

All about Tutankhamun's tomb: Unlocking the secrets of a very famous pharaoh

This article and the variety of engaging lesson ideas is the perfect resource for refreshing your Ancient Egyptian topic work. For more articles and lesson maps, visit schools.theweekjunior.co.uk/lesson-ideas

English in context

Vocabulary work

The following activity ideas develop vocabulary using the article:

- Look at new vocabulary from the text e.g. **mummification, archaeological, excavate, resumed, chambers** etc. Discuss the word class and meanings. Play Definition Bingo with the identified vocabulary.
- Use the article to investigate adverbial phrases- the how, the where and the when. Through further reading, collect and classify words as to how they have been used. Understand that prepositional phrases also show us where something occurs. Highlight these and record to be used in further writing opportunities.
- Use the text to ascertain how authors use headings, subheadings and captions. Ask the children to write alternatives for the article subheadings.
- Ask: *What are the three most important things that we find out from the article?* Discuss and agree as a class. Use this as a basis for investigating paragraphs further. Children must use the 'one paragraph per box' principle. Research the information from the article and other sources, and then challenge the children to write three paragraphs. Identify that the order is crucial as there must be a 'flow'. Ask the children to link their paragraphs with appropriate vocabulary.
- Take any section of the article and insert alternative verbs. Think of simple verbs and more complex choices which will extend the children's vocabulary further. Re-read the section and discuss whether altering the verbs changes the meaning of the piece of writing or the impact of what has been written. Children could be encouraged to practise their alphabetical skills by using a thesaurus to find the alternatives.



Reading comprehension

Use the article to answer the following questions in a whole class reading session, a grouped guided reading session or as an independent task:

- Who gave Howard Carter the money to search for and excavate Tutankhamun's tomb?
- Which phrase is used to suggest that the discovery of the tomb's entrance was a fortunate accident? Who discovered it?
- Why did the Ancient Egyptians mummify their dead?
- Name **two** things that were found inside the burial chamber.
- How do you know that the Egyptians thought that the afterlife was very important? Give **two** reasons from the text.
- Inside the tomb, Carter and his team found several chambers that were crammed with thousands of amazing artefacts dating back more than 3,000 years. What does the word 'crammed' mean in this sentence?
- Look at the section *The life of the boy king*. Which word does the author use to suggest that the cause of King Tut's death is not completely understood?
- Look at the timeline of the discovery. Decide whether these statements are true or false:
 - It took two days to uncover the tomb entrance.
 - The chamber had been sealed for over 4,000 years.
 - Carter was the first to enter the chamber.
 - The sarcophagus of the boy King was decorated and covered in a precious metal.
- Explain why the author does not fully believe that it was the curse that killed Howard Carter.
- Why can't we play Senet today?

Writing outcomes

The following ideas use the article to develop writing:

- Use the article as a stimulus to write an internal monologue from the point of view of Howard Carter. Talk about how the tomb entrance was discovered by chance and build up to the moment that the chamber was opened for the first time in over 3,000 years. *What were Carter's hopes and fears? What wonderful sights did he behold?* This would be an excellent opportunity to develop ideas of the emotional roller coaster: The dig having to be delayed due to war, the rising costs, the resignation of not finding it, moving to the accidental discovery and the opening of the tomb, followed by the celebrity and the fame.
- Write a persuasive letter to Lord Carnarvon to ask him to finance a new adventure. *How would the writer convince the investor to gamble a huge amount of money on the archaeological dig? What could the rewards be?*
- Investigate the mummification process further. It can be a little gory! Use this to create an instructional text to explain how to mummify a body. This text should be humorous and could be in the style of a Horrible History extract.
- Use images from the British Museum of Egyptian artefacts and explain to the children that they are going to write the display cards for the museum. They need to explain what the object is, when it was found, how it is used etc.



Cross-curricular opportunities

Maths

- Use hieroglyphic symbols and give each one a value. Change symbols to modern-day numbers and modern-day numbers to symbols.
- For younger pupils use the non-standard units made famous by the Egyptians. Investigate and measure using hands, cubits, paces and foot length.
- Measure the non-standard units in metric measurements. *How long is a cubit? A foot? How wide is a pace? A hand?* Collect data and discuss why we need standard units. Set word problems appropriate to the year group based around your discoveries.
- Use Number Pyramids to practise addition and reasoning. In a Number Pyramid, the numbers on the lower rows will determine the numbers above them. Start with three numbers and enter them in the bottom row. These can be whole numbers or decimal numbers and can be differentiated to suit the needs of different children.

