

No one knows what King Tut looked like exactly. But statues of him, like this one, help give us an idea.



Text Evidence As you read, look for details that tell you about King Tut's life and why people became fascinated with him thousands of years after he died.

LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S
8 WORDS IN BOLD



THE MUMMY KING

How a young ruler who lived 3,000 years ago became a modern celebrity

BY KRISTIN LEWIS | ART BY RANDY POLLAK

He is the king of ancient Egypt. He's only 9 years old. And he rules over millions of people.

When he walks, his heavy jewelry clanks. At night, his servants wave giant fans over him so he can sleep in the heat. Everywhere he goes, people bow to him. He is the **pharaoh**, or king.

But then, something terrible happens.

When he is about 18, this young ruler suddenly dies. His body is turned into a mummy. Then he is buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings. This area was

filled with the tombs of other kings.

Ancient Egyptians believed that life continued after death. So everything the king might need is buried in the tomb with him. There are jewels, statues, food, and games.

But no one could know that this boy king will be remembered thousands of years after his death. Kids will study him in school. Researchers will try to solve the mysteries of his life and death. Millions will travel from all over to see his treasures.

His name will be known to all: Tutankhamen [too-tahn-KAH-muhn].

A Celebrity

Tutankhamen—or “King Tut,” as he is often called—is a name known around the world. Still, his life is mysterious.

Today we know that he became king more than 3,000 years ago, when he was 8 or 9. He ruled for only about 10 years. In ancient Egypt, there were more than 170 pharaohs. Tutankhamen is just one of them.

So how did this boy king become famous? It all began with a team of people digging in the golden sands of Egypt. The year was 1922.

Amazing Finds

In the early 1900s, a man named Howard Carter was exploring the Valley of the Kings. With his thick mustache and wide hat, he was well-known to people in the area.

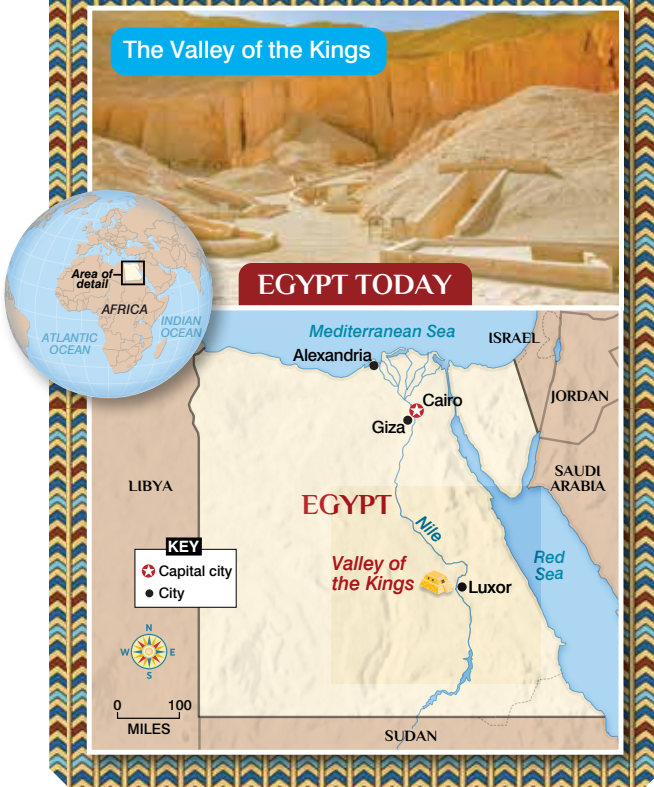
Carter was an **archaeologist**. Archaeologists are like detectives. They study old buildings, objects, and bones to try to understand how people lived in the past.

Carter had moved to Egypt from England in 1891. He was 17. He soon began working on **excavation** projects. These digs often involved hundreds of people. In the Valley of the Kings, the work was done mainly by local Egyptians. They prepared **artifacts** for travel so the objects wouldn't break. Children often helped. They carried away sand and rocks.

By the time Carter began working in the area, the tombs of many kings had already been found. But these tombs were empty. Their treasures were stolen long before. In ancient Egypt, **looting** was a big problem.

The Search

In 1907, Carter was hired by a rich man from England. His name was Lord



Carnarvon. Carnarvon loved ancient Egypt. He had many ancient Egyptian artifacts. And he asked Carter to sort them.

In 1914, Carnarvon got permission to dig in a new area of the Valley of the Kings. He thought highly of Carter. So he asked him to lead the project.

