



Teacher's Guide

Egyptians: Conflicting Visions of Immortality **Cultural Legacies of Ancient Civilizations Series**

Grade Levels:

7 - 12

Subject Areas:

Social Studies

World History

World Geography and Cultures

Synopsis:

Tells the story of the Pharaoh Akhenaten's legacy that was deliberately obliterated by polytheistic priests because his monotheism threatened their power. Contrasts this with the practices of mummification and building intricate tombs that failed to create the intended immortality for other god-kings whose tombs and mummies were destroyed by grave robbers and time's destructive forces. Like a modern mystery story, traces the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in the 20th century and the gradual piecing together of the truth about Akhenaten's reign, about his consort Queen Nefertiti, and the death and burial of their son, Tutankhamen.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain why the Egyptian nobility practiced mummification and built huge tombs.
- Contrast Egyptian ideals of immortality with the temporal powers of the priests.
- Explain why the priests effaced all signs of Akhenaten's reign.
- Describe how Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamen's tomb.
- Begin to understand that religion and politics are often interconnected.

Vocabulary:

aspirations, quest, eternal life, afterlife, embalming, transitioning, trappings, ingenious, plundered, artifacts, exploits, pivotal, Egyptology, dispatched, perfunctory, inscriptions, hieroglyphs, suppressed, pantheon, edict, intermediaries, redundant, antiquity, visionary, concessions, royal conventions,

austere, deities, courtier, regent, lineage, unvarnished, elongated, stylistic, Marfan Syndrome, genetic deformity, unconventional, radical, immortality

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

In ancient Egypt, why did the nobility mummify the dead?

Do people today believe in the immortality of the body? Could present-day attitudes towards immortality have been influenced by Egyptian beliefs? What makes you think so or not think so?

How did archaeologists piece together an understanding of Egyptian views of the afterlife?

Did ancient Egyptians believe in one god or many gods? How do you know?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

Can you imagine how Howard Carter felt when he went down the staircase and discovered Tutankhamen's tomb? How did he and other archaeologists recreate Akhenaten's story?

Why did the priests feel threatened by Akhenaten's plan to build a city dedicated to the worship of Aten?

How did Akhenaten's belief system contrast with that of the priests? What kind of a person was Akhenaten?

What does this story tell us about religion and politics in ancient Egypt?

Further Activities:

Investigate the treasures that were found in Tutankhamen's tomb. Trace their influence on archaeologists and on the general public who were able to view the artifacts in traveling expositions.

On the Internet or in libraries, find illustrations of Tell el-Amarna.

Find newspaper articles that describe Howard Carter's discoveries and the subsequent mysterious chain of events that followed.

Further investigate evidence that illustrates the nature of Akhenaten's conflict with the priests.

Research the concepts of monotheism and polytheism. In which major world civilizations have they occurred? Can they still be found in existing civilizations? Do the two sometimes overlap? How?

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