The book follows a wealthy ancient Egyptian on their last journey – to eternal life as a mummy. Learn about the complicated, and frankly gruesome, processes involved in mummification. From the cleansing and drying of the body, via the removal of the internal organs, to the wrapping of the body in layer upon layer of linen bandages, you’ll discover more about the religious and superstitious beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. Even after all of the prodding, poking, drying, stuffing and wrapping, and an elaborate funeral with hired mourners, mummies were not necessarily set for a peaceful afterlife. Tomb robbers, tourists and scientists were just some of the dangers lurking beyond the grave. It’s clear that You Wouldn’t Want to be an Egyptian Mummy!

About ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt is one of the earliest organised human civilisations. As a period, it is commonly described as beginning in around 3200–3100 BC when small pockets of civilisation along the River Nile coalesced into one kingdom under the rule of the first pharaoh. There is still debate amongst Egyptologists surrounding both the name and dates of this first pharaoh – he is known either as Narmer or Menes, although it is now thought that this was the same person!

Ancient Egyptian civilisation is split into three main periods, known as the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. The Old Kingdom spanned a period in the third century BC from around 2686–2181 BC; the Middle Kingdom lasted from around 2055–1650 BC; and the New Kingdom dates are around 1550–1077 BC. These ‘kingdoms’ were times of peace and prosperity in ancient Egypt unified under strong pharaohs: during the Old Kingdom, pharaohs began building vast stone pyramids for their tombs; in the Middle Kingdom trade, art and literature developed, with new forms of sculpture appearing, and stories and philosophical works being written down; the New Kingdom saw some of ancient Egypt’s most famous pharaohs, including Hatshepsut, Amenhotep III, Akhenaten and the boy-king Tutankhamun.

In between these ‘Kingdoms’ of ancient Egypt, there were so-called ‘Intermediate Periods’. These were characterised by a lack of coherent leadership and political unity as different power bases sought for control.

After the fall of the New Kingdom, Egypt entered another long Intermediate Period, during which time the power of the Egyptian civilisation began to wane. In around 728 BC, Nubians from the south took over. The final ‘Late Period’ of Egypt ran from around 664–332 BC. During this time, Egypt was largely ruled by foreigners, including the Persians who conquered in around 525 BC. The Late Period concludes with the arrival of Greek king, Alexander the Great, in 332 BC.
About ancient Egypt (continued)

Other early complex civilisations that were contemporary with ancient Egypt include:
- Mesopotamian Sumer civilisation in modern-day Iraq (c. 5300 BC to c. 2000 BC)
- Indus Valley civilisation in modern-day India and Pakistan (c. 3300–1300 BC)
- ancient Chinese dynasties such as the Xia (2070–1600 BC) and Shang (c. 1600–1046 BC)
- Mayan civilisation in modern-day southern America (from c. 2000 BC)

Ancient Egypt is famous for its monumental temples to an array of gods and its pharaohs’ tombs and pyramids, which can still be seen along the River Nile. It was one of the first civilisations to develop a writing system – hieroglyphs, or picture writing. Hieroglyphs were written on an early paper called papyrus, made from compressed water reeds, as well as carved into stone monuments and statues. Hieroglyphs were finally understood when a French man named Jean-François Champollion was able to decipher their meaning thanks to a famous inscribed stone, called the Rosetta Stone. The stone carries the same decree in three languages: Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, Demotic script, and Ancient Greek. You can see the Rosetta Stone at the British Museum in London.

Ancient Egypt is perhaps, however, most synonymous with mummies! This process began as a natural effect: the earliest ancient Egyptians simply buried their dead in the desert sand, where the heat and lack of moisture dried the bodies out creating natural mummies. When ancient Egyptians began burying their dead in coffins, they found that the bodies decomposed – no good for eternal life! The process of mummification was developed over many centuries to try to ensure that the body remained life-like, even after death.

Activity 1: Mummify an orange

This experiment, reproduced courtesy of the Young Archaeologists’ Club (www.yac-uk.org), replicates the mummification process. It is a fun activity, but can also be used to practise writing instructional texts. The activity can be conducted as a scientific experiment too, enabling your pupils to learn observation and recording skills. Be warned: the process is mucky and sticky!

You can find the instructions for mummifying an orange on the activity sheet. However, the instructions are given as a block of text, accompanied by a series of step-by-step photographs which are not in order! Before your pupils mummify their own orange, challenge them to rewrite the activity as an instructional text using, for example, numbered steps and a materials’ list. Can they match the correct photograph to each step? There is a separate activity sheet that your pupils can use to present their instructional text.