Science

- Mummify a tomato. Use antibacterial hand wash (containing alcohol) and natron (this is an equal mix of table salt and bicarbonate of soda). Observe the tomato – the colour, the skin, the texture. Scoop out the seeds. Rub the tomato with the antibacterial wash. Weigh the tomato and pack it in a container with the natron. Wait for an agreed period of time and make predictions about the weight of the tomato at the end of the experiment.
- Look at the climate of Egypt. Discuss how the Egyptians used irrigation to make their crops grow. Use this as a stimulus to investigate what is needed to make a plant grow. Set up an experiment to test plant growth in different conditions e.g. in the dark, with no water etc. Plan and decide the best way to carry out the experiment and make predictions.

Geography

- Link to wider curriculum ideas about rivers, habitats, food chains etc.
- Research the importance of the river Nile. Identify and mark it on a map showing where it begins and ends. Along the way add key places e.g. Luxor, Giza and Cairo. Identify how the Egyptians used the river to their advantage for fertile land, irrigation and transport.
- Understand that the flooding of the river helped the Egyptians successfully feed their nation. Look at flood seasons and why flooding occurs. Compare with modern day flooding and climate change. *Why is flooding such a devastating occurrence in modern times?*
- Egyptians invented a nilometer. A nilometer was used to predict flood levels. These were like steps in the river spaced all the way along it. This allowed the Egyptians to have an early prediction system as to whether a flood or drought would occur. *What systems do we use in modern times to protect ourselves?* Look at the Aswan Dam, Thames Barrier etc.
- The Egyptians set their calendars around the Nile River. They had three seasons which were called Akhet, where the river would flood, Peret, the growing season, and Shemu the harvest season. Investigate this further and how life along the Nile differed from the rest of Egypt, which is located in the middle of the Sahara Desert.

Art/DT

- Look at how a shaduf works. Link to the work on the Nile and irrigation. Challenge children to design and build their own shaduf. Test it out!
- Look at examples of Egyptian tomb art. The pictures were supposed to help the dead person once they reached the afterlife. The paintings showed all sorts of things that people did in their everyday lives. Children could create a modern version in the Egyptian style.
- Use Modroc or other modelling materials such as clay or papier mache to create a death mask. These were sometimes called burial masks and were used to cover the face of mummies. Ancient Egyptians believed that they were needed so that the spirit of the dead person could recognise its body. They were often made of linen or papyrus and then painted gold. King Tutankhamun's is one of the most recognisable and could be used as a model.
- Create a landscape representing one of the mountain ranges investigated in Geography.

History

- Create a simple pharaoh timeline. Look more deeply into what role the pharaoh played in Ancient Egypt. *How did someone get the job? What were the dangers?* Link to writing and write a job application.
- Investigate Egyptian gods and goddesses. Find out more about the specific job each of these were tasked to do e.g. Ra was the sun god, easily recognisable due to his hawk's head. The Egyptians believed that every night he was eaten by the sky goddess Nut and reborn every day at sunrise. Later in Egyptian times, he became merged with the god of wind, Amun, to become Amun-Ra. Tutankhamun was named after him as he was so important. His name means 'Living in the image of Amun.' Create a gods and goddesses board game to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
- Investigate the daily lives of Ancient Egyptians. Use archaeological sources to find out that everyone (including women) had a job to do. These jobs were often inherited bakers, farmers, fishermen etc. Some jobs were more important than others e.g. scribes, priests, administrators and the vizier. This could be used as a basis for a non-chronological report or for the creation of a job advert.

R.E

- Share some of the creation myths that the Egyptians told. There are several including Nun and the lotus flower which was warmed every day by Atum, or how Ra was tucked into a lotus flower each night to be kept safe. He came out to play each day and bought the sun with him. The story of Isis and Osiris could also be told. Compare these to other creation stories from major world religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism.
- Ancient Egyptians believed they could only progress in the afterlife if their heart was light. This was achieved by doing good deeds. Use this as a discussion point. How could pupils 'keep their heart light?'



Unlocking the secrets of a very famous pharaoh

The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb is one of the most famous finds of all time.

On the morning of 4 November 1922, Howard Carter and his team were searching for the tomb of Tutankhamun. After almost eight years of carefully scouring the Valley of the Kings, Carter and his team were ready to give up... until someone chanced upon an ancient stone step. This clue led Carter to make one of the most amazing archaeological discoveries of the century – Tutankhamun's tomb.

