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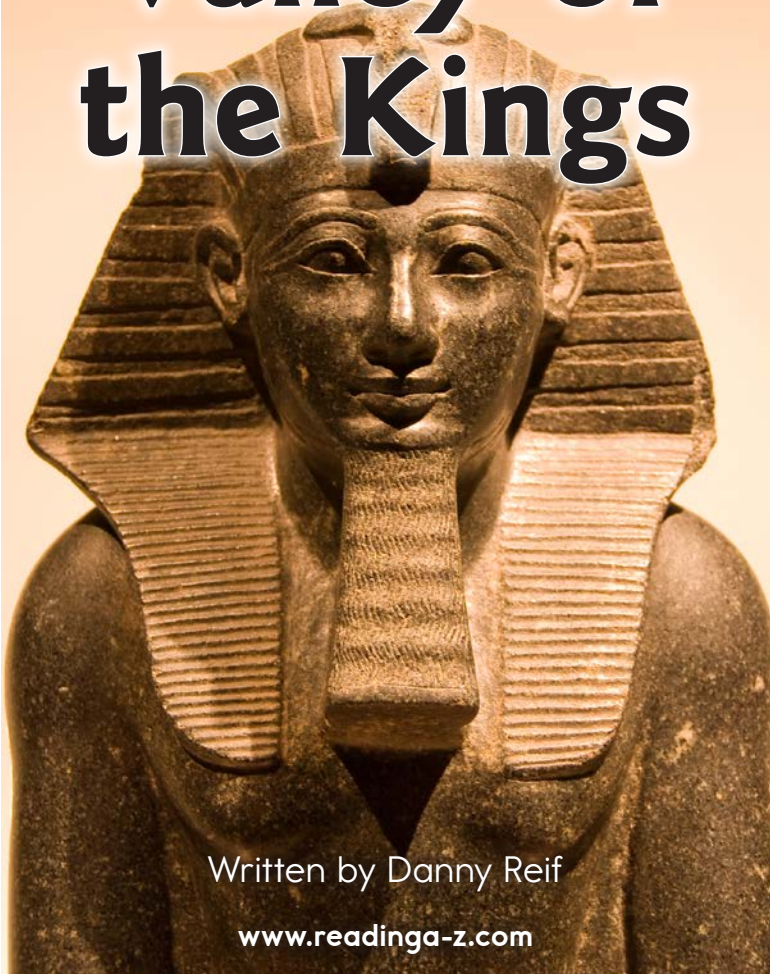
Valley of the Kings



Written by Danny Reif

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Focus Question

Why is the Valley of the Kings an important place?



Table of Contents

Treasure	4
A King's Valley	5
The Next Life	7
Building a Tomb	10
Changing Tombs	12
The Valley of the Kings Today ..	14
Treasures for Tomorrow	15
Glossary	16



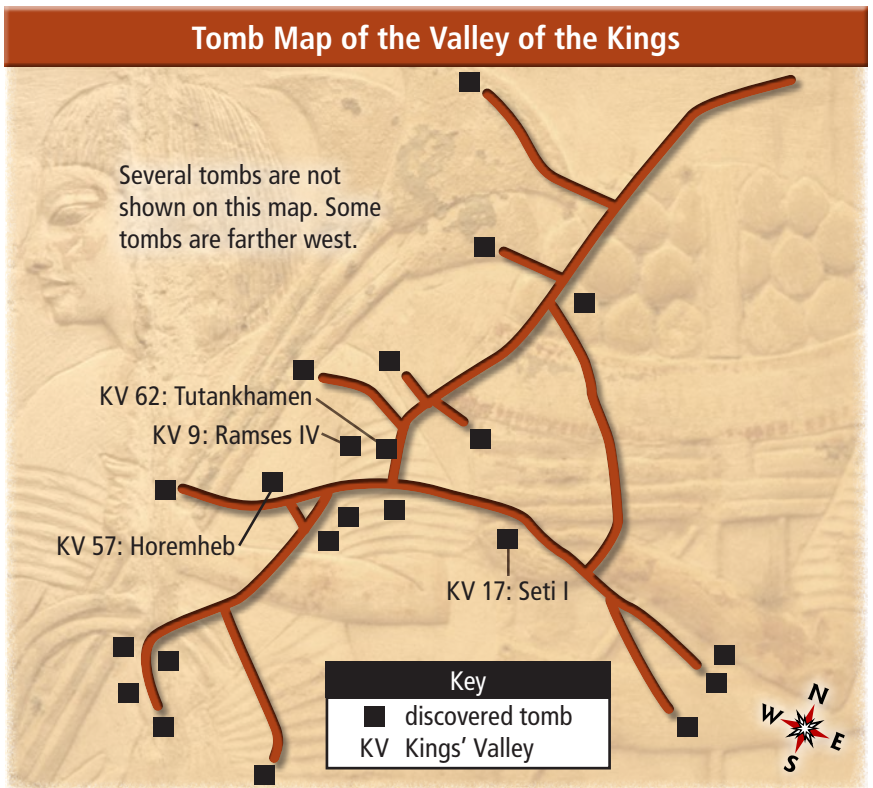
Howard Carter (left) found King Tutankhamen's small tomb. It was packed with priceless objects.