Talking point: What clues are there in a piece of writing which suggest it is an instructional text? What is the purpose of an instructional text? How are instructional texts presented? Your pupils may like to think about how instructional texts are ordered – are there numbered steps, bullet points, pictures or diagrams? You can also introduce ‘imperative’ verbs: e.g. cut, make, stuff, wrap, stick. Can your pupils think of some examples of instructional texts?
Extension activity: Once your pupils have successfully stuffed and wrapped their oranges, you can conduct a scientific experiment to test the conditions that are best for mummification.

Generally the best conditions for mummification are somewhere warm and dry – such as an airing cupboard. You could try experimenting with different conditions: e.g. a fridge, by the window in your classroom, in the stock cupboard, in a kiln, beside the school swimming pool. Try to come up with a range of different options with the help of your pupils. Leave a number of oranges to mummify in each location, and check on them regularly – perhaps fortnightly. At each observation, carefully unwrap each orange just enough to see inside. Ask your pupils to record how their orange looks. Are there any changes? Does it smell different? What does the skin feel like? You could take photographs or draw pictures at each observation too. Compare the oranges in the different locations. Is there a pattern emerging that suggests which conditions are best for mummification?

Activity 2: Interview Harold Carter

English archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun, ancient Egypt’s most famous mummy. The excavation was sponsored by Lord Carnarvon. Having worked at the site of the supposed tomb for several years, Carnarvon told Howard Carter in 1922 that he would only continue paying for the excavation for one more season of digging. Carter was under a lot of pressure to make a breakthrough.

The breakthrough finally came in November 1922, when a member of Carter’s excavation team discovered a stone step in the sand. The step led to another, and another. The team had uncovered a flight of steps leading down to the tomb! The small hole that Carter made using a chisel through the mud-plastered doorway resulted in some of the most famous words in archaeological history: Lord Carnarvon asked “Can you see anything?”, and Howard Carter replied with the words: “Yes, wonderful things!”

When the tomb was opened, it was found to be packed full of incredible treasures, including the iconic gold and blue funeral mask. In total, nearly 5,400 items were recovered from Tutankhamun’s tomb; a process that took around ten years to complete due to the careful cataloguing of every object. The wealth in the tomb included everything that a king would need in his afterlife: wine jars (some still containing wine), gold statues, funeral beds, linen underwear, all of the parts to make up four chariots, and much more!

Choose one or more of your pupils to take the role of Howard Carter. Encourage them to research the tomb’s discovery using the internet or other resources.

Challenge the rest of your class to come up with some questions that they would like to ask Howard Carter in an interview.

You could either interview him before the tomb was discovered, or after. How would the questions differ? For example, in the first case, Carter would probably be trying to justify why he should be allowed to continue with the excavation.
Talking point: what makes a good interview question? Which of these is better, and why: “Were you excited?” or “Can you tell me more about how you were feeling when you discovered the tomb entrance?” Encourage your pupils to think of questions that are open-ended and need explanations rather than ones that can be answered with a simple yes or no.

Once your pupils have completed their research and written their questions, you can stage the interview(s) as a dramatic performance. Make sure that the interviewers take notes as they will need information about the discovery to help them with the next activity!

Activity 3: Read all about it!

Using the research and information that your pupils have collected in activity 2, challenge them to create a newspaper or blog article about the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb.

Begin by coming up with a good catchy headline. You want people to read your article or blog, so the headline is very important as it should catch the readers’ attention and make them want to read more.

Example headlines for this story could include:
- Mummy’s the Word!
- Thrilling Discovery in Egyptian Desert
- Golden Moment for English Archaeologist
- Tomb of Tremendous Treasure

Talking point: what makes a good headline? You could choose a range of examples from different newspapers to discuss. Think about alliteration and the use of puns on popular sayings. Are there differences between headlines in tabloid newspapers and broadsheets? Can your pupils think of any reasons why?

Your pupils should carefully plan their article before writing it. What facts are important to include? Are there any quotes that could make the story more interesting? Look at how newspaper articles are structured. Often the most important facts are in the first paragraph – the ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ of the story.

Activity 4: Fun with hieroglyphs

Ancient Egyptians used a form of picture writing, called hieroglyphs. There were hundreds (if not thousands!) of different symbols. Each symbol could mean a whole word (called an ‘ideogram’) or a single sound (called a ‘phonogram’). There was no punctuation in this form of writing, or any space between words. What’s more, Egyptian hieroglyphs could be written from right to left or left to right, and sometimes they even wrote from top to bottom. It’s hardly surprising that very few ancient Egyptians could actually write!
Hieroglyphs were used to decorate a mummy’s coffin(s) and their tomb, and a papyrus scroll of the funerary text *The Book of the Dead* written in hieroglyphs was often placed between a mummy’s hands too.

