

Discovering Tutankhamun's Tomb!

Reading Comprehension

Most people have heard of Tutankhamun and will definitely recognise his famous golden death mask but how many people can remember the name of the man who helped discover the Boy King's lost remains – Howard Carter? Read on to find out more about how this amazing archaeologist finally found the king's remains after they were hidden for over three thousand years.

Between 1915 and 1922, Howard Carter began excavating in the Valley of the Kings on behalf of a wealthy Englishman called Lord Carnarvon, who was an amateur archaeologist. Carter had previously worked for the Egyptologist Theodore Davis and together they had discovered the tombs of Thutmose I and Thutmose III.

By 1914, Carter and Carnarvon had received a licence to dig in the Valley of the Kings but this was delayed due to the outbreak of World War I. Despite the war, Carter remained convinced that he would be able to locate the tomb of Tutankhamun and he kept asking for more funds from Lord Carnarvon in order to complete his mission. Although he continued to dig for the next six years, Carter failed to find any clues to indicate where the king might be buried. Many might have given up by now but, in 1922, he returned to Lord Carnarvon's home – Highclere Castle – in order to ask for just one more season of funding.



It was lucky that he did because they were close to making one of the most important discoveries in history! After just a few weeks of returning to Egypt, Carter instructed his workers to excavate the workmen's huts at the base of the



tomb of Rameses VI on 1st November 1922. These had once belonged to the people who had built the pharaoh's tomb and Carter realised that anything beneath them would have been untouched since the tombs in the valley had been cut into rock.



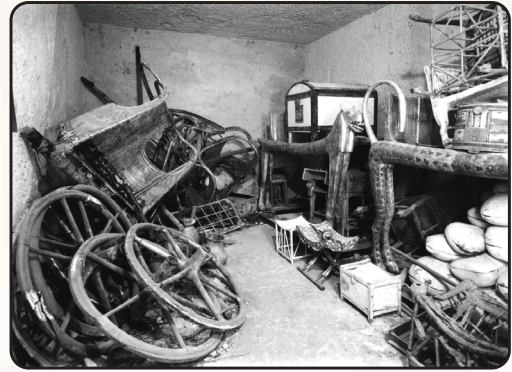
Just a few days later, by 4th November, a step had been revealed by a water boy who had hit a strange rock with his heel as he tried to make a place for the water jars for the workers. As he began to clear the sand around the rock, he realised that he was uncovering a step so he rushed to tell Carter. The whole group were extremely excited because they knew that most of the tombs in the valley had stairways cutting into the rock. As quickly as possible, they began to clear the area and gradually yet more steps were unearthed! But where did the steps lead to?

The following day, Carter and his team uncovered a stone doorway which had the royal seal on the plaster coating around it. This could mean only one thing – the stairway must lead to a tomb of a very important person! Fearful that someone else might enter the tomb without him, he ordered his workmen to guard the entrance whilst he waited for Lord Carnarvon and his daughter to arrive from England.

After almost three weeks, Carnarvon and Lady Evelyn Herbert arrived in Luxor and the day after their arrival they visited the excavation site. However, when the door was fully exposed, they noticed that there had been some damage to it, which caused them to believe that tomb robbers had already broken in and stolen anything of value or importance. Despite their fears, the men decided to continue but again were disappointed to find evidence that someone had been here before them.

On Sunday 26th November, Carter made a tiny hole in the upper left-hand corner of the second door that they had previously discovered.

Initially, he only saw darkness but, as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he saw a huge number of peculiar objects: strange animals, golden statues and chariots. He was amazed! Hastily, Carter widened the hole further so that he and Carnarvon could squeeze through and enter the small room. They were now in the antechamber.



After exploring the contents of the room, the men noticed another sealed door which led to an even smaller room called the annex. This room also contained items belonging to Tutankhamun which he would take with him to the after-life. These included items such as eating and cooking utensils, clothing and tools and helped Carter to understand more about the pharaoh's daily life.

When the men returned to the antechamber, they noted two life-size models of the king positioned near the right wall. The statues were facing each other and seemed to be guarding something. Could it be the entrance to another room? Before they could explore further, they needed to remove and catalogue the objects they had discovered so far. This was not an easy job and it took almost seven weeks for Carter and his team to complete!

