

THE BOY KING

Imagine being in charge of a whole kingdom at the age of just nine! That's what young Tutankhamun had to do over 3,300 years ago, when his parents died and he became the Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt. Wow!

The Ancient Egyptians believed that a pharaoh was a bit like a living god — so King Tut would have been worshipped by everyone in his kingdom. Pharaohs were responsible for taking care of the gods and communicating with them, so all rulers had to build temples and perform rituals to keep the gods happy.

Pharaoh powers

On top of all these religious duties, King Tut was in charge of the legal system and the army. During his nine-year reign between 1332 BC and 1323 BC, he moved Egypt's capital city, fought several battles and changed the religion. But he probably wouldn't have made these big decisions alone — he had advisors to influence him. The young king also got married before he was ten — to his own half-sister!

The afterlife

King Tut died when he was just 18 and, like all pharaohs, he was mummified (see right) and put into a tomb. The Ancient

Egyptians viewed death as the start of a long journey — which is why their burial chambers were filled with everything they might need for the afterlife and for their hazardous trip through the underworld to get there!

Tomb treasures

As well as his famous gold and blue coffins and priceless treasures such as crowns, thrones and jewels, Tut's tomb contained everyday items like food, clothes, board games and cosmetics. There were also 413 Shabti — little models of servants that would come to life and serve the king in the afterlife!

Murder mystery

Because King Tut died so young, early archaeologists suspected that he may have been murdered — perhaps by his closest advisors. Ay or Horemhab who both became King after him. But in recent years, modern technologies, such as 3D scanning, have shown that Tut was sickly — he had suffered from malaria and a bone disease and had some disfigurements. Experts now think he died from a broken leg that became infected. But we will never really know!



King Tut's tomb was crisscrossed with so many stairs that it took archaeologists 10 years to carefully remove and catalogue it all.

HOW TO MAKE A MUMMY!

Want to make sure a body gets reunited with its spirit in the afterlife? Here's how!

GROSS ALERT!

1 First wash the dead body in wine and Nile water. Make a cut in the side and take out the organs. To get to the brain, shove a hook up the nose and jiggle it about. Then pull out this useless organ* and chuck it away.



2 Clean the liver, lungs, intestines and stomach, then pop them in four special canopic jars whose lids look like the gods that guard them. The heart will need to be put back in the body, though, as it's the centre of intelligence!



3 Use a special Egyptian salt called natron to fill up the cavities and cover up the body. This will get rid of all the moisture. Leave it for about 40 days to dry out completely.

4 Next, scoop out the brain and stuff the body with spices, rags and plants so it doesn't lose its shape.



5 Wrap up the body in fine linen bandages. Don't forget to tuck in some lucky amulets, and then utter spells to activate their magical protective powers. When the wrapping is all done, put the mummy in a coffin. Then put that coffin in a coffin, and that coffin in another one and so on. Then place the whole lot in a tomb.

*They had some funny ideas, those Ancient Egyptians!

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THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS

Tutankhamun's tomb took ages to be discovered because it was buried in a secret rocky land known as the Valley of the Kings. Pharaohs were buried there during the New Kingdom (approx 1550–1080 BC) because they wanted a safe, hidden place where their riches wouldn't be ransacked by tomb raiders. The huge pyramids that had been built as tombs for pharaohs in the Old Kingdom (2650–2150 BC) had made it pretty obvious where all their treasures were stored!

Despite mazes, fake chambers and security guards protecting the tombs in the valley, most were still looted — even King Tut's was partially plundered. But then it stayed hidden for thousands of years, until finally being uncovered in 1922 by English archaeologist Howard Carter.



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Turn over to read about life in Ancient Egypt.