Inside the tomb, Carter and his team found several chambers that were crammed with thousands of amazing artefacts dating back more than 3,000 years. Astonishingly, one held the sarcophagus (a coffin) of the boy king himself.

The discovery of King Tut's tomb was described as "the archaeological triumph of the 20th century" and sparked a craze that would inspire books and films for many years to come.



A digital impression of King Tut.

Who was Howard Carter?



Born in 1874 in London, Howard Carter first travelled to Egypt when he was 17. Carter was a keen artist and recorded the hieroglyphics (ancient Egyptian writing) on the tombs. In 1907 he met a wealthy aristocrat, Lord Carnarvon, who funded his biggest adventure yet: the search for Tutankhamun's tomb.

The life of the boy king

Tutankhamun lived between 1,343 and 1,323 BC – that's around 3,500 years ago. He was nine years old when he became Pharaoh and ruled for about 10 years before he died. Many experts believe that Tutankhamun may have died of an injury or infection. After his death, his body was mummified and stored in a special coffin.



WORD OF THE WEEK

Egyptology is the study of ancient Egypt's history including the literature, language, religion and objects that people used.

Carter examines the sarcophagus.

What is mummification?

The afterlife was very important to the Egyptians. They preserved their dead by a process known as mummification. This involved removing a person's organs along with all the moisture from the body. The body was then wrapped in long strips of linen before being put in a coffin called a sarcophagus. They did this because they believed it would help prepare the body and spirit for the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians built more than 100 pyramids where the mummified remains of their rulers were kept in chambers.



King Tut's curse

"Death shall come on swift wings to him who disturbs the peace of the king" were the words said to be engraved on King Tut's tomb. Ever since Carter's discovery, stories have circulated that those who opened the tomb were cursed. Although curses aren't real, some people who helped find the tomb did come to untimely ends. Lord Carnarvon died of a disease caused by a mosquito bite in March 1923, just a few months after the tomb was opened – although he suffered from poor health anyway. By 1929, 11 people connected to the tomb were said to have died early.

Three treasures from Tutankhamun's tomb

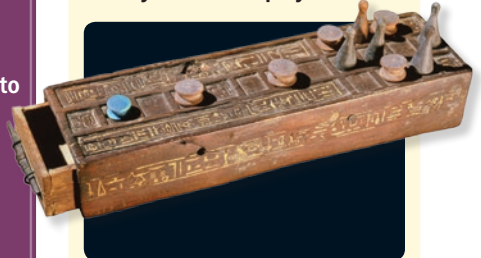
The statue of Anubis

The statue of the god Anubis is made of wood, plaster and gold leaf. Anubis was the god of the underworld and was thought to protect graves. He is often shown with the head of a jackal.



A board game

The board game, senet, is around 5,000 years old. It looks a bit like chess, but the rules have been lost to time so no-one knows exactly how it was played.



The royal chariot

King Tutankhamun's chariot was dismantled and stacked inside his tomb. The chariot is partly made of gold and would have been pulled by horses. It has now been reconstructed and stands in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.



A timeline of the discovery

1914

After studying an ancient cup with King Tut's name on it, which was found in 1905, Carter believed he would find the young pharaoh's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. The work was delayed by the First World War but Carter resumed it after the war ended in 1918.



Lord Carnarvon.



This casket was found in the tomb.

4 November 1922

It was a boy working as a water fetcher who spotted the step that would eventually lead to King Tut. It took a day and a half to remove the sand and find the stone doorway of the tomb.



Carter and Carnarvon in the tomb.

26 November 1922

Carter waited for Lord Carnarvon to arrive at the site before opening the tomb. Carter was the first to look inside and when he did, Carnarvon asked, "Can you see anything?" Carter replied, "Yes, wonderful things". It was the first time in more than 3,000 years that anyone had seen inside the ancient chamber.



A statue of the god Anubis.

16 February 1923

Within the tomb there were separate chambers and in one of these chambers Carter found the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun. The inner layer of the coffin was made of pure gold and covered in beautiful patterns and precious jewels. King Tut and his sarcophagus still lie in the tomb in a special box to protect them from any damage.



Carter at work on the coffin.

1932

It took 10 years for the team to excavate and catalogue the 5,398 artefacts identified by Carter in the chambers.

