

Social Studies LPA Assessment

6th Grade –“The Egyptian Mummy Project”

Instructions:

Read the following article carefully and **make notes in the margin** as you read.
Your notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer’s strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment.

Student _____ SSID _____
Teacher _____ Class Period _____
School _____ School District _____

King Tutankhaten—whose remains are one of the most famous Egyptian mummies—died in 1323 B.C.E. He was 18 or 19 years old. For a long time, archaeologists wondered how the young pharaoh had died. In January 2005, for the first time in 80 years, a team of scientists took “King Tut” from his tomb.

The team of scientists removed the stone lid from King Tut’s sarcophagus, or stone coffin. They lifted the wooden box containing the mummy and carefully carried it outside. A van holding a CT (or CAT) scanner was waiting near the tomb. This scanner is a large, specialized X-ray machine that uses a computer to show three-dimensional images of a body.

Inside the van, the scientists pulled back layers of cloth surrounding the king. Still in its box, the mummy was placed in the CT scanner for about 15 minutes. The machine took around 1,700 images. Scanning King Tut was the first act of the members of the Egyptian Mummy Project. Scientists from around the world took part in this five-year project to study and preserve the ancient mummies of Egypt.

Ancient Embalmers

The ancient Egyptians turned their dead into mummies to prevent decay and to preserve their bodies. The Egyptians believed that a person would need his or her body in the afterlife.

The process of making a mummy was complex. First, the embalmers took the internal organs out of the body. They dried the organs and the body with *natron*,

*Notes on my thoughts,
reactions and questions as I
read:*

a type of salt that they found in the desert. The organs were then wrapped in linen and stored in jars or placed back inside the body. Sometimes the body was stuffed and decorated with makeup, jewelry, and clothing. Finally, it was wrapped in long strips of linen and put in a coffin.

Two British scientists, named Richard Evershed and Stephen Buckley, studied 13 mummies that had been created over a 2,300-year period. They concluded that the ancient Egyptian embalmers used very advanced methods in their work.

Studying Mummies, Then and Now

In 1922, Englishman Howard Carter made one of the most important discoveries in Egyptian archaeology—he found the tomb of Tutankhaten in the Valley of the Kings. This was important because Tutankhaten’s mummy was found exactly as the priests had left it more than 3,000 years earlier. In most other tombs, the mummies were missing. This kept archaeologists from studying the details about how ancient Egyptians were buried.

In Carter’s time, the study of mummies was a simpler process than it is today. Back then, archaeologists would remove the bandages from a mummy to examine the remains. But after a time, scientists began to realize that their actions were causing damage to the bodies. Often, mummies fell apart when taken out of their wrappings. Today, it’s sometimes hard to tell if damage to a mummy dates from a king’s lifetime, the embalming process, or the way archaeologists treated mummies that were discovered in the 1920s.

Modern scientists use all sorts of technology to study mummies. One technique is to X-ray the body. As people age, their bones become thinner and weaker. By examining X-rays of bones, scientists can tell how old people are. In this way, archaeologists have discovered that ancient Egyptians lived short lives, at least by modern standards. Most rich Egyptians lived no longer than about 35 years. For poor Egyptians, life was even shorter. Most did not live much beyond about 25 years.

Since 1926, the year Carter returned King Tut to his tomb, the young pharaoh’s remains have been X-rayed twice. The first time was in 1968. Those X-rays showed a bone fragment inside the king’s skull. The finding prompted the idea that King Tut might have died as a result of a blow to the head.

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Demonstrate Understanding

1. *Summarize the text for someone who has not read it. Make sure you include the main idea and supporting details.*

Demonstrate Understanding

2. *Explain the sequence of the mummification process in detail.*

Develop an Interpretation

3. *Based on the text, why would you conclude that many mummies were missing in the 1920's when the archaeologists went to find them?*

Develop an Interpretation

4. *Based on the information presented in paragraph nine, what can you conclude about the living conditions of ancient Egyptians?*

Analyze Text

5. *Removing mummies from their tombs for scientific purposes is a controversial idea, and many people have different opinions about whether it is right or wrong. Does the author seem to support using mummies for science or disagree with doing so? Use evidence to support your claim.*