



## Chapter 8

# The Ancient Egyptian Pharaohs

*What did the pharaohs of ancient Egypt accomplish, and how did they do it?*

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, you will visit ancient Egypt. You will meet four leaders, called pharaohs.

In 1922, archaeologists discovered the tomb of a pharaoh known as King Tutankhaten (too-tan-KAH-tin), or King Tut. Inside a small burial chamber, they found three coffins nested inside each other. The smallest coffin was made of solid gold. It held the king's mummy. (A mummy is a body that has been preserved after death to keep it from decaying.) On the mummy's head was a magnificent golden mask. Jewelry and good luck charms lay on the mummy and in the wrappings that protected it. Other rooms of the tomb were filled with statues, weapons, furniture, and even a chariot.

The treasures in King Tut's tomb provided an amazing glimpse into ancient Egypt. Other pharaohs also left behind fabulous riches and artwork. Many of these pharaohs had great monuments built to celebrate their lives and their accomplishments. Like King Tut's tomb, these artifacts have much to teach us about this ancient civilization.

In this chapter, you will learn about three important **periods** in ancient Egyptian history. Then you will meet four pharaohs who ruled during these periods, learn what they **accomplished**, and explore some of the monuments they left behind.



This view of the inside of King Tut's tomb, discovered in 1922, shows the pharaoh's coffin and some of the chamber's detailed wall paintings.

◀ This is King Tutankhaten's funeral or death mask.

**pharaoh** a ruler of ancient Egypt

## 8.2 Ancient Egypt and Its Rulers

Ancient Egypt enjoyed three long periods of stability and unity under the rule of **pharaohs**. Historians call these periods the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

The Old Kingdom lasted from about 2700 to 2200 B.C.E. During this time, early pharaohs set up a strong central government. They also had great pyramids built as tombs for themselves. Some historians call this time the Age of the Pyramids.

The Middle Kingdom (about 2000 to 1800 B.C.E.) is sometimes called the Period of Reunification because it followed years of chaos and disunity. During this era, Egyptians enjoyed many great achievements in literature, art, and architecture.

The New Kingdom (about 1600 to 1100 B.C.E.) is often called

Egypt's Golden Age. During this time of peace and stability, ancient Egypt's power reached its height. Pharaohs increased trade and had huge monuments built.

As in Mesopotamia, religion played a central role in Egypt's social and political order.

