

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Explain Information

Read the short story and answer each question.



Preserving the Pharaohs

In ancient Egypt, death was not the end—it was a journey. The ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife, a second life after death, and they wanted to be prepared for it. That's why they practiced **mummification**, a careful process of preserving the body.

What Happened During Mummification

The mummification process could take more than 70 days. First, the body was washed and laid out on a special table. The internal organs were removed because they would rot if left inside. Each organ was placed in a decorated jar called a **canopic jar**, with its own symbol and protection god.

The heart, however, was usually left inside the body. Egyptians believed the heart was the center of a person's thoughts and needed to be weighed in the afterlife to judge a soul's worth. The body was then filled with **natron**, a type of natural salt, to dry it out. This step was important to prevent decay. After forty days, the salt was removed, and the body was stuffed with cloth, sawdust, or herbs to help it keep its shape.

Wrapping and Final Rituals

Next came the **wrapping stage**. Workers used linen strips to wrap the body from head to toe. Amulets—small magical charms—were placed inside the wrappings to protect the person in the afterlife.

Priests read spells and prayers to guide the spirit safely. The final step was placing the mummy in a coffin, sometimes within several layers of nested boxes. For pharaohs and the wealthy, the coffins were placed in grand tombs filled with treasures, food, and tools for the next life.

Each step in the mummification process was done for a reason—so that the body, and the spirit, would be ready for eternity.



Name: _____

Preserving the Pharaohs

1. Why did ancient Egyptians remove the internal organs during mummification?

- A. To use them as medicine
- B. To decorate the tomb with them
- C. To prevent the body from rotting
- D. To cook them for a celebration

2. What was the purpose of the wrapping step in mummification?

- A. To make the body look like a statue
- B. To keep the body soft and flexible
- C. To protect the body and prepare it for the afterlife
- D. To hide the body from tomb robbers

3. Fill in the blank:

The heart was usually left in the body because Egyptians believed it would be _____ in the afterlife to judge the soul.

4. Choose two steps from the mummification process and explain what happened and why that step was important.

5. How does this process show the values and beliefs of ancient Egyptian culture?



Instructional Guide

Guide Reading Level: S

Lexile Level: 850L-1000L

Grade Level: 4th Grade, End of the Year

Genre: Informational Nonfiction – Historical Process

Introducing the Text

“Today we’ll explore how and why the ancient Egyptians prepared mummies for the afterlife. We’ll look at each step in the process and explain what happened and why it was important in their culture. This will help us better understand ancient beliefs and traditions.”

Vocabulary: mummification, canopic jar, natron, amulet, afterlife

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about ancient Egypt?
 2. Why might people want to preserve a body after death?
 3. What do you think a culture's burial traditions say about its beliefs?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. Why were the organs placed in special jars?
 2. What does natron do during mummification?
 3. Why were amulets placed in the wrappings?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What steps did the Egyptians take to prepare the dead for the afterlife?
 2. How does each step reflect their beliefs about death and eternity?
 3. If you had to explain this process to someone new, what would you say happens and why?
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Activity Idea

Have students create a visual timeline of the mummification process, with each step illustrated and labeled. Under each image, students must write a sentence explaining why that step was important. This will reinforce both sequence and reasoning, as required by RI.4.3.

