

Tutankhamun

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Learning



Contents

King at Nine!	4
Why Is He Famous?	5
King Tut's Father	7
King Tut's Power	9
King Tut's Life	11
Finding King Tut	13
The Boy King Remembered	17
Comprehension Questions	18
Glossary	19
World History Timeline	21

King at Nine!

Imagine becoming a king when you are only nine years old! That is what happened to Tutankhamun. He became the king of Egypt when he was only a boy. He ruled for nine years and died when he was still a young man. As supreme ruler of his people, he was thought of as a god. He was the messenger between the gods and people.



A painted wooden head of Tutankhamun from his tomb



Tutankhamun's death mask

Today, Tutankhamun is one of the most famous kings in all of Egyptian history. However, he was not a famous or popular leader during his lifetime. He served as king for only a short time and achieved little during his rule.

Tutankhamun on a modern Egyptian postage stamp



Why Is He Famous?

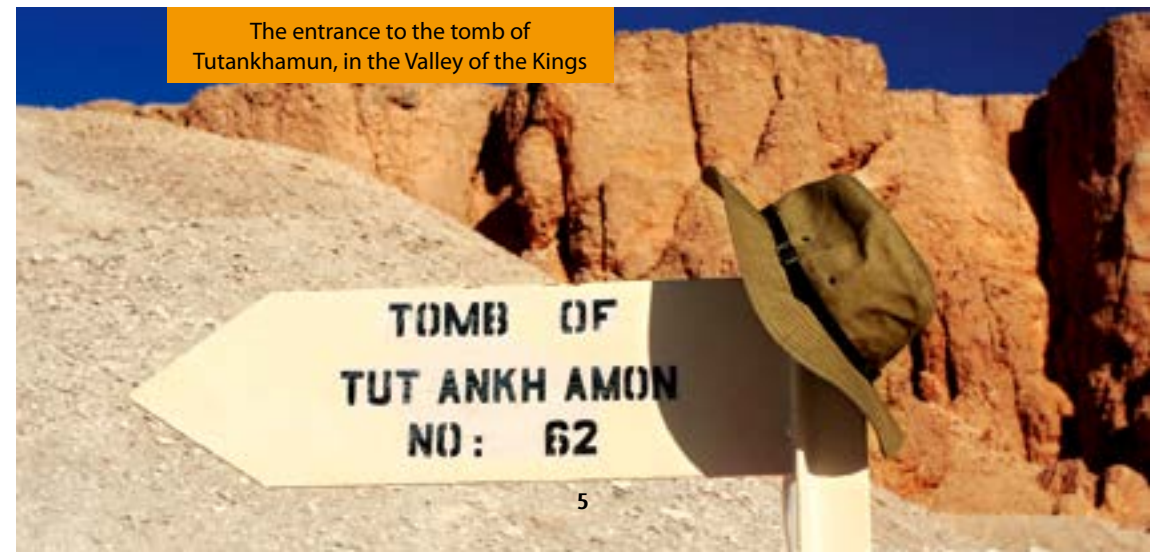
It might seem strange, but Tutankhamun became famous because he was forgotten. It is believed that his early death caused an urgent burial. Tutankhamun's body was placed in a small tomb probably built for someone less important than himself. Sometime after his tomb was sealed, the opening to his tomb was covered by debris when a later tomb was built.

For thousands of years, his body lay forgotten in its tomb, surrounded by beautiful treasures. He and his treasures were safe from thieves.



The Valley of the Kings in Luxor, Egypt

The entrance to the tomb of Tutankhamun, in the Valley of the Kings



King Tut's Father

When Tutankhamun's tomb was finally discovered, it became one of the most significant finds in the history of archaeology. The inside was very different to any of the other tombs of the pharaohs found by archaeologists. Thieves had broken into most of the other tombs.



Great treasures being removed from the tomb of Tutankhamun

Tutankhamun's tomb is the best preserved tomb ever found. Even though his tomb was smaller and more modest than others, it was amazing. Most of his things were just as they were when they had been put there many years before.



A gold painting from Tutankhamun's tomb

It was a glorious tomb, filled with treasure. The special items housed in the tomb, together with the paintings on the walls, helped explain a lot about both Tutankhamun and Egyptian culture.

Tutankhamun was born in 1341 BC, around 3,400 years ago. His father King Akhenaten was not a popular leader. He used his power to stop the Egyptians from praying to many of their gods. Instead, he demanded that they only pray to one god—a sun god named Aten.



Aten, the sun god

By itself, this was a big change. He was asking people to change their religion. In addition, there was another side to his policy. It was also a strategy to take power away from the high-level priests, who respected other gods. This made the powerful priests very angry.



