

**She Would Have Enjoyed It**  
**by George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)**  
**The Mitre, Oxford**  
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(This question was drawn from Advanced Placement English examination administered in 1981)

The following excerpt is taken from a letter by George Bernard Shaw on the death of his mother. Read the passage carefully.

At the passage "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" there was a little alteration of the words to suit the process. A door opened in the wall; and the violet coffin mysteriously passed out through it and vanished as it closed. People think that the door is the door of the furnace; but it isn't. I went behind the scenes at the end of the service and saw the real thing. People are afraid to see it; but it is wonderful. I found there the violet coffin opposite another door, a real unmistakable furnace door this time; when it lifted there was a plain little chamber of cement and firebrick. No heat, no noise. No roaring draught. No flame. No fuel. It looked cool, clean, sunny. You would have walked in or put your hand in without misgiving. Then the violet coffin moved again and went in, feet first. And behold! The feet burst miraculously into streaming ribbons of garnet coloured lovely flame, smokeless and eager, like pentecostal tongues, and as the whole coffin passed in, it sprang into flame all over; and my mother became that beautiful fire.... The door fell; well, they said that if we wanted to see it all through to the end, we should come back in an hour and a half. I remembered the wasted little figure with the wonderful face, and said "Too long" to myself—but off we went .... When we returned, the end was wildly funny: Mama would have enjoyed it enormously. We looked down through an opening in the floor. There we saw a roomy kitchen, with a big cement table and two cooks busy at it. They had little tongs in their hands, and they were deftly and busily picking nails and scraps of coffin handles out of Mamma's dainty little heap of ashes and samples of bone. Mama herself being at that moment leaning over beside me, shaking with laughter. Then they swept her up into a sieve and shook her out; so that there was a heap of dust and a heap of bone scraps. And Mama said in my ear, "Which of the two heaps do you suppose is me?"... and that merry episode was the end, except for making dust of the bone scraps and scattering them on a flower bed.... O grave, where is thy victory?.... And so goodnight, friends who understand about one's mother.