Frustratingly, Carter and Carnarvon were forced to wait until 17th February 1923 before they were able to dismantle the sealed door between the statues! However,

the wait was worth it as they had finally found the burial chamber and Tutankhamun's final resting place! Here before him was the Boy King's sarcophagus with the seals all intact.



Inside the burial chamber, Carter observed numerous ritual and personal objects. There were also paintings on the wall but it was clear that this had been rushed which suggested that the king had died unexpectedly. In addition to the burial chamber, a treasury was also discovered and this housed more personal items such as the embalmed bodies of Tutankhamun's infant children as well as the canopic jars which contained the king's organs. It is believed that Carter found over 5,000 items belonging to the king, many of which are now located in a museum in Egypt.



QUESTIONS

1. Which word in the introduction suggests that the author is certain that the reader will have heard of Tutankhamun? (1 mark)

2. How long had the king's remains been hidden for? (1 mark)

3. Circle the word which is closest in meaning to 'excavating' from the options below. (1 mark)

searching

building

exiting

digging

4. Read the paragraph starting "By 1914..." What suggests that Carter was a determined person? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer. (3 marks)

5. Why did Carter tell the workers to excavate the workmen's huts? (2 marks)

6. What was so significant about locating the step? (2 marks)

7. How do we know that Carter was anxious about his discovery being explored without him? (1 mark)



8. a) What suggested that the tomb had already been raided? (1 mark)

8. b) Why was this an issue? (1 mark)

9. Match the words in the grid to their closest synonym. (1 mark)

initially

familiarised

accustomed

strange

peculiar

firstly

hastily

speedily

11. Tick to show whether the statements are true or false. (1 mark)

The annex contained items belonging to Tutankhamun.

true

☐

false

☐

There were four life-size statues facing each other.

☐☐

All the objects had to be removed and recorded.

☐☐

It took over two months to remove and record all of the items.

☐☐

The king's death had been expected.

☐☐

11. Match the date to the correct events. (1 mark)

1st November

A worker finds a step.

17th February

The sealed door between the statues is dismantled.

4th November

Carter makes a tiny hole.

26th November

The workers are instructed to excavate the workmen's huts.

ANSWERS

1. Which word in the introduction suggests that the author is certain that the reader will have heard of Tutankhamun? (1 mark)

definitely

2. How long had the king's remains been hidden for? (1 mark)

three thousand years

3. Circle the word which is closest in meaning to 'excavating' from the options below. (1 mark)

searching

building

exiting

digging

4. Read the paragraph starting "By 1914..." What suggests that Carter was a determined person? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer. (3 marks)

Children to use some of the following ideas to justify his determination:

- Despite the war he remained convinced he could locate the tomb; he didn't let the war stop him from working.
- He asked for more funds which shows he thought he could be successful.
- He dug for 6 years when many would have given up having not had any success.
- He asked for another season of funding despite a lack of success.

5. Why did Carter tell the workers to excavate the workmen's huts? (2 marks)

These had once belonged to the people who had built the pharaoh's tomb and Carter realised that anything beneath them would have been untouched since the tombs in the valley had been cut into rock.

6. What was so significant about locating the step? (2 marks)

The step suggested that this was the entrance to a tomb as most of the tombs in the valley had stairways cutting into the rock.

7. How do we know that Carter was anxious about his discovery being explored without him? (1 mark)

He ordered his workmen to guard the entrance.

8. a) What suggested that the tomb had already been raided? (1 mark)

There was some damage to the door.

8. b) Why was this an issue? (1 mark)

It caused the excavators to believe that tomb robbers had already broken in and stolen anything of value or importance which would mean they had been digging for no reason.

9. Match the words in the grid to their closest synonym. (1 mark)

| | |
|------------|--------------|
| initially | familiarised |
| accustomed | strange |
| peculiar | firstly |
| hastily | speedily |

11. Tick to show whether the statements are true or false. (1 mark)

| | true | false |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| The annex contained items belonging to Tutankhamun. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There were four life-size statues facing each other. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| All the objects had to be removed and recorded. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It took over two months to remove and record all of the items. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| The king's death had been expected. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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