



Decision Making About Artifacts

One of the most important tasks of historians is decision making. Below is a story about a scholar's decision that made headlines in May 1995. Answer the questions that follow the story. If you need help, refer to pages 86 and 87 in your textbook.

Dr. Kent Weeks is a scholar at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. His main goal is to find and preserve every possible artifact that exists in the Valley of the Kings. This valley, which is located on the west bank of the Nile River in Upper Egypt, is where most of the tombs of ancient Egyptian kings have been found.

In 1988 Dr. Weeks had a difficult decision to make. A site known as Tomb 5 had been identified as a good place to build a parking lot for tourists. When the site was first explored in 1820, a British scholar concluded that all the artifacts had been uncovered. Dr. Weeks, however, wasn't so sure. Should he explore the site one more time, or should he begin a new dig in a completely different part of the Valley of the Kings?

Dr. Weeks decided to explore Tomb 5 again. After seven years of slow, careful digging, he was finally able to pry open a stone door that had remained shut for thousands of years. There, before his eyes, was the discovery of a lifetime: a long corridor with ten doors on each side and at the end a statue of Osiris, the god of the afterlife. This and other artifacts led Dr. Weeks to conclude that he had found the last resting place of as many as 50 sons of Rameses II, the greatest of all the ancient Egyptian kings.

Michael D. Lemonick, "Secrets of the Lost Tomb," *Time*, May 29, 1995.

1. What was Dr. Weeks's goal?

2. What alternatives did he consider?

3. What decision did he make? Why did he choose this alternative?

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MUMMIES

Mummies are often featured in movies as being undead beings. Early science fiction novels were written about ancient mummies coming back to life, and horror films about mummies became extremely popular between the 1930s and '50s, the heyday of science fiction and horror films. Many of the mummy films made around that time promoted a belief that mummies have magical powers: if you disturb their sleep, a curse will be placed upon you!



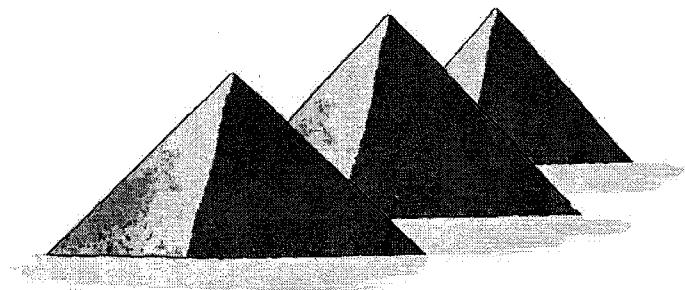
FAMOUS MUMMY:

King Tutankhamun, or "The Boy King", is possibly the most famous of ancient Egyptian royalty. King Tut took the throne at age nine or ten. History suggests he wasn't very famous when he was a king, but he is remembered in modern society because of the very public discovery of his tomb by Egyptologist Howard Carter in 1922. Legends of a "curse" are still around to this day because people that were part of Carter's excavation team had instances of bad luck shortly after. The mission's funder caught an infection, and one of the anthropologist's house burned down!

PYRAMIDS:

Though it was actually rare for Egyptian royalty to inscribe curses in their tombs, the pharaohs seemed to be trying to prevent people from breaking into their chambers and derailing their journey to the afterlife. Winding walkways to the tomb that lead deep under the pyramid were common, and doors to the tomb were often sealed shut. Even King Tut was buried in three nested sarcophagi, which were inside of five layered wooden shrines. Inside their tombs, pharaohs stocked everything they might need for the afterlife, including food, furniture and valuables.

Draw up a floor plan for your pyramid. How would you trick people into staying away from your chamber?



Name three things you'd want to have in your tomb. What do you think you'd need or want in the afterlife?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

