Curse of the Boy King?

King Tut’s Tomb, Luxor, Egypt

The Egyptians believed that their kings, known as pharaohs, were gods who had come down to Earth. After these rulers died, their spirits would continue to live among the gods. The Egyptians also thought that to fully enjoy this afterlife, the pharaohs needed their bodies. So a pharaoh’s corpse was turned into a mummy and buried with food, beautiful artwork, and priceless treasures that the pharaoh would take along to the afterlife. Anyone who dared disturb the tomb or remove its riches would be put to death.

In 1922, an English archaeologist named Howard Carter explored the tomb of Tutankhamun (too-tahn-KAH-muhn), a pharaoh who ruled ancient Egypt more than 3,000 years ago. King Tut is sometimes called the boy king because he came to power when he was about nine years old and died around the age of 18 in 1322 B.C.
Like all pharaohs, King Tut was buried with great riches. Also like the others, he was turned into a mummy by highly skilled experts called embalmers. The Egyptian mummy-makers began their process by removing most major organs. Then they laid the body in salt to dry it out. Finally, the embalmers wrapped the mummy in strips of cloth and placed it in a magnificent set of nested coffins.

After Howard Carter entered King Tut’s tomb and found both the boy king’s treasures and his mummy, newspapers started printing legends about a “mummy’s curse.” According to these stories, a dead pharaoh would cause great harm to anyone who entered his tomb. When a man who had worked closely with Carter died, some people said the curse was to blame. Scientists, of course, say there is no mummy’s curse. Yet that hasn’t stopped books and movies from keeping the legend of the pharaoh’s revenge alive to this day.

King Tut’s mummy

Some newspaper stories claimed that the curse was recorded on a stone tablet in Tut’s tomb. The words on the tablet were said to be “Death shall come on swift wings to him that touches the tomb of Pharaoh.”