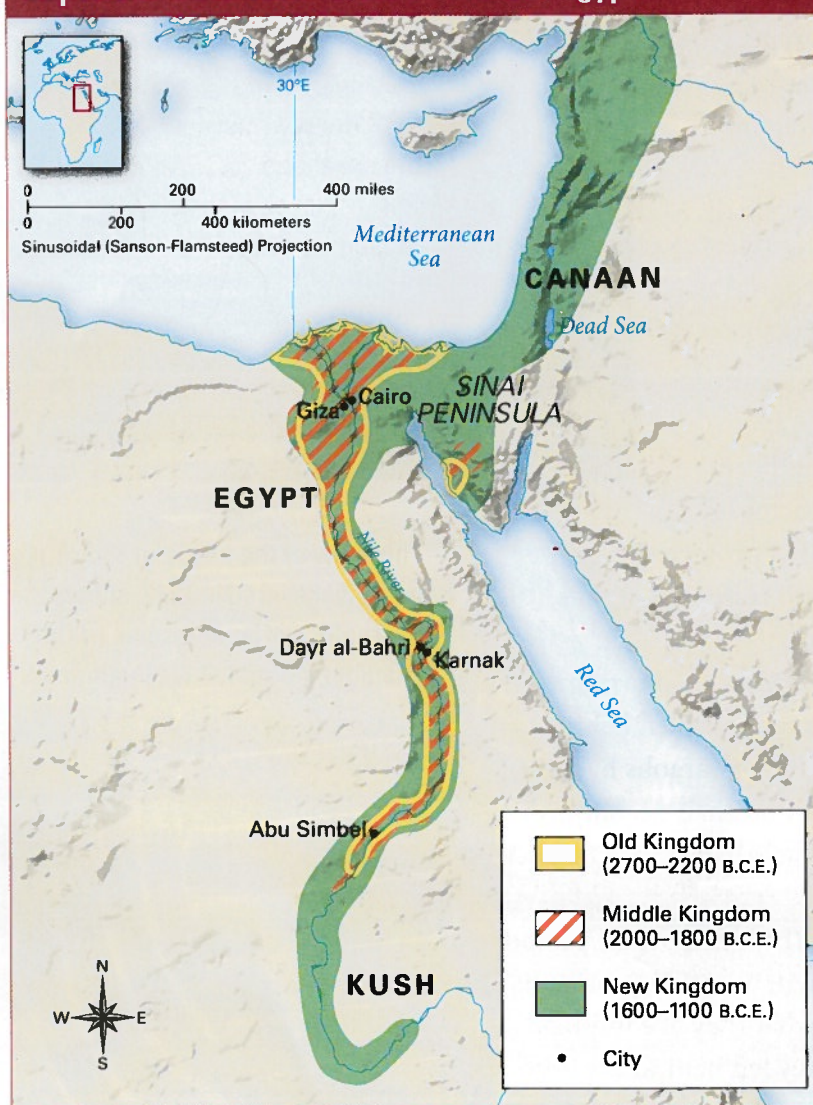
Pharaohs were believed to be gods. They owned all the land and were responsible for their people's well-being. They were kings, generals, and religious leaders, all combined.

After they died, pharaohs were thought to enter an after-life that would never end. Their tombs were built to last. Many objects were buried with the pharaoh for use in the next world.

The pharaohs built other monuments to glorify their power and success. The map shows the locations of some of the greatest monuments. Let's find out more about these **structures** and the pharaohs who ordered their creation.

This map shows some of the sites of great monuments built during Egypt's three periods of stability under the pharaohs.

### Important Monument Sites in Ancient Egypt



As soon as Khufu became pharaoh, he began construction on the Great Pyramid.

## 8.3 Pharaoh Khufu: The Pyramid Builder

The pharaoh Khufu (KOO-foo) ruled from about 2551 to 2528 B.C.E., during the Old Kingdom period. Today, he is best known as the builder of a famous pyramid.

Not much is known about Khufu. Some stories describe him as a cruel, harsh ruler. Others say that he was powerful but kind.

We do know that Khufu helped establish the pharaoh as a central **authority**. For example, he kept strict control over Egypt's food supply. He oversaw the harvest and the storage of extra grain. He also controlled a large network of government officials who carried out his laws. Khufu emphasized his supreme power by declaring himself a god.

Khufu and other Old Kingdom pharaohs had magnificent pyramids built as tombs for themselves and their families. Khufu was responsible for the building of the Great Pyramid at Giza. It is one of the wonders of the ancient world.

The Great Pyramid sat at the center of a huge complex of temples, statues, monuments, and smaller tombs. It was made of more than 2 million stone blocks, perfectly fitted together. Inside, tunnels led to several burial chambers. The king's chamber had six roofs to hold up the weight of the stone layers above it.

Building the Great Pyramid was an amazing feat. No one knows exactly how the Egyptians did it. The pyramid took about 20 years to complete. Khufu had strict control of the building project. He organized and fed thousands of workers. The finished pyramid was a stunning monument to Egyptian engineering.

This three-inch-high ivory statue of Khufu was discovered during the excavation of a temple in 1903. It is displayed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.



## 8.4 Pharaoh Senusret I: Patron of the Arts

The pharaoh Senusret I (SEHN-oos-ret) ruled from about 1971 to 1926 B.C.E., during the Middle Kingdom. He was a strong leader who ruled a stable, unified Egypt. Art, literature, and architecture flourished during his reign.