Your pupils can use the activity sheet, based on a version kindly supplied by the Young Archaeologists’ Club (www.yac-uk.org), to create their own messages in hieroglyphs, and then challenge each other to decipher them.

*Extension activity:* can your pupils come up with their own picture-writing codes?

*Why not try:* hieroglyphic maths?! If your pupils are beginning to experiment with algebra, you could try using hieroglyphs in place of letter symbols to create basic equations. There are some hieroglyphic maths activity sheets in the pupils’ pack.

**Activity 5: Stock your tomb**

A rich Egyptian would need to ensure that they had everything that they needed in their tomb for the afterlife. Challenge your pupils to stock a mummy’s tomb – they can each put five items from the selection given on the activity sheet into the tomb for the mummy’s afterlife. What will they choose to pack into the tomb, and why?

*Talking point:* what objects might a modern-day mummy want in their tomb with them?

*Extension activity:* ancient Egyptians believed that every person had three spirits that survived after death: the *ka* (life force), the *ba* (personality), and the *akh* (soul). Can your pupils research other beliefs about the afterlife and compare these to ancient Egyptian beliefs?

**Activity 6: Egyptian gods**

The ancient Egyptians believed in many gods; theirs was a polytheistic religion with different gods to worship responsible for different elements. The main gods involved in the mummification process were: Anubis, the god of embalming; Thoth, the god of wisdom who was responsible for writing down the fates of every man and woman at the weighing of the heart ceremony; and the gods Imsety, Duamutef, Qebehsenuef and Hapy who were represented on the canopic jars that stored the main bodily organs removed during the mummification process.

Many Egyptian gods had the body of a human and the head of an animal. For example, Anubis the god of embalming had the head of a type of dog-like creature called a jackal, whereas Thoth the god of wisdom, had the head of a bird called an ibis.

*Talking point:* Many ancient religions were polytheistic, whereas modern-day religions tend to be monotheistic, with one god. Can your pupils think of any reasons why this might be the case?

Your pupils can use the activity sheet to design and name their own ancient Egyptian god. What is their god responsible for looking after? What does s/he look like? You can use the same sheet to challenge your pupils to research and write about a real Egyptian god.
Activity 7: Arty challenges

During the mummification process, special charms or amulets were tucked between the bandages to provide magical protection. Scarab beetle amulets were supposed to stop a mummy’s guilty secrets being discovered during the weighing of the heart ceremony. A so-called ‘eye of Horus’ amulet covered the slit in a mummy’s stomach where the organs were removed. Challenge your pupils to design their own amulets and describe what magical properties they would have. They could even make copies of their amulets using clay, plasticine or play doh.

Ancient Egyptian mummies often had elaborate funerary masks – Tutankhamun’s gold gilded mask is the most famous example. Your pupils can design their own funerary masks on the activity sheet. They could even try making their Egyptian funerary mask using a plastic mask (from a craft shop) and strong cardboard (from a packing box or similar). This mask (right) was made by the Young Archaeologists’ Club (www.yac-uk.org) and was covered in papier-mâché before being painted gold and decorated with strips of blue paper. If you cannot get a plastic mask, you could blow up a balloon, and cover it in papier-mâché. Once it has dried and hardened, cut it in half vertically. Mark and cut holes for the eyes, and then use this in place of the plastic mask.

Activity 8: For fun...

The mummy wrapping game is a great game for school parties, and can even be adapted to become a PE relay race! The basic idea is simple: in teams, wrap a pupil from head to toe in toilet roll to create a mummy! To turn this into a relay race, you can have the strips of ‘bandage’ (i.e. toilet roll) at one end of the school hall/field and your ‘mummy’ at the other. In turns, each member of the team should run to collect a strip of bandage and then add it to their mummy.

