The Boy King

Tutankhamen was king of ancient Egypt from 1333 B.C. to 1323 B.C. Often called “The Boy King,” he was only about 9 or 10 years old when he ascended to the throne. Because of his age, several regents made decisions for him, especially one named Ay. The kingdom he inherited from his father was in something of a turmoil, because the father had initiated a new religion that focused on one god and eliminated many of the gods the Egyptians had previously worshiped. Tutankhamen, or King Tut, as he is more famously known, spent some time restoring these other popular gods to the country’s religious practice. He also moved the capital to Memphis, to further distance himself from his late father’s religious policies.

It appears that King Tut was physically impaired, because he is known to have relied on the use of a cane. Because of his impairments and his youth, King Tut was not an effective or aggressive ruler. But the lack of fame during his lifetime turned, many years after his death, to the greatest fame of all the Egyptian kings. After more than 3,000 years, King Tut’s tomb was discovered in the Valley of the Kings by the British Egyptologist Howard Carter.

Breathtaking Riches

Although there was evidence to suggest that Tut’s tomb had been looted, possibly not long after his burial, it was the most intact of all the pharaohs’ burial places. The riches that were found with his mummified body were breathtaking. Most famous, and exhibited around the world today, is the gold face mask. His most interior coffin was solid gold, and the outer coffins were wood covered with gold.

Since the discovery of Tut’s mummy in 1922, archaeologists have been able to piece together quite a bit of this Boy King’s history, as well as provide some tantalizing mysteries about him. Foremost concerns how he died, at only about 19 years old. Some believed at first that he had been murdered by a blow to the back of the head, but it is now generally accepted that the evidence of this possibility is actually a result of the embalming process. They have been able to establish, however, that death most likely resulted from an infection in his leg, perhaps combined with malaria, which he had had several times during his life. So we can conclude that this Egyptian king had a luxurious, but probably a rather painful life.