The arts thrived under Senusret's rule. The pharaoh controlled mines filled with gold, copper, and gems such as purple amethyst. Artisans fashioned these materials into beautiful pieces of jewelry. Bracelets and necklaces were often highly detailed. They were also decorated with stones like turquoise.

Some of the greatest works in Egyptian literature were written during Senusret's reign. "The Story of Sinuhe" tells of a young official named Sinuhe who overhears a plot to kill the pharaoh.

Fearing for his own life, Sinuhe flees Egypt. He thrives in his new land, but he grows very homesick. When a new pharaoh calls him home, Sinuhe returns joyfully to Egypt.

Senusret's greatest accomplishments were in religious architecture. He had many temples, shrines, and religious monuments built and improved.

Perhaps Senusret's finest architectural achievement was the White Chapel. (A chapel is a small temple.) It was made of alabaster, a hard white stone. Some historians think that the chapel was originally covered in a thin layer of gold.

Beautiful artwork decorated the chapel's pillars. Carved scenes showed the pharaoh with various gods. Birds, animals, and Egyptian symbols were also depicted.

Senusret wanted his memory to live on through his monuments. But few of his buildings survived the passage of time. A later pharaoh took the White Chapel apart and used the pieces in a monument of his own. Archaeologists later discovered the pieces and reconstructed the White Chapel.

This statue of Senusret shows him clutching an ankh in each hand. The ankh was the Egyptian symbol of immortality, or eternal life.



## 8.5 Pharaoh Hatshepsut: Promoter of Egyptian Trade

During the New Kingdom, the pharaoh Hatshepsut (haht-SHEP-soot) ruled Egypt from about 1473 to 1458 B.C.E. Hatshepsut was Egypt's first female pharaoh. Under her rule, Egyptian art and architecture flourished. Hatshepsut was also known for encouraging trade.

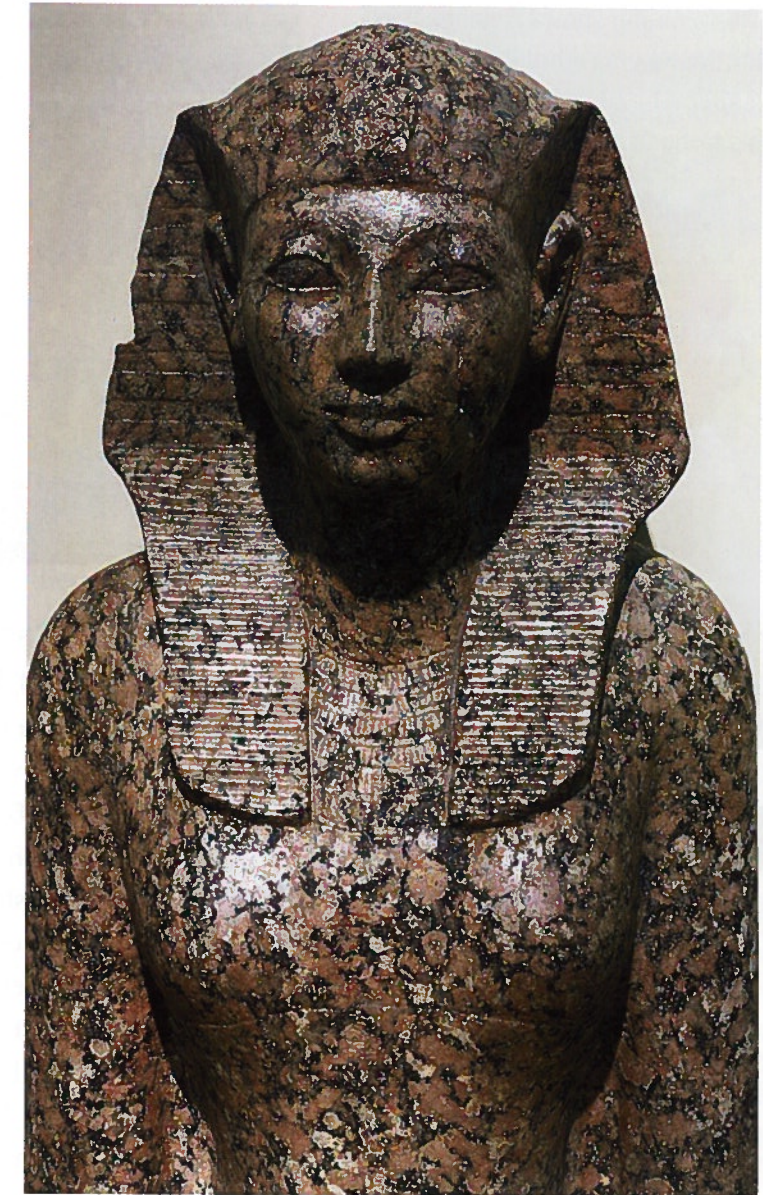
One of her greatest accomplishments was her rise to power. Never before had a woman pharaoh ruled Egypt. At first, she shared power with her male relatives. However, she soon took over as sole ruler.

