

Class - xi

Subject - English

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Discovering Tut: the Saga Continues

Explanation

He was just a teenager when he died. The last heir of a powerful family that had ruled Egypt and its empire for centuries, he was laid to rest laden with gold and eventually forgotten. Since the discovery of his tomb in 1922, the modern world has speculated about what happened to him, with murder being the most extreme possibility. Now, leaving his tomb for the first time in almost 80 years, Tut has undergone a CT scan that offers new clues about his life and death — and provides precise data for an accurate forensic reconstruction of the boyish pharaoh.

Heir – Inheritor, successor

Laden – loaded

Speculated- form a theory without evidence

Tomb- an enclosure to bury the dead

Forensic Reconstruction – the process of recreating the face of an individual

Pharaoh- a ruler in ancient Egypt

Tutankhamun, also known as Tut, was a teenager when he died. He was the last successor of his powerful Pharaoh Dynasty which ruled Egypt and its empire for centuries. He was laid on rest, heavily loaded with gold. His tomb was discovered in 1922 which made the world raise a question about what had happened to him and whether he had been murdered? After almost 80 years, his body was about to undergo a CT scan which would give new information and clues about his life and death. His face would be recreated with the help of a procedure called forensic reconstruction.

AN angry wind stirred up ghostly dust devils as King Tut was taken from his resting place in the ancient Egyptian cemetery known as the Valley of the Kings*. Dark-bellied clouds had scudded across the desert sky all day and now were veiling the stars in casket grey. It was 6 p.m. on 5 January 2005. The world's most famous mummy glided head first into a CT scanner brought here to probe the lingering medical mysteries of this little understood young ruler who died more than 3,300 years ago.

Stirred – move or cause to move slightly

Ghostly – eerie and unnatural; unreal

Resting place- here, the grave

Cemetery- a large burial ground

Dark-bellied – dark in colour

Scudded across – moving quickly; it refers to the movement of the dark-bellied clouds

Veiling – to cover something

Casket- a small ornamental box or chest for holding jewels, letters, or other valued objects.

Casket grey – It means that the grey clouds were like a grey coloured casket which contained the stars. The stars are like jewels which are kept in a casket.

Glided – quite, continuous motion

Probe – to investigate, find out

Lingering – long-lasting

A fast, strange and unnatural wind was blowing as King Tut's body was taken from his grave called 'Valleys of the Kings', an ancient Egyptian cemetery (The location of the Valley of the Kings is given in the image). Dark clouds moved quickly across the desert all day long and later, they covered the stars. On January 5, 2005, at 6 pm, King Tut's mummy which is the world's most famous mummy was placed in the CT scanner to investigate the mystery behind his death which had occurred more than 3300 years ago.

All afternoon the usual line of tourists from around the world had descended into the cramped, rock-cut tomb some 26 feet underground to pay their respects. They gazed at the murals on the walls of the burial chamber and peered at Tut's gilded face, the most striking feature of his mummy-shaped outer coffin lid. Some visitors read from guidebooks in a whisper. Others stood silently, perhaps pondering Tut's untimely death in his late teens, or wondering with a shiver if the pharaoh's curse — death or misfortune falling upon those who disturbed him — was really true.

Descended – moved or gathered

Cramped – very small to fit into

Rock-cut – made in a rock by cutting it

Gazed – to look in surprise or in admiration

Murals – a painting or other artwork executed directly on the wall

Gilded – covered with a thin sheet or coating of gold

Striking- prominent

Whisper- to speak in a low voice

Pondering – think about something carefully

All afternoon, tourists visited the 26 feet deep, underground rock-cut tomb to pay respect to the king. Many people stuffed into the small tomb and looked in admiration at the murals on the walls of the chamber and took a look at the face of Tut that had been painted with gold. While visitors read the guidebooks in a hushed tone, some stood silently, wondering about his untimely death in his teen years. They might also be wondering if the curse of the pharaoh which leads to the descent of misfortune upon the person who disturbs him is true.

