

Kinds of Mummies

Name _____

Many rituals surrounded the Egyptian mummies. Egyptians believed that the heart was the center of the thoughts and intelligence. The heart was placed on a set of scales and weighed against the feather of truth. If the scales balanced the person was said to be pure. He was able to go into the afterlife. If the heart was heavier than the feather, the person was impure and was punished.

The Egyptians did not mummify just humans. They also mummified pets. Often the pets were enclosed in the tombs to travel with their owners into the afterlife. Cats were highly valued in the Egyptian culture and were the most common mummified animals.



Mummy from Peru

South American Mummies

The Egyptians were not the only civilization that mummified their dead. The oldest mummies actually came from the other side of the globe in Chile and Peru. The bodies in South America were preserved either by drying them in the hot sun or freezing them in the cold temperatures of the Andes Mountains. The Egyptians laid the bodies out flat. The South American mummies are in crouched positions with their knees pulled up to their chins. Both the South Americans and the Egyptians wrapped the mummies in layers of cloth. The South Americans used cotton

and wool cloth, while the Egyptians used linen. In South America, sometimes false heads made of painted cloth stuffed with leaves and covered with a wig of human hair were placed on top of the wrapped body.

Bog Mummies

Many other mummies have been discovered that were not mummified on purpose. Weather conditions and location contributed to the process. Across northern Europe many ancient bodies have been discovered in swampy bogs. The cold conditions kept the bodies well preserved. These mummies are named according to where they are found. One such mummy is called the Lindow Man. Scientists have been able to learn many things about his lifestyle. They have determined that he had done very little manual labor, that his beard was trimmed with shears, and what his last meal was.

Ice Mummies

A body was discovered high in the Italian Alps. He had an unfinished bow, some arrows, a wooden ax with a metal head, and all the materials needed to make a fire. He appears to have been buried for over four thousand years. Historians are uncertain why the man was so high in the Alps in what would have been very bad conditions. He had head wounds and arrow wounds. Scientists think that someone may have been pursuing him when he got caught in a snowstorm.

In Greenland eight Inuit mummies were found in a cave. They were dressed in warm clothes and lying on sealskin blankets. Around them were goods needed to journey into the afterlife. Freezing temperatures preserved these mummies for over five hundred years.

Cryonics

A modern mummy is different from that of an ancient one. The purpose is not to preserve the body for the afterlife. Instead the hope is that the sick person that is preserved can be restored when a cure has been found. After a person dies, scientists called *cryonicists* freeze the brain. The body is cooled and the blood is replaced with a blood substitute. The body's temperature is lowered to -223.6°F and is stored in a container of liquid nitrogen. People pay significant amounts of money to have their bodies frozen; however, there is no proof that cryonics actually works.