

The Mystery of King Tut

A Reading A-Z Level Z Leveled Reader

Word Count: 2,391



Reading a-z

Visit www.readinga-z.com
for thousands of books and materials.

LEVELED READER • Z

The Mystery of King Tut



Written by David Dreier

www.readinga-z.com

The Mystery of King Tut



King Tut's sarcophagus

Written by David Dreier

www.readinga-z.com

Photo Credits:

Front cover: GNU Free Documentation License; back cover: © Ferdinando Scianna/Magnum Photos; title page: Museum Of Antiquities Basel, Andreas F. Voegelin/AP Images; page 3: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, UK/Bridgeman Art Library; page 4: © Amr Nabil/AP Images; page 6: © M. Spencer Green/AP Images; page 7: © Yuri Khristich/iStock; page 9: © Bettmann/CORBIS; page 10: © CHRISTOPHER KLEIN/National Geographic Images; page 11 (both), 22: © Mary Evans Picture Library; page 12: © Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS; page 13: © The Bridgeman Art Library; page 14, 18: © Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS; page 15: © Nicolas B. Tatro/AP Images; page 16: © Hulton Archive/Getty Images; page 17: © Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images; page 19: The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images; page 20: © Supreme Council for Antiquities/Handout/Reuters/Corbis; page 21: © Ben Curtis/AP Images; page 24: © Farrell Grehan/CORBIS

Front and back cover: The front and back of King Tutankhamun's funeral mask, one of the treasures found in his tomb

Table of Contents: A fragment from a column at Amarna showing Queen Nefertiti, who was probably Tut's stepmother

The Mystery of King Tut
Level Z Leveled Reader
© Learning A-Z, Inc.
Written by David Dreier

All rights reserved.

www.readinga-z.com

Correlation

LEVEL Z	
Fountas & Pinnell	V
Reading Recovery	29
DRA	N/A



Table of Contents

Finding Tut 4

King Tut’s Homeland 5

King Tut’s Family 7

The Boy Pharaoh 11

End of a Dynasty 14

King Tut’s Tomb 16

The Suspects 18

The Body 20

Mystery Solved?..... 22

Glossary..... 23

Finding Tut

In 1922, a British **archaeologist** (AR-kee-OLL-oh-gist) made a fantastic discovery in the country of Egypt. He found the tomb of Tutankhamun (toot-an-KAH-muhn), better known as King Tut. Tut ruled ancient Egypt more than 3,300 years ago, becoming **pharaoh** (FARE-oh) at the age of nine. He ruled less than a decade before dying suddenly at about age 18. Since the opening of Tut’s coffin more than 80 years ago, many have wondered how and why the young king died.



What Tut might have looked like, with his funeral mask in background

Just like detectives, archaeologists try to solve mysteries by looking at the evidence and by asking questions. Where did Tut live? What was his life like? Who were his family and friends? Did he have enemies? Answering questions like these may help solve the ultimate question: Did King Tut die of natural causes—or was the young pharaoh murdered?

King Tut's Homeland

Ancient Egypt was ruled for about 3,000 years by a series of 30 **dynasties** (ruling families). Historians group the first 20 dynasties into historical periods called the Early Dynastic Period, the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

King Tutankhamun was a member of the 18th Dynasty, the first ruling family of the New Kingdom, which began around 1540 BC, almost 200 years before Tut was even born.

In ancient Egypt, religious belief was an important part of life. Egyptians at that time worshiped many different **deities**—gods and goddesses. To fully understand the mystery surrounding King Tut, one must learn the history behind this religious belief.



Two of Egypt's most important gods at the beginning of the New Kingdom were Ra (RAH) and Amun (AH-muhn). Ra was believed to live within the sun. In images, he was often depicted as a falcon. Amun was usually depicted as a man with a tall crown.

During the early part of the New Kingdom, however, some Egyptians began worshiping the sun in a different way. Instead of seeing the sun as Ra's home, they saw the sun as a god itself. They called this new god Aten (AH-tuhn) and depicted him as a golden disk with rays of light reaching toward Earth.

