

Egyptian Mummies

It was very important to ancient Egyptian religious beliefs that the human body was preserved. A method of artificial preservation, called mummification was developed by the ancient Egyptians. Mummification was a complicated and lengthy process which lasted up to 70 days.

A mummy is the body of a person (or an animal) that has been preserved after death. Any Egyptian who could afford to pay for the expensive process of preserving their bodies for the afterlife could be mummified. The Egyptians definitely believed in life after death. They believed that they had to preserve their bodies so they could use them in the afterlife.

The Egyptians believed that when they died, they would make a journey to another world where they would lead a new life. They would need all the things they had used when they were alive, so their families would put those things in their graves. Egyptians paid large amounts of money to have their bodies properly preserved. Egyptians who were poor were buried in the sand while the rich ones were buried in a tomb.

The process of mummification took a very long time, from start to finish, it took about 70 days to embalm a body. The priest in charge would wear the mask of a jackal representing the god Anubis. The pharaoh's internal organs were removed from his body so that the body could be properly dried out. Canopic jars that resembled the gods were used by ancient Egyptians to hold the organs. After this long process the mummy was now ready for its journey to the afterlife.

The Egyptians thought the heart was the center of intelligence and emotion. The Egyptians believed that Anubis, the god of mummification, would weigh the pharaoh's heart against a feather. If the pharaoh's heart was lighter than the feather he could enter the afterlife.

After mummification, ancient Egyptians were buried with their belongings and the tomb walls were painted with scenes from the dead person's life. The objects included furniture, games and even food was placed in the tombs for the long After Life journey!



Name _____

Egyptian Mummies – Questions

1. What is mummification?
2. What is a mummy?
3. Who in ancient Egypt could have their body mummified?
4. Why did ancient Egyptians preserve their bodies?
5. Why did ancient Egyptians put material things in the tombs of the pharaoh?
6. Was mummification expensive or cheap?
7. Where were rich Egyptians buried?
8. Where were poor Egyptians buried?
9. How long did the process of mummification take?
10. What would the priest in charge of the mummification wear?
11. Why were the internal organs taken out of the body during mummification?
12. How were the organs stored?
13. What did ancient Egyptians believe about the heart?
14. What did the god Anubis do with the heart before the pharaoh went to the afterlife?
15. What happened to the body after mummification?