4-1)

'When you're very old you will be dead.' Lucas (4-5)

'Maybe you will go red as red means blood comes out and you be dead without blood' Hanley (4-8)

'If you stay on the ground for a really long million time then you died' Hanley (4-8)

If you be dead it means you will never be alive again' Sam P (4-9)

'You're really dead if you are on the floor' Mia O'S (4-3)

'If you die then you can't move and you can't see your mummy ever again' Lucas (4-5)

'Dead means you go to the soldiers and you go on a soldier aeroplane' Jamie (4-6)

*'The thing about questions is, sometimes they fall out your mind and sometimes they stay still, very still in your brain.'* Amata (4-0)

