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classroom TUTORIALS

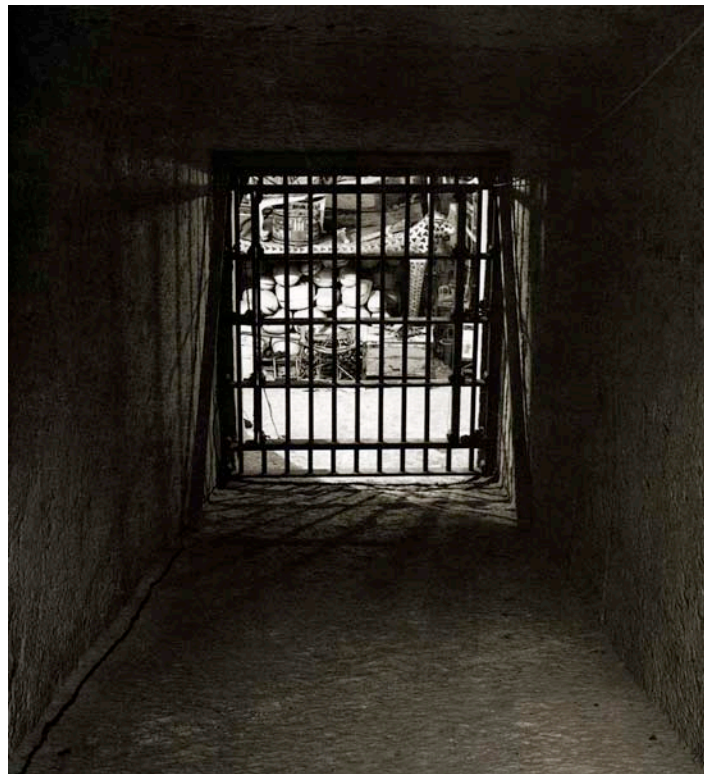
The Tomb of King Tutankhamun

Tomb robbery in ancient Egypt was very common, and almost all of the royal burials were looted in antiquity. In fact, according to Howard Carter, King Tutankhamun's tomb, the most intact ancient Egyptian tomb ever found, was probably robbed at least twice. Shortly after the burial, thieves broke in and took metals, linen, oils, and perfumes. Officials soon discovered this break-in and resealed the entrance corridor, this time filling it with limestone chips. Necropolis officials resealed the door and stamped it with their seal. But soon after, another group of thieves entered it, and were caught red handed! Again the tomb had to be closed and resealed. This time objects were put back into the tomb in a very haphazard way.

This is how British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the tomb on November 4, 1922. The most famous tomb in the Valley of the Kings, the tomb of Tutankhamun, was filled with exquisite ancient treasures. Carter had spent six seasons searching for the tomb in the Valley of the Kings, and when he finally peered into it, it was a spectacular sight. Here are Carter's own words about the event:

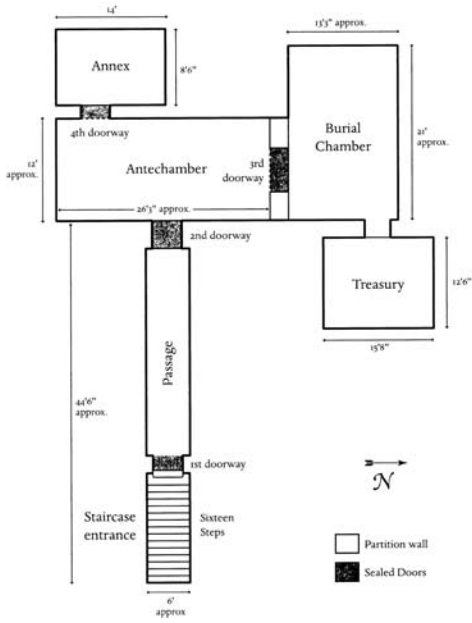
At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues and gold—everywhere the glint of gold...I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, "Can you see anything?" it was all I could do to get out the words, "Yes, wonderful things."

Entry passage
leading to
the Tomb of
Tutankhamun.



GRIFFITH INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

classroom TUTORials **The Tomb of King Tutankhamun**



The tomb of King Tutankhamun is unlike other royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings in both plan and size. The simplicity of the plan, its small size, and the youthful age of the king at the time of his death (he was only 19), has led scholars to suggest that Tutankhamun died suddenly, and that the tomb was originally constructed for one of his advisors, Ay or Horemheb.