Carter was excited about what they might find. He and his team worked nonstop. They dug day after day. But after seven years of hard work, they hadn't found anything amazing.

Had everything of value in the Valley of the Kings already been found?

By then, Carnarvon had spent a lot of money on the dig. He wanted to quit. But Carter asked for one last chance.



The Tomb

In early November 1922, Carter's team was digging in the sand. Suddenly, they saw something: a stone step.

The step belonged to a staircase leading underground. At the bottom of the staircase was a door.

The door led to a tomb.

What an amazing discovery! The seal on the door was in one piece. Did that mean the tomb was never looted? Was it possible that it held the mummy of a pharaoh?

In late November, Carter, his team, and Carnarvon opened the door. A rush of old air met them. The air had not been breathed in thousands of years. They peered into the darkness.

As the story goes, Carnarvon asked Carter, "Can you see anything?"

Tutankhamen's mummy was found inside a gold coffin, held inside two other gold coffins. Here, Howard Carter and a colleague study one of the coffins.



HARRY BURTON/ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES (HOWARD CARTER); BUSINESS WIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES (COFFIN)

Carter answered, "Yes, wonderful things." Slowly, strange shadows appeared in the dark.

"Details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold—everywhere the glint of gold," Carter would later write. He was filled with amazement.

They had found the tomb of King Tutankhamen.

Dazzling Discovery

Tutankhamen's tomb held thousands of objects. They were unlike anything the world had ever seen. There were baskets filled with nuts and seeds. There were gold sandals and sparkling jewels. Over time, about 6,000 objects would be found inside the tomb.

To archaeologists, the objects were priceless treasures. They helped create a lively picture of ancient Egypt. Indeed, King Tut's tomb would end up being one of the greatest discoveries of all time.

But the most thrilling discovery of all was probably Tutankhamen himself. His mummy was wearing a beautiful golden mask. It had been placed inside a gold coffin, held inside two larger gold coffins.

Pharaoh Fever

News of the amazing discovery quickly spread around the world. Big photos of the tomb's treasures



TREASURES OF THE DEAD

Some of the thousands of objects found
in Tutankhamen's tomb

jewelry made
of gold and
precious
stones



statue of
Anubis, god
of the dead



board game called
senet, which was very
popular in ancient Egypt



gold sandals



appeared in newspapers. Short films of the dig drew crowds to movie theaters.

People soon had “pharaoh fever.” President Herbert Hoover named his dog King Tut. Women began wearing their hair in ancient Egyptian styles. There were Tut dances and Tut songs. Companies used Tutankhamen to sell goods, from lemons to cookies.

People in the United States, and all over the world, were obsessed.



The Curse

But soon a scary rumor began. There were whispers of a “mummy’s curse.” It was said that anyone who entered the tomb of Tutankhamen would be punished.

A few months after the tomb’s discovery, Lord Carnarvon was found dead. Two other English men died after visiting the tomb.

Was Tutankhamen angry?

Were these tragedies his revenge?

Probably not.

Each death had an explanation. For example, Carnarvon died from an infected

mosquito bite. And nothing happened to Carter at all. He died many years after opening the tomb. If the tomb were cursed, wouldn't he have been its number one victim?

Deeper Questions

Tales of the curse were probably spread to sell newspapers. Yet the stories about the curse raise deeper questions: Who did King Tut's tomb belong to? Who had the right to take its treasures?

In Egypt, it was against the law to remove artifacts from the country without permission. Carter and Carnarvon had not received permission. But people believe that they took many objects from the tomb to England anyway.

They were not alone. In Egypt, artifacts were often stolen. Rich Europeans would pay a lot of money for vases and coffins from ancient times. They would use these objects to show off to their neighbors and party guests.

Who Was He?

Tutankhamen's tomb was found

more than 100 years ago. And King Tut is as popular as ever. A museum exhibit all about King Tut began traveling the world in 2019. A new museum in Egypt showcases together almost all the objects from Tut's tomb.

Yet the boy king still fascinates us. Who was Tutankhamen really? What made him laugh? What made him cry? There was a trumpet in his tomb. Did he play it or simply like its music?

We may never know the answers to those questions. But we do know this: The name Tutankhamen will never be forgotten. The boy king will live forever. He has become **immortal**. ■



WRITE TO WIN

Imagine you work at a museum that's having an exhibit about Tutankhamen. Write a brochure for the exhibit with details from the text about King Tut and the discovery of his treasures. Send it to "King Tut Contest" by May 1, 2023. Five winners will each receive a \$20 gift card for the Scholastic Store Online. See page 2 for details.

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