Hatshepsut strengthened her position in several ways. She filled her government with loyal advisers. She demanded the same respect shown to male rulers. Sometimes, she dressed in men's clothing. She even put on the fake beard worn by male pharaohs. Artists were often instructed to portray her as a man. She also spread stories that her father was a god.

As pharaoh, Hatshepsut promoted trade with other countries. Her biggest trade expedition was to the African kingdom of Punt, at the southern end of the Red Sea. Over 200 men in five ships brought gifts and trade goods to Punt.

Hatshepsut left behind a stunning monument to her reign—a great temple at Dayr al-Bahri (deer ahl-BAH-ray). The main part of the temple was built into a cliff above the Nile River. At the entrance were two tall, thin monuments called *obelisks*. The entrance was also graced by 200 sphinx statues. The sphinx is a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head of a man.

Scenes from Hatshepsut's reign decorated the temple walls. Detailed carvings portrayed the great voyage to Punt. The carvings showed the valuable things that the pharaoh's traders had brought back to Egypt.



Hatshepsut actively encouraged trade. During her reign, trade helped spread Egyptian influence along the Nile and in nearby lands in the Middle East (western Asia).

**Hatshepsut** the first woman pharaoh of ancient Egypt

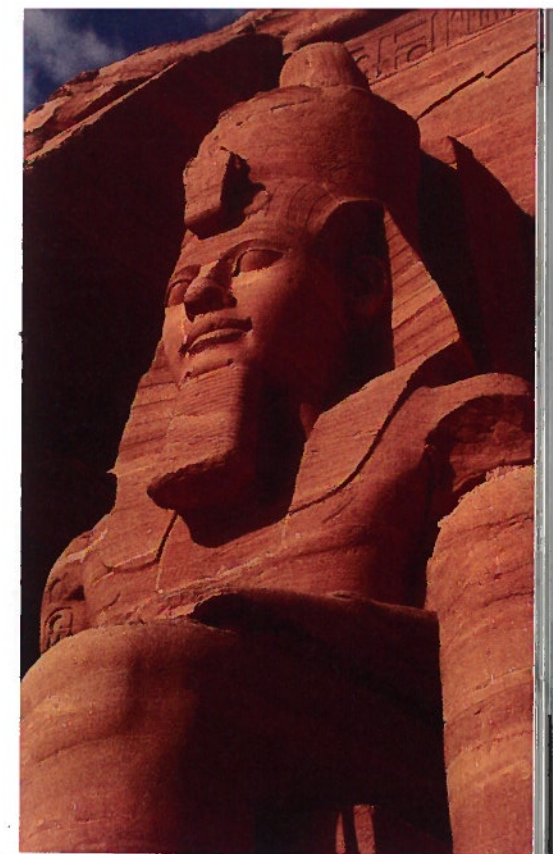
This painting shows Ramses II in battle. He was a brilliant military leader who became a captain in his father's army at the age of ten.