As Aten's power as a god grew, other gods such as Ra and Amun were worshipped less and less. But Egypt was still a land of religious freedom, and to most people, this newcomer, Aten, was just another god among many. He did not pose a threat to their religious beliefs until a young man named Amenhotep (Ah-muhn-HO-*tep*) IV—Tut's father—became pharaoh.



Amenhotep IV

Gods on the Job

Out of hundreds of deities, people usually devoted themselves to a small group of major and minor gods and goddesses. One reason Egyptians worshiped particular deities was to get help with their careers.

Thoth, god of writing and knowledge, was worshiped by many scribes in ancient Egypt.

Seshat, goddess of writing and measurement, would have been a better choice than Thoth for ancient astronomers, architects, and mathematicians.

Ptah, god of craftspeople, was worshiped by artisans of all kinds, such as those who painted tomb walls or those who made statues.

Anubis, god of embalmers, was believed to be a powerful friend of those who made their living by preparing the dead for the afterlife.

King Tut's Family

Amenhotep IV began his rule in 1353 BC. He was an odd-looking man with a long face, large lips, and a protruding belly. Amenhotep had been raised in the new Aten religion and was a true believer. He saw Aten as a universal god—a god of all the people in the world, not just Egyptians.

The pharaoh believed Aten, the universal sun god, created the world at the beginning of time, ruled over it alone, and continued to give life to

the world through his bright rays of light. Thus, Amenhotep IV has been called the world's first **monotheist**, someone who believes in a single, all-powerful god.

After about five years, the new pharaoh took a drastic step. He began a religious **revolution**, a sudden and complete change in the official religion of Egypt. He declared that Egyptians could only worship Aten. He changed his name to Akhenaten (ahk-NAH-tuhn), which means "He Who Serves Aten." Akhenaten closed and tried to destroy temples that worshiped the other gods.

Akhenaten's actions upset people who were used to worshiping many gods and angered the priests of the old gods. Taking away religious freedom sometimes moves people to violence. In various parts of Egypt, people tried to stop the destruction of their temples, but the pharaoh's military was able to control them.

In addition to destroying temples, Akhenaten also ordered a new capital city built. He moved the capital away from Thebes and called the new city Akhetaten (ahk-TAH-tun), which means "Horizon of Aten." Today this area is called Amarna, and Akhenaten's revolution is called the Amarna Revolution.

Many people remained angry throughout Akhenaten's reign and perhaps through the reign of his son. Due to the drastic religious changes initiated by his father, Tut inherited enemies. His father's revolutionary actions undoubtedly created some of the mystery surrounding the reign and death of King Tut.



Akhenaten and Nefertiti, possibly Tut's stepmother with their three children in a carving from a temple at Amarna

But was anyone angry enough to commit murder?

It was in this new capital of Egypt that King Tut was born in about 1342 BC. No one knows for sure who his parents were, but most historians feel his father was Akhenaten and his mother was Lady Kiya, one of Akhenaten's wives. The boy was named Tutankhaten, meaning "the Living Image of Aten."

Akhenaten died in 1336 BC after 17 years of rule. What happened next is as puzzling as who Tut's parents were. There were apparently two rulers who had very brief reigns after Akhenaten's death.

One of them may have been a brother of Tutankhaten. The other may have been a queen named Nefertiti. No one knows for sure. In any case, three or four years after Akhenaten's death, the throne of Egypt was again empty so nine-year-old Tutankhaten became pharaoh.



Queen Nefertiti

Except for Cleopatra, no other queen of Egypt is as well known as Nefertiti (neh-fer-TEE-tee). She was the favorite wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten. Nefertiti became the stepmother of the young Prince Tutankhaten (later Tutankhamun) when his mother died. Nefertiti died in her early 30s.

