

# Tutankhamun

Tutankhamun, the ancient Egyptian pharaoh who is thought to have reigned between 1332 and 1323 BC, is arguably one of ancient Egypt's best known rulers. Despite this, due to the passage of time since his reign and the complexity of ancient Egyptian history, many areas of Tutankhamun's life are widely disputed. Read on to discover some fascinating facts about the ruler commonly known as 'The Boy King'.

## His Name

Surprisingly, Tutankhamun – often given the shortened nickname 'King Tut' – was originally known as Tutankhaten, which is thought to have meant 'the living image of Aten'. The Aten was the worshipped disc of the sun in ancient Egyptian mythology and one aspect of the god Ra. Thus, the meaning of the name Tutankhaten had great religious significance.

However, Tutankhaten did not think that the Aten should be worshipped as the sole deity of ancient Egypt. Therefore, after the death of the pharaoh Akhenaten in around 1334 BC, Tutankhaten changed his name to Tutankhamun upon ascending the throne. This showed everybody that he rejected the idea of just worshipping the Aten as a single god and that he wanted to return the country to worshipping Amun and other ancient Egyptian deities as well.

## His Parents

Due to damage to the ancient stone artefacts found in Akhetaten (the capital city during the reign of Akhenaten), the exact parentage of Tutankhamun remains uncertain.

However, Egyptologists and scientists have analysed the remains of a mummy found in tomb KV55 of the Valley of the Kings – a popular royal burial site – and discovered that this mummy was shown to share very similar physical characteristics with the mummy of Tutankhamun. Artefacts also found in tomb KV55 led some scholars to believe that this was the burial site of Akhenaten.



Therefore, based on both sets of evidence, many people have reached the logical conclusion that Akhenaten was the father of Tutankhamun.

Historically, many people have believed that Akhenaten's wife, the famous pharaoh Nefertiti, was Tutankhamun's mother. However, this is now believed by some to have been a misconception. Inside tomb KV55, alongside the mummy of

Akhenaten, Egyptologists discovered artefacts which suggested that Akhenaten had many wives – one of whom was known as Kiya.

A mummy discovered in a different archaeological site (tomb KV35) has recently been proved to be Tutankhamun's mother after thorough study and DNA testing. This mummy is informally referred to as 'The Younger Lady', but her exact identity remains unknown. It is widely debated whether this mummy proven to be Tutankhamun's mother is that of Queen Nefertiti, of Kiya or of someone else entirely.



### Becoming Pharaoh

Shortly before the death of Akhenaten, a mysterious figure known as Smenkhkare ruled jointly with him – a situation known as coregency. Little is known for certain about Smenkhkare; it is even uncertain whether they were male or female. Some people speculate that they may have been Tutankhamun or another of Akhenaten's children while others hypothesise that it was Akhenaten's wife Nefertiti who helped him to rule as his health declined.

After Akhenaten's death, a female pharaoh named Neferneferuaten ruled over ancient Egypt for two years. Some people speculate that this, too, was Nefertiti. It is thought by some that Nefertiti did this because Tutankhamun (Akhenaten's heir) was too young to assume the throne.

Nevertheless, in what is thought to have been around 1332 BC, Tutankhamun became pharaoh at eight or nine years of age. It is thought that he initially became the ruler under his birthname of Tutankhaten as regal artefacts, such as a royal staff, were found inscribed with this name.

### His Reign

It is widely believed that Tutankhamun reigned for approximately ten years until his untimely and unexpected death in around 1323 BC. At this time, Tutankhamun was thought to have been around 19 years old. After his death, Tutankhamun was embalmed and buried in an elaborate 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.

# Questions

1. Look at the section entitled **His Parents**.

Which word from this section means 'examined methodically'? Tick one.

- ☐ characteristics
- ☐ analysed
- ☐ suggested
- ☐ logical

2. In which tomb was the mummy thought to be Akhenaten found? Tick one.

- ☐ KV35
- ☐ KV55
- ☐ 1336
- ☐ 19

3. Find and copy **two** nicknames that Tutankhamun is still commonly given.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. ... **due to the passage of time since his reign...**

How else could the author have phrased this?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why might the author have chosen to start the **His Name** section with the word 'surprisingly'?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. State what Tutankhamun was originally called and explain its religious significance at the time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Summarise the significance of Tutankhamun's decision to change his name.

---

---

---

8. Discuss **two** reasons why the exact identity of Tutankhamun's mother is uncertain.

---

---

---

9. 'It would be logical to conclude that Neferneferuaten was Nefertiti.' Argue in support of this statement, providing reasons for your answer.

---

---

---

---

10. Explore two reasons why Tutankhamun's reign was unusual.

---

---

---