Four giant statues of a seated Ramses framed the entrance to the main temple. The figures were carved right out of the rock face of the cliff. They are among the finest examples of the artistic skill of Egyptian sculptors.

The inside of the temple was also remarkable. Visitors passed through three large rooms, called halls, to reach the temple's main room. This room's altar contained statues of Ramses and three Egyptian gods. The temple was built so that, twice a year, the sun lined up with the entrance. Beams of sunlight would shine down the halls and light up the statues.

Ramses ordered more temples and monuments built than any other pharaoh in history. When he died, he was buried in the tomb that he had ordered workers to construct solely for him. His mummy is one of the best-preserved bodies ever found.



This is a view, from below, of one of the four 66-foot statues of Ramses II, seated at the entrance of the main temple at Abu Simbel.

**Ramses II** an ancient Egyptian pharaoh, known as “Ramses the Great”; skilled as a military leader; and responsible for building many monuments, including the temple at Abu Simbel

**treaty** a written agreement by which two or more states agree to peaceful relations

## 8.6 Pharaoh Ramses II: Military Leader and Master Builder

The pharaoh **Ramses II** (RAM-seez) ruled from about 1290 to 1224 B.C.E., during the New Kingdom. Called Ramses the Great, he is one of the most famous pharaohs. He reigned for more than 60 years, longer than almost any other pharaoh. He is best known for his military leadership and for building numerous monuments.

Ramses used his power to excess. He had over 100 wives, and more than 100 children. Never shy about his importance, he had hundreds of statues of himself erected throughout Egypt. Some of them were over 60 feet high.

From a young age, Ramses was a fearless soldier. He fought alongside his father in various battles. At the age of ten, Ramses was made a captain in the Egyptian army.

Ramses tried to defend an Egyptian empire that extended north into Canaan. His most famous military campaigns were against the Hittite Empire in Anatolia (present-day Turkey). The Hittites constantly threatened Egypt's northern borders. In his best known battle, Ramses reached a standoff with the Hittites, even though he was greatly outnumbered.

Ramses was also a peacemaker. He and the Hittites signed the world's first peace **treaty**. This peace lasted until the Hittite Empire collapsed around 1190 B.C.E.

One of Ramses' greatest projects was the temple complex at Abu Simbel. The main temple was carved into the side of a cliff. The cliff was on a bank of the Nile River. A smaller temple honored his favorite wife, Nefertari.

### Chapter Summary

**In this chapter, you learned about the accomplishments of four of the pharaohs of ancient Egypt who ruled during three long periods of stability.**

**Ancient Egypt and Its Rulers** Ancient Egypt enjoyed three periods of stability and unity under the rule of pharaohs. These periods were the Old Kingdom (Age of the Pyramids) from about 2700 to 2200 B.C.E.; the Middle Kingdom, (Period of Reunification) from about 2000 to 1800 B.C.E.; and the New Kingdom, (Golden Age) from about 1600 to 1100 B.C.E.

**Pharaoh Khufu** During the Old Kingdom, Khufu set up a strong central government. He also had the Great Pyramid built at Giza. It was an amazing construction feat and one of the wonders of the ancient world.

**Pharaoh Senusret** During the Middle Kingdom, Senusret encouraged Egyptian art and literature. Artisans and architects created fine works, including White Chapel.

**Pharaoh Hatshepsut** Hatshepsut, Egypt's first female pharaoh, promoted Egyptian trade during the New Kingdom. She had a great temple built at Dayr al-Bahri.

**Pharaoh Ramses II** Ramses the Great was a superior military leader and builder of monuments during the New Kingdom. He signed the world's first peace treaty with the Hittites. He had the temple complex at Abu Simbel built.