The Boy Pharaoh

Before and during his reign, Tut lived the life of the wealthy. He wore jewelry, linen clothes, perfumed oils, and makeup. Archaeologists found all these items in his tomb. He would have been expected to hunt, usually with a bow and from a chariot, and he might have otherwise passed the time playing games as children do everywhere. Chariots, nearly 50 bows, and senet (a board game) were placed in his tomb for his use in the afterlife.



During his reign, Tutankhaten married his half-sister Ankhesenpaaten (AHNK-eh-suhn-PAH-tuhn), a daughter of Nefertiti.



Ankhesenpaaten's name means "She Lives Through Aten." Marriages between close relatives were common in Egyptian royal families so the family could keep their lands and the power that came with them. The couple had two children, but neither lived.

King Tut had several servants in the court. One personal attendant, Tutu, had served Tut's family for years, since his grandfather had been king. Other servants, some even younger than King Tut, would help him with even the smallest tasks. For example, he had a cup bearer, whose job was to make sure everyone's drinking cups stayed full, especially the young king's.

Because the pharaoh was so young, the military and political work of the royal court was mostly carried out by others—two men in particular. One of them was an aging military officer and adviser named Ay. The other was a great army general named Horemheb (HOR-ehm-heb). Although they had both served Akhenaten, they strongly disliked his religious reforms. The two hoped King Tut would bring back the old ways of worshiping.



Wall painting of Horemheb, an army general and adviser to King Tut

Horemheb and Ay wanted Tut to end the worship of Aten. They especially wanted Tut to return Amun to his former glory as chief god. The king did so, and changed his name from Tutankhaten to Tutankhamun, “the Living Image of Amun.” The queen also took a new name, Ankhesenamun (AHNK-eh-suhn-AH-muhn). Historians are certain that Ay and Horemheb were the main forces behind the changes that took place during King Tut’s reign. Because he was so young, they believe the pharaoh did as he was told.

As part of a return to the old ways, the royal court moved back to Thebes. The once thriving city of Amarna, devoted to the god Aten, was left to decay in the Egyptian sun.



Remains of Akhenaten’s city of Akhetaten built around 1348 BC

End of a Dynasty

In 1322 BC, when he was about 18 years old, King Tutankhamun died. How he died was not recorded and remains a mystery. The young pharaoh was **mummified** and then buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings, a large royal cemetery near the city of Thebes.

Because Tut had no living children, the throne of Egypt was open to someone who was not a member of the royal family. Ay, because of his long experience in the court, became the new pharaoh and married Tut’s widow. After ruling for just four years, Ay died in 1319 BC. Horemheb then became pharaoh.



Do You Know?

Just like a person today might have a first, middle, and last name, pharaohs had more than one name. They had one name at birth, and when they became pharaohs, they were given other names. Often these names appeared inside an oval known as a cartouche (car-TOOSH). Ancient Egyptians believed names were very powerful. They thought that by writing a person’s name on something, then breaking it, they could hurt or even kill that person.



Many mummies of pharaohs were found in the Valley of the Kings.

To show his devotion to Amun, Horemheb ordered the destruction of everything connected with the Aten religion and Akhenaten. In Amarna, his men demolished the abandoned temples of Aten. They also smashed statues of Akhenaten and his family—including King Tut—and gouged their names and faces from wall art. Later, workers removed the blocks of stone with the wall art from the buildings in the city and used them for construction projects in Hermopolis, a city on the other side of the Nile River near Amarna.

Horemheb ruled for 27 years, dying in 1292 BC. With his death, the 18th Dynasty ended. Later, Ramses II, a great pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty who had served with Horemheb in the Egyptian army, completed the destruction of Amarna. The shattered remnants of Akhenaten's once-splendid capital were covered by drifting sand and forgotten.

