Ancient Egypt
Making Mummies

Thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt, pharaohs were buried inside huge pyramids. Before burial, however, their bodies were preserved.¹ To do this, the ancient Egyptians would mummify their kings. Mummification was a very careful process. In fact, it took 70 days to complete.

First, embalmers² would remove organs from the body. They removed the brain by sticking a hook up the pharaoh’s nose. This would loosen up the brain so it could be pulled out through the nose. The ancient Egyptians didn’t think the brain was important, so it was thrown away. The stomach, liver, intestines, and lungs were also removed. These organs were carefully wrapped and kept in jars. They thought the heart was most important. They left the heart in its place.

The body was now a shell. The embalmers stuffed it with fabric and sawdust. Then it was covered in salt, which dried it out. When the body was completely dry, it was wrapped in layers and layers of linen³ bandages. Then it was placed in a coffin.

Sometimes, the coffin was placed inside another coffin. These coffins were made out of wood or stone. They were either shaped like a rectangle or like the mummy itself. The coffin was placed in a tomb. Next to it were many objects for the mummy to use in the afterlife.

¹ preserved: prepared to be kept for a long time
² embalmers: people who preserve dead bodies
³ linen: a type of cloth made from flax
1. What happens when embalmers cover a body with salt?
   a. The body turns white.
   b. The body becomes soft.
   c. The body disintegrates.
   d. The body dries out.

2. Which step comes last in the sequence described in the passage?
   a. The body is placed in a coffin.
   b. The body is wrapped in linen bandages.
   c. The coffin is placed in a tomb.
   d. Organs are removed from the body

3. It can be inferred from the passage that
   a. ancient Egyptians did not think that people had an afterlife
   b. ancient Egyptians thought the brain was the most important organ
   c. usually only special people like pharaohs were mummified
   d. everyone who died in Ancient Egypt was mummified

4. **Mummification** is a word for describing what process?
   a. Preserving bodies
   b. Destroying bodies
   c. Hiding bodies
   d. Burying bodies

5. This passage is mainly about
   a. the long, careful process of mummification.
   b. what is inside the Egyptian pyramids.
   c. the different organs inside the human body.
   d. the different kinds of coffins used in Ancient Egypt.
6. Why were objects placed in tombs along with the mummies?

______________________________________________________________________

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______________________________________________________________________

7. Based on the passage, why do you think embalmers stuffed the bodies with fabric and sawdust?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Some people in ancient Egypt used to be mummified before being buried, _________ the way people are buried today.

a. as a result of  
b. in contrast to  
c. despite  
d. because
9. Read the following sentence.

**Thousands of years ago, pharaohs were buried inside huge pyramids in Egypt.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. Who is the subject of the sentence? pharaohs

2. Pharaohs were what? __________________________________________

3. When? ______________________________________________________

4. Where? _____________________________________________________

10. **Vocabulary Word**: coffin: something in which a dead body is buried.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: __________________________________________

___________________________________________________________
Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 600

Featured Text Structure: Sequence – the writer provides an order of events or steps in a process

Passage Summary: The passage describes the steps in the process of mummification, or preserving bodies, that ancient Egyptians did before burying pharaohs inside pyramids.

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   a. the long, careful process of mummification.
   b. what is inside the Egyptian pyramids.
   c. the different organs inside the human body.
   d. the different kinds of coffins used in Ancient Egypt.

6. Why were objects placed in tombs along with the mummies?

   **Suggested answer**: The objects placed in tombs along with the mummies were for the dead king to use in the afterlife.

7. Based on the passage, why do you think embalmers stuffed the bodies with fabric and sawdust?

   **Suggested answer**: Embalmers most likely stuffed the bodies so that they would not collapse or lose their shape. With the organs removed, fabric and sawdust were used to take their place.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

   Some people in ancient Egypt used to be mummified before being buried, _________ the way people are buried today.

   a. as a result of
   b. in contrast to
   c. despite
   d. because

9. Read the following sentence.

   **Thousands of years ago, pharaohs were buried inside huge pyramids in Egypt.**

   Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

   1. Who is the subject of the sentence? pharaohs
   2. Pharaohs were what? **buried inside huge pyramids**
   3. When? **thousands of years ago**
4. Where? in Egypt

10. **Vocabulary Word**: coffin: something in which a dead body is buried.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.