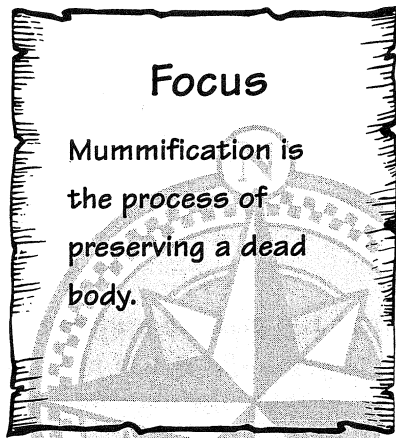


Mummies

Brief #4



Ancient Egyptians believed that after a person died, he or she went on to live in the afterlife. They believed that a person would need his or her body in this afterlife. For this reason the ancient Egyptians developed the practice of mummification, which prevented a body from decaying as fast as it normally would after death.

Mummification is a process that preserves the bones and soft tissue of a body after death.



The Mummification Process

The process of turning a body into a mummy took about seventy days. It was performed by priests called embalmers. They were specially trained in the mummification process.

The first thing the ancient Egyptians did was remove all of the moisture from the body. This was called dehydration. Next, they would remove all of the internal organs. They used a long wire and pulled the brain out through the nose. A small incision, or cut, was made in the side of the body through which the liver, lungs, and other parts were removed.

These internal organs were washed in oil and then put in canopic jars. The lids of the canopic jars were carved with the heads of special gods who protected the organs. The heart was left in the body. The ancient Egyptians believed that the heart was the organ of life force and intellect and that the person would need it in the afterlife.

After the organs were removed, the body was covered in a kind of salt called natron. This salt drew even more moisture from the body. After about thirty-five days, the body would be wrapped in linens. The arms, legs, and even fingers were wrapped individually. The embalmers put amulets or charms inside of the linens to protect the person in the afterlife. A death mask was placed onto the mummy. Then the mummy was put in a coffin. The ancient Egyptians also mummified animals.

Archeologists have found several Egyptian mummies including Tutankhamen, Ramesses I and II, and Seti I. Ancient Egyptian mummies have been x-rayed and scanned with modern equipment. This helps scientists learn valuable things about the ancient Egyptians, including what they ate and diseases that they suffered from.

Vocabulary

1. mummification