Treasure

In November 1922, a British man named Howard Carter discovered the **tomb** of King Tutankhamen (toot-an-KAH-muhn). This was an exciting find. Other explorers thought they had already found everything in the Valley of the Kings. The tomb held more than five thousand objects. Many of them were solid gold!

A King's Valley

The Valley of the Kings is probably the most amazing **burial** ground in the world. Steep valleys hold the tombs of almost every king from the New Kingdom time in Egypt. This time lasted about five hundred years, from 1550 to 1080 BC.



The valley's steep cliffs and single entrance made it easy to guard. It also took several hours to walk there from the **ancient** city of Thebes. That helped keep tomb robbers away.



The Next Life

People in ancient Egypt believed a tomb was as important as the palace where the king lived. The tomb protected the dead king's body, which they believed returned to life after burial. When a king died, people placed his body inside a decorated **coffin**. Then, they put the coffin inside a bigger, heavier coffin made of solid stone. The larger coffin weighed as much as five elephants!



Howard Carter removes a covering of Tutankhamen's coffin.

To reach the next life, the people of Egypt believed spirits had to follow the travels of Ra (RAH), the Sun god, through the night. They covered tomb walls with pictures and writing to help the soul on its journey.



Pictures of the Sun god, Ra, are on the walls of many of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings.



Tombs often held hundreds of small statues. People in ancient Egypt believed these statues would come to life and serve the king after he died.

A king's tomb held everything he might need in his next life. Some rooms held many things, such as makeup, clothing, and even games. They held everyday items, such as furniture and lamps. They also held plenty of gold, gems, and other treasures.

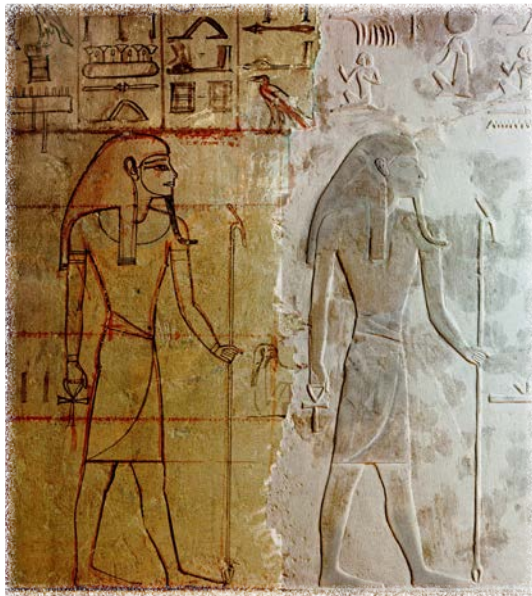


Entrances to some tombs are very steep.

Building a Tomb

Scientists think tomb building began as soon as a new king began his rule. Using only simple tools, work crews cut into the hard ground and rock. They cut rough hallways and rooms first, then smoothed the walls, ceiling, and floor.

Workers covered the walls with white **plaster**. Then, artists drew and painted pictures on the walls. The pictures were the way the people of Egypt wrote thousands of years ago. Sometimes, workers **carved** pictures on the walls. Then, artists painted in details. All work was checked, and workers fixed anything that wasn't correct.



When a king died, workers had to work quickly. Sometimes artwork was left unfinished.

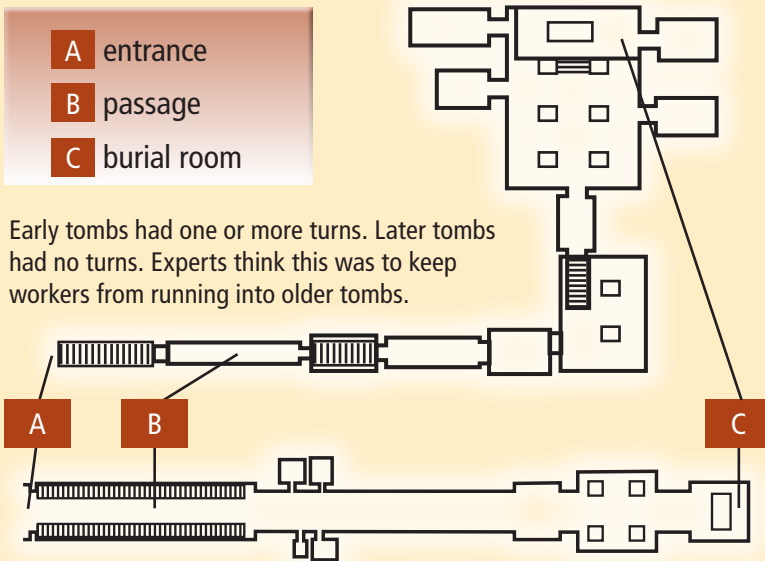
Changing Tombs

No two tombs in the Valley of the Kings are the same, but most have some things in common. Tombs built during the early part of the New Kingdom were usually smaller than later tombs. Often, early plans also included one or two sharp turns. Later tombs were usually built in a straight line.