King Tut's Tomb

In the 1800s, many archaeologists went to Egypt to study Egyptian picture writing, called **hieroglyphics** (hy-ur-uh-GLIF-iks), on walls and monuments. From the writing, archaeologists



Treasure from Tut's tomb

learned a lot about the pharaohs of Egypt. They learned that the tombs of pharaohs would be filled with all the things a person might need in the

afterlife. Expecting to find riches, they found the pharaohs' tombs, but were disappointed. Every tomb had been robbed of its valuable treasures by thieves long ago. By the early 1900s, archaeologists believed they had discovered the tomb of every known pharaoh except one: Tutankhamun.

A British archaeologist, Howard Carter, was determined to find it. Carter searched for Tut's tomb for more than five years with no success. In 1922, he persuaded the man paying for the search, Lord Carnarvon, to pay him for one more season.

Luckily for the world, his persistence paid off. Later that year, Carter found Tut's tomb in almost undisturbed condition. It contained a wealth of **artifacts**, including thrones, jewelry, weapons, and statues. The mummy of Tutankhamun, covered with a large gold mask, lay within three nested coffins. The innermost coffin was made of about 242 pounds (110 kilograms) of pure gold. Carter's discovery created a sensation, and Tut became the most famous pharaoh in history.



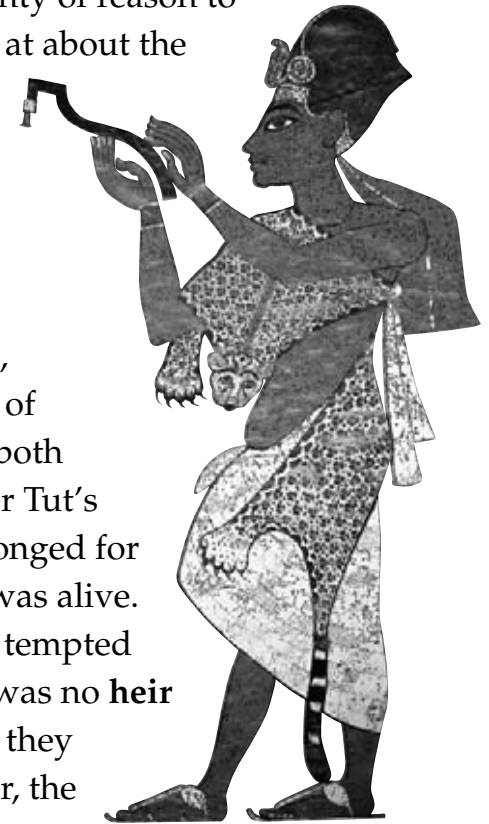
The Mummy's Curse

In November 1922, Lord Carnarvon attended the opening of Tut's tomb. A few months later, he died from an infected mosquito bite. Soon after that, two other people who had entered the tomb died prematurely. These deaths gave rise to the legend of "The Mummy's Curse." The legend said that anyone who dared to disturb Tut's resting place was doomed. However, most people associated with the tomb were not affected by the curse. In fact, Howard Carter, a real life Indiana Jones, the man who should have been the most cursed of all, lived until the age of 66.

The Suspects

Early death was nothing unusual in ancient times. The average life span in ancient Egypt was about 30 years, and many people didn't live that long. Still, there is plenty of reason to believe that King Tut, at about the age of 18, may have been the victim of murder. Several people had reasons to kill him.

Ay and Horemheb, who controlled many of King Tut's decisions, both became pharaohs after Tut's death. Perhaps they longed for the throne while Tut was alive. They must have been tempted by the fact that there was no **heir** to the throne. Thus, if they wanted to seize power, the time to do it was before Tut had children who lived, or before he reached adulthood and pushed the two men aside. Some archaeologists say that Ay and Horemheb may have joined forces to kill Tut, perhaps with poison.



A wall painting of Ay found in Tut's tomb

Ay and Horemheb are the most likely suspects, but they are not the only ones. Some researchers have identified two of Tut's servants as possible murderers: the cupbearer and his personal attendant, Tutu. They were among the very few people permitted to enter the king's bedroom. Either man could have murdered the pharaoh, perhaps by striking his head with a heavy object while he slept.