Pupils’ pack contents

- ‘Mummify an orange’ activity sheet
- ‘Mummify an orange’ instructional text template sheet
- ‘Mummify an orange’ observation and recording sheet
- ‘Writing in hieroglyphs!’ activity sheet
- ‘Hieroglyphic maths’ activity sheets (4)
- ‘Stock your tomb’ activity sheet
- ‘My Egyptian god’ activity sheet
- Design your own Egyptian amulets
- Design your own Egyptian death mask
- Blank sheet with the border top and bottom for your pupils’ own artwork and writing
Hieroglyphic maths! (1)

Answer sheet:

Examples: \(6 + \boxed{\Delta} = 10\) \(\Delta = 4\) and \(\boxed{- 2} = 8\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 10\)

1) \(9 + \boxed{\sigma} = 10\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 1\)

2) \(10 - \boxed{\sigma} = 3\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 7\)

3) \(5 + \boxed{\Delta} + 2 = 10\) \(\boxed{\Delta} = 3\)

4) \(13 - \boxed{\sigma} = 5\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 8\)

5) \(3 + \boxed{\Box} = 12\) \(\boxed{\Box} = 9\)

6) \(\boxed{\sigma} - 16 = 4\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 20\)

7) \(\boxed{\sigma} + 7 = 15\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 8\)

8) \(\boxed{- 24} = 5\) \(\boxed{- 24} = 29\)

9) \(\boxed{- 17} = 25\) \(\boxed{- 17} = 8\)

10) \(\boxed{\sigma} - 13 = 9\) \(\boxed{\sigma} = 22\)
Hieroglyphic maths! (2)

Answer sheet:

Examples: \(20 \div \Box = 4\)

1) \(16 \div \Box = 4\)

2) \(21 \div \Box = 3\)

3) \(50 \div \Box = 10\)

4) \(24 \div \Box = 12\)

5) \(99 \div \Box = 11\)

6) \(\overset{\text{Bird}}{\times} 4 = 12\)

7) \(\overset{\text{Shovel}}{\times} 5 = 25\)

8) \(\overset{\text{Bird}}{\times} 3 = 27\)

9) \(\overset{\text{Sword}}{\times} 10 = 40\)

10) \(\overset{\text{Ankh}}{\times} 2 = 16\)
Hieroglyphic maths! (3)

Answer sheet:

Examples: \(2 \begin{array}{c} \Delta \\ \infty \end{array} = 4 \quad \Delta = 2\) and \(3 \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} + 7 = 13 \quad \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} = 2\)

1) \(2 \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 10 \quad \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 5\)

2) \(3 \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 12 \quad \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 4\)

3) \(2 \begin{array}{c} \Delta \\ \infty \end{array} + 10 = 30 \quad \begin{array}{c} \Delta \\ \infty \end{array} = 10\)

4) \(5 \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} + 5 = 15 \quad \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} = 2\)

5) \(3 \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} + 3 = 24 \quad \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 7\)

6) \(7 \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} - 6 = 8 \quad \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} = 2\)

7) \(9 \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} - 4 = 32 \quad \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 4\)

8) \(4 \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} - 3 = 29 \quad \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \infty \end{array} = 8\)

9) \(3 \begin{array}{c} \sim \\ \infty \end{array} \div 4 = 3 \quad \begin{array}{c} \sim \\ \infty \end{array} = 4\)

10) \(8 \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} \div 6 = 4 \quad \begin{array}{c} \square \\ \infty \end{array} = 3\)
Hieroglyphic maths! (4)

Answer sheet: NB, the answers given for questions 1 to 4 are examples, and other alternative answers are possible

Give three alternative correct values of \( \square \) and \( \bigtriangledown \) in the following equations:

1) \( \bigtriangledown + \square = 10 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 9 \) and \( \square = 1 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 2 \) and \( \square = 8 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 4 \) and \( \square = 6 \)

2) \( \bigtriangledown - \square = 16 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 20 \) and \( \square = 4 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 17 \) and \( \square = 1 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 36 \) and \( \square = 10 \)

3) \( \bigtriangledown \times \square = 24 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 3 \) and \( \square = 8 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 2 \) and \( \square = 12 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 4 \) and \( \square = 6 \)

4) \( \bigtriangledown ÷ \square = 2 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 10 \) and \( \square = 5 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 14 \) and \( \square = 7 \)

\( \bigtriangledown = 40 \) and \( \square = 20 \)

5) If: \( \bigtriangleup \bigtriangleup + \bigtriangleup = 10 \)

And: \( 3 \bigtriangleup - \bigtriangleup = 6 \)

What are \( \bigtriangleup \) and \( \bigtriangleup \) ?

\( \bigtriangleup = 4 \) and \( \bigtriangleup = 6 \)

To work this out, add the two equations together to make:

\( 4 \bigtriangleup + \bigtriangleup - \bigtriangleup = 16 \)

The two \( \bigtriangleup \) symbols cancel each other out (as you have one being added and the second subtracted).

Therefore \( \bigtriangleup = 16 \)

So: \( \bigtriangleup = 4 \) and \( \bigtriangleup = 6 \)