The plan of Tutankhamun's tomb consists of a long entrance passage and four small chambers, named the Annex, Antechamber, Treasury, and Burial Chamber by Howard Carter. The narrow entry passage leads to the Antechamber, which is attached to the Annex on one side and the Burial Chamber on another. The Burial Chamber leads to the Treasury.

The Antechamber was filled with boxes, jars, furniture, and dismantled chariots, piled one on top of the other in a haphazard fashion. At the far end of the Antechamber, Carter found a sealed doorway flanked by two gilded guardian figures of the king. Behind this wall of mud plaster, Carter was confronted with an almost solid wall of richly gilded wood. This was the south wall of the first of three shrines that surrounded the red granite sarcophagus.

The Burial Chamber is the only room that was decorated with painting. The east wall shows the funeral of Tutankhamun. Mourners pull his mummy on a sledge. The two with shaved heads likely represent the viziers of Upper and Lower Egypt. Egyptologists have speculated that the person directly before the sledge is the general Horemheb, the ruler of the army who became pharaoh after the death of Tutankhamun.

The north wall of the Burial Chamber shows the next three encounters in the king's journey after death. The first scene is Tutankhamun's advisor, Ay, performing the Opening of the Mouth ritual on the mummy of the deceased king. This ritual revived the mummy and returned the use of his senses in the afterlife. In the next scene, the sky goddess Nut greets and offers libations to the king, who is seen striding forth with a mace in one hand and a staff in the other. The last scene on the north wall shows King Tutankhamun accompanied by his *ka*, or life force, embracing Osiris.

Howard Carter and his team had to clear the rooms of their piles of treasure. Each artifact had to be labeled, photographed in place (*in situ*), and removed. After removal they then had to be cleaned, stabilized, and transferred to the museum in Cairo. Carter and his team worked for ten years!



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ARCHIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EGYPTIAN ART



TOP TO BOTTOM
Plan of the tomb of King Tutankhamun

Antechamber filled with boxes, jars, furniture, and dismantled chariots.

East wall showing Tutankhamun's funeral.



North wall showing the next three encounters in the king's journey after death.

classroom TUTORIALS **The Tomb of King Tutankhamun**



The west wall of the Burial Chamber is decorated with a number of baboons. This scene depicts the hours of the Amduat, a detailed roadmap to the underworld that corresponds to the 12 hours of night. The Egyptians thought that Tutankhamun had to travel through these hours to be reborn in the afterlife. On top of the west wall a scarab beetle, rides in the solar boat, flanked by two Osirises who raise their arms to the god of dawn.

On the south wall there is a depiction of the king being greeted by deities Anubis, Isis, Hathor, and three gods of the netherworld as he enters the afterlife.

The Burial Chamber housed the mummy of King Tutankhamun. The mummy is not in the exhibition because Egyptian law requires that it remain in his tomb in Egypt for all eternity. While King Tutankhamun (and his funerary mask) are national treasures that cannot leave Egypt, a number of artifacts found on the king's mummy are in this exhibition. The gold finger and toe stalls were found in place, adorning Tutankhamun's hands and feet. This pair of gold sandals, made for funerary use, were found on the mummy.

On the north end of the Burial Chamber's east wall, there was an entryway to another room that Carter called the Treasury. Guarded by the statue of the funerary jackal god, Anubis, this room housed the viscera (internal organs) of the king, jewelry, and gilded statues of the gods and of Tutankhamun.

The Annex was the last room in King Tutankhamun's tomb to be excavated. Originally this room was likely meant to house unguents, precious oils, foodstuffs, and wine, though it also served as a storage area for overflow objects.

The treasures from the tomb of King Tutankhamun are spectacular. Artifacts from this find serve as a standard of timeless beauty. The soul of this relatively minor king in ancient Egypt was quite well provided for. It makes us wonder what other royal tombs might have contained as well as what may still lay beneath the sands of Egypt. To access a 3D version of King Tutankhamun's tomb on the National Geographic website, visit the link <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/tut/mysteries/index.html> and click on "the Pharaoh Awaits."



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Gold finger and toe stalls



Gold sandals

TOP TO BOTTOM

The west wall of the burial chamber, decorated with baboons.

The south wall, depicts the king greeted by deities.

Anubis, god of the dead, rests atop a portable shrine at the entrance to the Treasury.