Carter's archaeologists found three nested golden mummy-shaped coffins in King Tut's stone sarcophagus. Inside the third coffin was King Tut's mummy.

## The Egyptian Mummy Project

**King Tutankhaten—whose remains are one of the most famous Egyptian mummies—died in 1323 B.C.E. He was 18 or 19 years old. For a long time, archaeologists wondered how the young pharaoh had died. In January 2005, for the first time in 80 years, a team of scientists took “King Tut” from his tomb. They used new technologies to reexamine the mummy, searching for answers to age-old questions about the lives and deaths of ancient Egyptians.**

The team of scientists removed the stone lid from King Tut's sarcophagus, or stone coffin. They lifted the wooden box containing the mummy and carefully carried it outside. A van holding a CT (or CAT) scanner was waiting near the tomb. This scanner is a large, specialized X-ray machine that uses a computer to show three-dimensional images of a body.

Inside the van, the scientists pulled back layers of cloth surrounding the king. Still in its box, the mummy was placed in the CT scanner for about 15 minutes. The machine took around 1,700 images. Scanning King Tut was the first act of the members of the Egyptian Mummy Project. Scientists from around the world took part in this five-year project to study and preserve the ancient mummies of Egypt.

### Ancient Embalmers

The ancient Egyptians turned their dead into mummies to prevent decay and to preserve their bodies. The Egyptians believed that a person would need his or her body in the afterlife.

The process of making a mummy was complex. First, the embalmers took the internal organs out of the body. They dried the organs and the body with *natron*, a type of salt that they found in the desert. The organs were then wrapped in linen and stored in jars or placed back inside the body. Sometimes the body was stuffed and decorated with makeup, jewelry, and clothing. Finally, it was wrapped in long strips of linen and put in a coffin.

Two British scientists, named Richard Evershed and Stephen Buckley, studied 13 mummies that had been created over a 2,300-year period. They concluded that the ancient Egyptian embalmers used very advanced methods in their work.

### Studying Mummies, Then and Now

In 1922, Englishman Howard Carter made one of the most important discoveries in Egyptian archaeology—he found the tomb of Tutankhaten in the Valley of the Kings. This was important because Tutankhaten's mummy was found exactly as the priests had left it more than 3,000 years earlier. In most other tombs, the mummies were missing. This kept archaeologists from studying the details about how ancient Egyptians were buried.

In Carter's time, the study of mummies was a simpler process than it is today. Back then, archaeologists would remove the bandages from a mummy to examine the remains. But after a time, scientists began to realize that their actions were causing damage to the bodies. Often, mummies fell apart when taken out of their wrappings. Today, it's sometimes hard to tell if damage to a mummy dates from a king's lifetime, the embalming process, or the way archaeologists treated mummies that were discovered in the 1920s.

Modern scientists use all sorts of technology to study mummies. One technique is to X-ray the body. As people age, their bones become thinner and weaker. By examining X-rays of bones, scientists can tell how old people are. In this way, archaeologists have discovered that ancient Egyptians lived short lives, at least by modern standards. Most rich Egyptians lived no longer than about 35 years. For poor Egyptians, life was even shorter. Most did not live much beyond about 25 years.

Since 1926, the year Carter returned King Tut to his tomb, the young pharaoh's remains have been X-rayed twice. The first time was in 1968. Those X-rays showed a bone fragment inside the king's skull. The finding prompted the idea that King Tut might have died as a result of a blow to the head.

In 2007, King Tut was transferred from the wooden box in which Carter's team had placed him to a climate-controlled glass box. The head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, Dr. Zahi Hawass (center), supervised the move.





Scientists from the Egyptian Mummy Project used a CT scan to create three-dimensional images of King Tut's mummy.