Horemheb included an inscription on a statue of himself, found in his tomb, that claims he is innocent of Tut's death. Even though he destroyed the city that Tut's father built, Horemheb insists he always served the young pharaoh faithfully, then warns, "Egyptian brothers, don't ever forget what foreigners did to our King Tutankhamun." This note points to a foreigner.



A queen's servant pours a drink for her as another servant attends to other needs.

The servant Tutu was of foreign origin, and he was said to be a rather suspicious character. A group of amateur archaeologists in Egypt contends that Tutu was spying for an Egyptian **vassal state**, a country conquered and then ruled by Egypt. They think Tutu could have murdered both Tut and Akhenaten when they discovered what he was doing.

The Body

For many years, people have theorized that Tut was indeed killed by a blow to the head. They based that belief on **X-ray** studies of the pharaoh's mummy made in 1968 and in 1978. The X-rays showed damage to the back of Tut's skull. Experts said the damage was strong evidence that Tut had been hit on the back of the head with a heavy object. But was that really true?



Dr. Zahi Hawass with Tut before the mummy enters the CT scanner

In 2005, researchers in Cairo, Egypt, decided to answer the question once and for all. The group was led by a top Egyptian archaeologist, Zahi Hawass. The researchers studied King Tut's mummy with an advanced X-ray technique called **CT (CAT) scanning**. A CT scanner takes numerous X-rays of an object from different angles. The X-ray information is fed to a computer, which uses the information to produce images. CT images are much more detailed than ones made with regular X-ray machines.



Scientists reveal the face of King Tut's mummy.

Hawass announced that King Tutankhamun definitely did not die from a blow to the head. He said the skull damage, revealed by the earlier X-ray studies, had been caused in other ways, after Tut's death. In fact, the injuries may have happened during mummification when King Tut was **embalmed**.

The mystery doesn't stop there. The researchers did find new evidence of what might have killed Tut. The CT scans showed that the king had suffered a broken leg. Hawass said the boy may have developed an infection from the injury and died a few days later.

Mystery Solved?

So, is that the end of the mystery? Maybe not. Some members of Hawass's group said the broken leg might have also happened when Tut was being embalmed. Others felt certain that Howard Carter's team caused the break when they removed Tut's body from its inner coffin. However, Hawass agreed that it's still possible that Tut was poisoned. But if that's



Carter's team removes Tut from his tomb.

what happened, we'll probably never find proof of it, much less find out who did it. Needless to say, there were many people who had motives for murder. Thus, the mystery surrounding King Tut's death continues. We may never know what really happened.

Glossary

archaeologist (<i>n.</i>)	someone who studies objects from ancient times (p. 4)
artifacts (<i>n.</i>)	objects created by people of a particular period (p. 17)
CT scanning (<i>n.</i>)	the use of computerized tomography machines to create three-dimensional images of human bone and soft tissue (p. 21)
deities (<i>n.</i>)	gods and goddesses (p. 5)
dynasties (<i>n.</i>)	families whose members rule a country for generations (p. 5)
embalmed (<i>adj.</i>)	filled with chemicals to prevent decay (p. 21)
heir (<i>n.</i>)	someone who will inherit the property and wealth of another, usually a family member (p. 18)
hieroglyphics (<i>n.</i>)	the ancient Egyptian system of writing using pictures (p. 16)
monotheist (<i>n.</i>)	person who believes in one god (p. 8)

mummified (<i>adj.</i>)	embalmed and wrapped in burial cloth (p. 14)
pharaoh (<i>n.</i>)	a king in ancient Egypt (p. 4)
revolution (<i>n.</i>)	a sudden, major change in the way things are, often brought about with violence, such as overthrowing a government (p. 8)
vassal state (<i>n.</i>)	a place that has been defeated and partly taken over by another government (p. 20)
X-ray (<i>n.</i>)	an energy beam capable of creating an image of many substances, especially bone (p. 20)

Examples of Egyptian hieroglyphics from the Temple of Amun

