

# Tutankhamun



Tutankhamun is possibly one of ancient Egypt's best known rulers. However, there are many things that are not known for certain about his life. Read on to find out some fascinating facts about the ruler commonly known as 'The Boy King'.

## Was His Name Really Tutankhamun?

Surprisingly, Tutankhamun was originally known as Tutankhaten. This is thought to have meant 'the living image of Aten'. The Aten was the disc of the sun in ancient Egyptian mythology. This meant that the name Tutankhaten had great religious meaning.

However, Tutankhaten did not think that the Aten should be worshipped as the only god of ancient Egypt. Therefore, Tutankhaten changed his name to Tutankhamun. This showed everybody that he did not support the idea of just worshipping the Aten as a single god.

## Who Were Tutankhamun's Parents?

The exact names of Tutankhamun's parents remain uncertain. However, **Egyptologists** have studied a mummy that was found in tomb KV55 in the **Valley of the Kings** and it was shown to be very similar to Tutankhamun. **Artefacts** also found in the same tomb make some people believe that this was the burial site of Akhenaten. Therefore, many people think that Akhenaten was the father of Tutankhamun.

In the past, many people believed that Nefertiti was Tutankhamun's mother. However, this is now thought by some to be untrue. Inside tomb KV55, along with the mummy of Akhenaten, Egyptologists discovered artefacts which suggested that he actually had many wives – one of whom was known as Kiya.

A female mummy that was found in a different tomb (KV35) has recently been proved to be Tutankhamun's mother through DNA testing. This mummy is informally referred to as 'The Younger Lady', but her exact identity remains unknown. Many people wonder whether Tutankhamun's mother was Queen Nefertiti, Kiya or someone else altogether.



### When Did Tutankhamun Become King?

Shortly before the death of Akhenaten, a mysterious person known as Smenkhkare ruled with him. Not much is known about Smenkhkare – not even whether they were male or female. Some people guess that Smenkhkare could have been Tutankhamun or another of Akhenaten's children. Other people think that Smenkhkare was Akhenaten's wife Nefertiti and that she helped him to rule.



After Akhenaten's death, a female **pharaoh** named Neferneferuaten ruled over ancient Egypt for two years. Some people think that this was also Nefertiti. It is thought by some that Nefertiti did this because Tutankhamun was too young to become pharaoh.

However, in around 1332 BC, Tutankhamun became pharaoh at eight or nine years of age. It is thought that, at first, he became the ruler under his birth name of Tutankhaten because a royal staff was found with this name carved into it.

### How Long Did Tutankhamun Rule For?

Many people believe that Tutankhamun ruled for ten years until his death in around 1323 BC. At this time, Tutankhamun was thought to have been around 19 years old.

After his death, Tutankhamun was buried in a lavish tomb within the Valley of the Kings. This tomb remained sealed and undisturbed for more than 3,000 years until it was discovered by archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922.

### Glossary

**artefacts:** Objects made by human beings, typically ones of cultural or historical interest.

**Egyptologists:** People who study the history of ancient Egypt.

**pharaoh:** A ruler in ancient Egypt.

**Valley of the Kings:** A place in Egypt where pharaohs were buried.



# Questions

1. What is the name Tutankhaten thought to have meant? Tick one.
  - ☐ in the image of the living Aten
  - ☐ the only god known as Aten
  - ☐ the living image of Aten
  - ☐ the image of the ancient Aten
2. What is the name of the pharaoh that many people think is Tutankhamun's father? Tick one.
  - ☐ Aten
  - ☐ Akhenaten
  - ☐ Tutankhaten
  - ☐ Nefertiti
3. According to the first paragraph of the text, by what name is Tutankhamun commonly known?

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4. Find and copy the name that Tutankhamun was originally known by.

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5. **... a royal staff was found with this name carved into it.**  
From the context of this sentence, what do you think a 'royal staff' is?

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6. Explain why it is not possible to say for sure who was the mother of Tutankhamun.

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7. Why might some people assume that Neferneferuaten was Nefertiti?

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8. Summarise what you have learnt about Tutankhamun's reign in 20 words or fewer.

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