Was Tutankhaten murdered? Scientists from the Egyptian Mummy Project set out to answer that question. This time, rather than rely on a one-dimensional X-ray, scientists used the CT scan. They created three-dimensional images that would show more information.

### CT Scan Findings

Did the young pharaoh die from a blow to the head? Definitely not, say the nine doctors who studied the CT images.

Scientists believe that the bone fragment discovered in the king's head, in 1968, occurred after his death. It is likely that this damage was caused by the team of archaeologist Howard Carter. Scientists reached this conclusion because they found no traces of embalming fluid in the wound.

Scientists have agreed that there is no evidence of head injury. But they also found a broken bone in the mummy's left leg. Some experts thought that the broken bone was a serious injury Tut suffered shortly before death. They wondered whether the break led to a life-threatening infection. From the CT scans, scientists concluded that Tut died from complications from a broken leg, made worse by disease, probably malaria.

### Reconstructing King Tut's Face

Scientists also used the three-dimensional CT scans to create the first busts of the Egyptian king. A bust is a three-dimensional sculpture of a head. Three separate teams—from France, the United States, and Egypt—created busts of King Tut.

The National Geographic Society chose a French team to create the first bust. A CT-scan-based skull model was made for forensic anthropologist Jean-Noël Vignal. Vignal often works with police to reconstruct the heads of victims of violent crimes. Using the CT images, Vignal created a rough plastic skull.

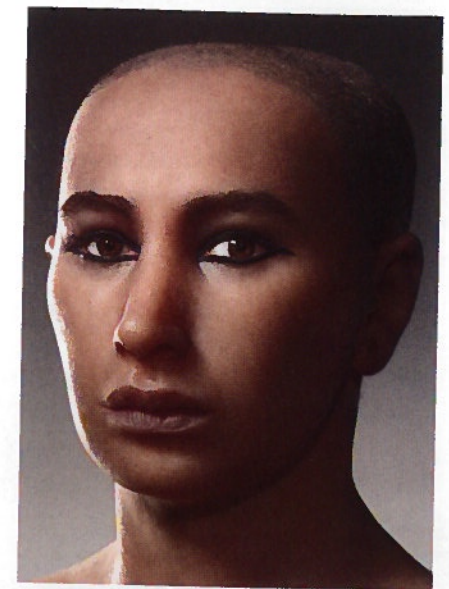
Vignal gave the plastic skull to sculptor Elisabeth Daynès. Using Vignal's data and two wooden sculptures of Tutankhaten for reference, she created a lifelike clay face. She then created a plaster mold with a silicone "skin," and covered it with a flesh color based on an average shade for modern Egyptians. Next, Daynès added hair, makeup, and glass eyes. The bust was meant to show what Tut had looked like on the day of his death. It is the most lifelike image ever seen of the long-dead ruler.

The National Geographic Society then asked a group of experts from the United States to make a second bust. This time the experts weren't told who their famous subject was.

Susan Antón, an associate professor of anthropology at New York University, and Bradley Adams, of New York City's Chief Medical Examiner's office, both studied the CT scans. At first, Antón thought that the unusual-looking skull was that of a female. But after further study, she determined that her subject was an 18- to 19-year-old male, most likely of North African origin. Forensic artist Michael Anderson, of Yale University's Peabody Museum, used the CT scans and Antón's data to create his own bust of the mystery subject's head.

Finally, Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities selected an Egyptian team to make a third bust. Like the French team, the Egyptians knew who their famous subject was. The Egyptian team used the same CT scan data to build a plastic skull model. They added clay features inspired by ancient portraits of Tut.

Archaeologists have not been able to solve all the mysteries of King Tut's death, but they did solve some. First they asked key questions, and then they used the latest technology to gather information. In what other ways might archaeologists use CT scans? What questions do *you* have about ancient mummies?



This bust of King Tut was created by a French team. Sculptor Daynès used hair, makeup, and glass eyes to make the bust extremely lifelike.