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MICHAEL C.  
CARLOS  
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# classroom TUTORIALS



## Canopic Coffinette



**F**ound in Tutankhamun's canopic chest, this beautiful miniature coffin (A) from the exhibition once held the king's mummified stomach. It is one of a set of four mummiform containers that held the king's internal organs—the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines. Each of these canopic coffinettes is made of gold and inlaid with carnelian, lapis lazuli, and colored glass. When you first look at this piece, it brings to mind the very famous funerary mask of King Tutankhamun. However, when comparing these two objects, small differences in facial features are apparent. On the coffinette the nose and lips are more slender, the face is shaped differently, and the eyes are larger. Why would these differences exist? Egyptologists have discovered that these coffinettes were originally made for a member of the royal family other than Tutankhamun, either his predecessor Smenkhkare or Akhenaten's son, Neferneferuaten. By closely examining a cartouche on the coffinette's interior, they determined that the royal name was reworked to write King Tutankhamun's name.

An engraved depiction of the sky goddess, Nut , appears on the interior lid of the coffinette (B). The goddess wears a bead-net dress and stands upon the hieroglyph for gold (*nbw*) with her winged arms raised. This gesture indicated that the deity of the sky would protect the king on his journey to the afterlife.

The four coffinettes depict Tutankhamun in the form of the god of the underworld, Osiris, shown as a mummy with folded arms holding the crook and flail. The flail, with its three strands of beads, likely takes its shape from a flywhisk and was usually paired with a crook, a type of cane with a hooked handle. Tutankhamun's funerary mask and the coffinette also wear the false beard of Osiris. In life, this type of faux facial hair was attached to the face of the king with a cord. The faces of both the coffinette and funerary mask are made of gold, associating the dead king with the gods whose skin was said to be made of gold. Note that the coffinette and mask both have holes for earrings but not the earrings themselves . Though Egyptian males wore earrings, earrings are never depicted in works of art.

Other visible details on this coffinette are the cuff bracelets  and the *shebyu* necklace . The cuff bracelets seen on the coffinette resemble an actual piece of jewelry that belonged to Queen Ahotep, featured in the exhibition. The *shebyu* necklace, three strands of gold disk-shaped beads visible behind the false beard, could be worn by the king but could also be given by the king as a gift to his officials. A relief in the exhibition depicts Tutankhamun's advisor Ay and his wife, Tye, wearing *shebyu* necklaces, gifts from Akhenaten.



**A** Exterior  
**B** Interior  
LEFT  
Cartouche on  
the coffinette's  
interior with  
Tutankhamun's  
name

LEFT  
Funerary mask of Tutankhamun  
on display in the Cairo Museum



Cuff bracelet that belonged to Queen Ahotep.



Relief depicting Tutankhamun's advisor Ay and his wife, Tye, wearing *shebyu* necklaces



The Egyptian hieroglyph for "eternity," the *shen*, appears on the back of the coffinette.

On the coffinettes, Tutankhamun wears a *nemes* headdress made of gold and inlaid with blue glass made to look like lapis lazuli. This headdress was a sort of kerchief with lappets flanking the king's face. The "fabric" in the back was gathered into a ponytail.

A vulture and cobra decorate the brow. These two animal figures depict the deities Nekhbet and Wadjet, Egyptian goddesses representing Lower and Upper Egypt and symbolizing the king's dominion over both. Winged forms of the two goddesses envelope the king on the exterior of the coffinette. In their talons, they clutch the Egyptian hieroglyph for "eternity," the *shen* ○, symbolizing their protection of him for all eternity.

The inscriptions down the front of the coffinette tell us that the goddess Neith and the god Duamutef, one of the four sons of Horus, protect the stomach of the king. Throughout Egyptian history, the four sons of Horus guarded the internal organs of the deceased in the form of lids for the canopic jars that stored the stomach, liver, intestines, and liver. Sometimes the gods are depicted in animal forms and in other in human form as on the stoppers of Tutankhamun's canopic chest, one of which is in the exhibition (C).

Considerable time and skill went into the manufacture of these coffinettes. First, thick gold sheet was hammered over a wooden form, then thin strips of gold were soldered to the surface to hold inlays cut to fit the elaborate pattern of the face, jewelry, hieroglyphs, and the feather or *rishi* pattern that covers the body. The inlays were made of semi-precious stone or glass. The Egyptians began making glass during the reign of Amenhotep III, not long before Tutankhamun ruled Egypt. Glass was considered a high-status material valued for its color, just like precious stones.

While glass was man made, other materials in this coffinette had to be located and extracted from the earth. Gold was obtained from Egypt or Nubia. Carnelian was found as pebbles in Egypt's Eastern Desert and lapis lazuli, a dark blue semi-precious stone, was imported from Afghanistan. These semi-precious stones were then cut and shaped to fit within the tiny gold spaces. Originally, eyes of rock crystal and obsidian would have been inserted into their now empty sockets. The obsidian would have been gathered from present-day Ethiopia; rock crystal from either the Sinai or the Western Desert.



Canopic stopper

The process of creating Tutankhamun's canopic coffinettes was time consuming and required a skilled metalworker to create the delicate inlaid pattern. The coffinette on display in *Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs* is a highly symbolic object made to hold the stomach of the boy king and to help ensure his successful transition into the land of the dead.