Some of the other Egyptian gods

King Tut's Power

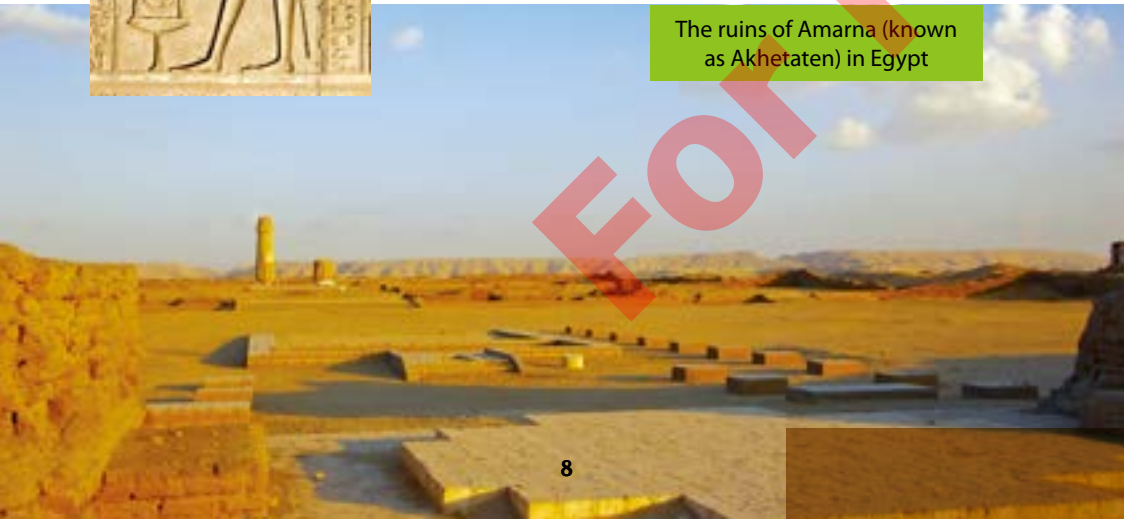
Basically, Akhenaten's policy changed society and the economy away from a priest-based system to one ruled by the military and government officials. In addition, Akhenaten moved the capital from Thebes to Amarna, known as Akhetaten to the ancient Egyptians.

These changes caused a great deal of trouble, and some historians believe that Akhenaten was eventually killed as a result. Indeed, his enemies removed all records of his time in power. Then, after a short rule by one or two other pharaohs, it became Tutankhamun's time to rule.



An Egyptian priest making an offering to the god Ka

The ruins of Amarna (known as Akhetaten) in Egypt



Becoming a king at nine years of age would not have been easy. Because Tutankhamun was so young, he did not have the responsibility of ruling alone. Actually, for a number of years, a military general named Horemheb and a legal advisor named Ay helped Tutankhamun rule Egypt. Tutankhamun removed most of King Akhenaten's changes to the laws. He brought back respect for the old gods, especially the god Amun Ra.



A statue of Horemheb

An image from a temple wall showing a pharaoh praying to the god Amun Ra



Comprehension Questions

1. How old was Tutankhamun when he died?
(a) 9
(b) 27
(c) 19
(d) 58
2. Tutankhamun was...
(a) very healthy.
(b) quite sick.
(c) killed on a horse.
(d) killed by his sister.
3. Tutankhamun's father was...
(a) Akhenaten
(b) Horemheb
(c) Amun
(d) Ankhesenamun
4. Tutankhamun's father wanted to...
(a) anger the gods.
(b) change the people's religion.
(c) live in Thebes.
(d) be a priest.
5. The ancient Egyptians had...
(a) one god.
(b) many gods.
(c) no gods.
(d) no religion.
6. Tutankhamun ... his father's policies.
(a) kept
(b) changed back
(c) added more of
(d) loved
7. Tutankhamun...
(a) married his half-sister.
(b) never married.
(c) had several wives.
(d) married his mother.
8. Who found Tutankhamun's tomb?
(a) A tourist
(b) Amun
(c) Lord Carnarvon
(d) Howard Carter
9. Tutankhamun probably...
(a) was not very handsome.
(b) did not fight as a soldier.
(c) did not agree with his father's ideas.
(d) All of the above
10. Tutankhamun is famous because of his...
(a) dislike for traditional festivals.
(b) love for the god Aten.
(c) tomb.
(d) All of the above

Glossary

- **archaeology** the study of human life and activity from long ago by looking at things such as their buildings and tools
- **debris** loose natural material, mostly broken pieces of rock
- **Egyptian** a person from Egypt
- **glorious** beautiful or very good
- **jewelry** ornaments for the body such as bracelets, rings, and necklaces
- **malaria** an infectious, sometimes deadly, disease usually spread by mosquitoes
- **mummify** to be turned into a mummy after death
- **mummy** a body specially prepared for the afterlife
- **pharaoh** a king of ancient Egypt
- **poison** to kill someone or something with a deadly substance
- **priceless** so precious that its value cannot be determined
- **thief** a person who steals things
- **tomb** a large stone room usually underground where a person is buried when they die
- **walking stick** a long, thin piece of wood to help someone to walk better