Tomb Rooms

- A** entrance
- B** passage
- C** burial room

Early tombs had one or more turns. Later tombs had no turns. Experts think this was to keep workers from running into older tombs.



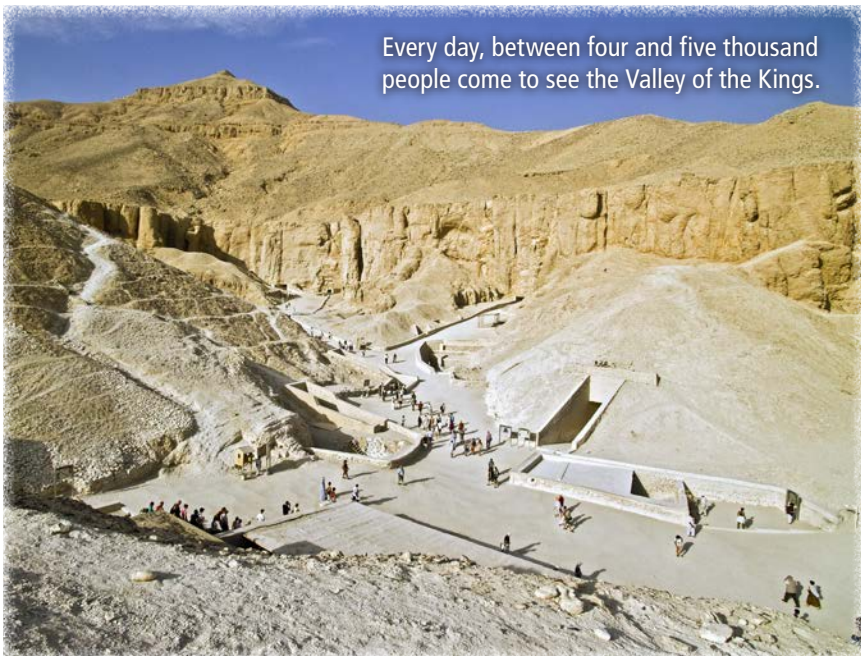


Experts think that only two of the halls in Ramses IX's tomb had been finished before he died. The work looks as if it was done in a hurry.

When a king died, tomb builders had only seventy days to finish their work. Sometimes, though, a tomb wasn't finished on time. Workers had to leave paintings or rooms half-finished.

The Valley of the Kings Today

Over a million people visit the Valley of the Kings every year. Thousands visit each day. Only eighteen of the tombs are open to visitors. This helps prevent damage to the important paintings and carvings. The eighteen tombs are sometimes closed so every tomb gets “time off” for cleaning and repairs.





King Tutankhamen's golden mask was found in his tomb. It is one of Egypt's many treasures.

Treasures for Tomorrow

So far, sixty-three tombs have been discovered in the Valley of the Kings. However, several New Kingdom tombs have not yet been found. Experts think they are probably located somewhere in the valley.

Glossary

- ancient** (*adj.*) from a very long time ago
(p. 6)
- burial** (*n.*) the act or process of
placing a dead body in
the ground (p. 5)
- carved** (*v.*) cut with care; made
something, such as a
sculpture, by carefully
cutting and shaping
a material (p. 11)
- coffin** (*n.*) a long, narrow box
in which a dead person
is buried (p. 7)
- plaster** (*n.*) a mixture of lime, water,
and sand or cement that
hardens as it dries and
is used to coat walls
and ceilings (p. 11)
- tomb** (*n.*) a room or grave for
a dead person (p. 4)

Words to Know

ancient
burial
carved

coffin
plaster
tomb

Front cover: Many tombs in the Valley of the Kings were built at the base of steep cliffs.

Back cover: Hieroglyphic writing and paintings from the burial chamber of Horemheb

Title page: Statues of kings and other artwork were often found in tombs in the valley.

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World Landmarks
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Correlation

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Valley of the Kings

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Connections

Writing

Imagine being Howard Carter and discovering the tomb of King Tutankhamen. Write a diary entry about your discovery and how you felt about it.

Social Studies

Create a drawing or model of King Tutankhamen's golden mask. Use the book to help you.

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