“The mummy is in very bad condition because of what Carter did in the 1920s,” said Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities, as he leaned over the body for a long first look. Carter—Howard Carter, that is — was the British archaeologist who in 1922 discovered Tut’s tomb after years of futile searching. Its contents, though hastily ransacked in antiquity, were surprisingly complete. They remain the richest royal collection ever found and have become part of the pharaoh’s legend. Stunning artefacts in gold, their eternal brilliance meant to guarantee resurrection, caused a sensation at the time of the discovery — and still get the most attention. But Tut was also buried with everyday things he’d want in the afterlife: board games, a bronze razor, linen undergarments, cases of food and wine.

Futile – pointless; incapable of producing the result of something

Hastily – fast; swiftly

Ransacked – raid; go through a place to steal or damage something

Antiquity – age, oldness

Resurrection – restoration to life

Afterlife- life after death, based on the belief that the essential part of an individual’s identity continues to the next life after the death of the physical body

As Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of Egypt, leaned over the body to have a look, he said that the mummy was in a very bad condition because of what the British archaeologist Howard Carter did to it in the 1920s. He discovered King Tut’s tomb in 1922 after a long search. The valuable treasures of Tut had been explored earlier too but surprisingly, they were complete. The treasure found at Tut’s grave is the richest till date and has come to be known as the Pharaoh’s legend. It has artefacts in gold which are eternally beautiful and as good as new. Such artefacts still get attention. Tut was buried with things of daily use like a razor made of bronze, games, linen undergarments and boxes of food and wine which he could use in the next life.

After months of carefully recording the pharaoh’s funerary treasures, Carter began investigating his three nested coffins. Opening the first, he found a shroud adorned with garlands of willow and olive leaves, wild celery, lotus petals, and cornflowers, the faded evidence of a burial in March or April. When he finally reached the mummy, though, he ran into trouble. The ritual resins had hardened, cementing Tut to the bottom of his solid gold coffin. “No amount of legitimate force could move them,” Carter wrote later. “What was to be done?”

Funerary Treasures – the valuable things with which the king was buried

three nested coffin- three cofins placed one in another in order of decreasing size. The innermost coffin houses the body of the deceased.

Shroud – a length of cloth in which a dead person is wrapped

Adorned – decorated

Garlands of willow – a wreath of flowers and leaves

Mummy- a body of a human being or animal that has been ceremonially preserved by removal of the internal organs, treatment with natron and resin, and wrapping in bandages.

Ritual – here, the resins used in the ceremony of mummification

Resins – a sticky flammable substance that is insoluble in water

Legitimate – reasonable

Carter took a few months to record the treasures found in Tut's grave. Then he began investigating his three coffins which were nested one in another. In the first coffin, he found a piece of cloth with garlands of willow, olive leaves, wild celery, lotus petals and cornflower, which suggested that he had been buried in the months of March or April. When he reached the third coffin, he was in trouble. The body had hardened due to the resins which had cemented the body and it had stuck to the bottom of the coffin which was made of gold. Carter wondered what to do next because no amount of force could separate the two.

The sun can beat down like a hammer this far south in Egypt, and Carter tried to use it to loosen the resins. For several hours he set the mummy outside in blazing sunshine that heated it to 149 degrees Fahrenheit. Nothing budged. He reported with scientific detachment that “the consolidated material had to be chiselled away from beneath the limbs and trunk before it was possible to raise the king's remains.”

Blazing – very hot

Budged – moved or shifted; a slight movement

Chiselled away – to cut something with a chisel

Carter tried to loosen the resins by keeping the body in the hot sun. He kept the mummy in 149 degrees Fahrenheit heat for several hours but still, it remained stuck. He reported that a chisel could be used to cut down the mummy from the limbs and the trunk so that Tut's body could be taken out of the coffin.