

The Making of a Mummy

Name _____

Mummification was a process undertaken by Ancient Egyptians to preserve the bodies of their loved ones after death. Egyptians believed that the body was the home of the soul, and if their bodies decayed, the spirits of their loved ones could be lost; thus, they devised a lengthy, complex process of mummifying dead bodies.

The mummification process consists of two main stages: embalming and wrapping. During the embalming stage, the Egyptians would bring the dead body into a tent called an *ibu*, wash it with palm wine, and rinse it with water from the Nile River. Then, they would remove internal organs like the intestines from the body, which are usually the first part of the body to decompose. The brain would be pulled out of the body through the nose using a large hook. The Egyptians left the heart inside the body, however, as they regarded it to be the center of intelligence and a spiritual guide for the person in the afterlife.

After removing internal organs, the body would be stuffed with a mineral salt called natron to dry it out; after forty days, the body would be washed again with water from the Nile and oils to keep the skin supple. The final step in embalming was to return the now-dehydrated organs back to the body and to stuff the body with dry powders like sawdust to make it look more lifelike.

When the embalming process was complete, the wrapping of the body with linens began. The wrapping process started with the head, neck, fingers, and toes, and then progressed in layers to the other body parts. Resin was added between each layer of bandages to help them stick together, and religious amulets were added as well to protect the body and spirit during the journey to the underworld. After the body was fully wrapped many times, it was placed in multiple coffins and finally laid to rest in a stone sarcophagus inside its tomb. The whole process spanned about seventy days.

The mummification process allowed for the preservation of lost loved ones for many years, as well as gave the living a sense of peace that their friend or relative was on the way to a better place. Today, we can examine ancient sarcophagi and try to further understand the lives of ancient Egyptians.

- 1. Which of the following materials is not used as part of the mummification process?**
 - a. Palm wine
 - b. Resin
 - c. River water
 - d. Palm leaves

- 2. With which of the following statements would an ancient Egyptian agree with?**
 - a. The brain acts as a spiritual guide to the afterlife for a dead ancestor.
 - b. The soul of our ancestor might be lost forever if his/her body is not mummified.
 - c. Mummification will only preserve the body of our lost ancestor for a few days.
 - d. The brain is the home of the soul.

- 3. Why might the Egyptians dehydrate a dead body's organs prior to mummification?**
 - a. To remove all bodily fluids that might prevent preservation of the mummy.
 - b. To use the bodily fluids for other purposes, such as blood transfusions.
 - c. To prevent the organs from pumping blood within the dead body.
 - d. To make the dead body look as lifelike as possible.

- 4. Which of the following WAS NOT part of the embalming stage?**
 - a. The body would be taken into an ibu.
 - b. Internal organs were removed.
 - c. The body would be wrapped in linens.
 - d. The body would be stuffed with natron.

- 5. Which of the following is true according to the Egyptians?**
 - a. The heart was the center of intelligence.
 - b. The brain was the body's spiritual guide in the afterlife.
 - c. It was important that the heart be the first organ removed from the body.
 - d. Sawdust was added to the body to make the decomposition process faster.

- 6. Which of the following mummies is least likely to be preserved over time?**
 - a. A mummy washed with water from a river other than the Nile
 - b. A mummy wrapped with multiple layers of linens
 - c. A mummy laid to rest in a stone sarcophagus
 - d. A mummy with no resin added to its bandages

7. Which of the following is the main goal of mummification?

- a. To ensure safe passage to the afterlife and preserve the bodies of loved ones.
- b. To preserve bodies over time so they could be studied in the future.
- c. To trap the souls of loved ones within their bodies.
- d. To remove organs from dead bodies to be used for organ donation.