

# Mummification

The Ancient Egyptians believed that after a person died, their spirit was divided into two parts, the ba and the ka. They believed that the ka needed a body to inhabit, so they took great care to preserve the bodies of the dead. The process of preserving the body was called embalming. Embalming was carried out in tents in the desert, and could take up to ten weeks to complete.

First, the body was washed with palm wine and rinsed with water taken from the Nile. The liver, lungs, stomach and intestines were then removed, washed and packed in natron, a preserving salt. They were placed in special jars known as canopic jars. The brain was considered to be useless, and was pulled out through the nostrils using a hook, and thrown away. The heart, however, remained in the body, as it would be needed in the Judgement Hall.

The body was then treated with natron to prevent it rotting and left for forty days. The organs were then wrapped in linen and placed back inside the body. The body was stuffed with leaves, linen and sawdust to make it look more lifelike, after which it was wrapped in linen bandages.

First, the head and neck were wrapped. Then, the fingers and toes were wrapped individually, after which the arms and legs were wrapped. Scrolls with spells on them were then placed between the hands to help in the Underworld. Finally, a cloth was wrapped around the entire mummy, which was then enclosed in a wooden mummy case to protect it.

1. Why did the Ancient Egyptians take so much care with the dead?


2. How long did the whole process take, and why did it take so long?


3. What were canopic jars for, and why was something obvious missed out?


4. How did they preserve the body and what did they do to make it look more lifelike?


5. What would you have seen when the process was complete?
