



Fact or Fiction?

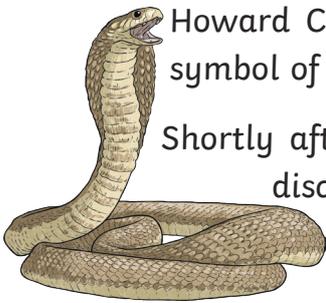
The Pharaoh's Curse

In 1922, the 3000-year-old tomb of the great pharaoh, Tutankhamun, was discovered by archaeologist, Howard Carter. It was an astonishing discovery and news rapidly spread across the world. Suddenly, everyone wanted to know about pharaohs, pyramids and everything else associated with ancient Egypt.



Something Strange

However, soon after the tomb's discovery, unusual occurrences began to happen.



Howard Carter's canary was reportedly killed by a cobra – the ancient Egyptian symbol of monarchy. This sparked local rumours of a curse.

Shortly after this, people mysteriously started to die. A year after Tutankhamun's discovery, the man who funded the expedition, Lord Carnarvon, became gravely ill. Some people believed that this confirmed that the supposed curse was real.

Newspaper Stories

Many people found the idea of a pharaoh's curse both frightening and fascinating; it unsurprisingly fuelled many stories in global newspapers. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a popular Victorian author, wrote that Lord Carnarvon's death had been caused by ghostly 'elementals'.



Arthur Weigall, an Egyptologist and journalist, said that he had watched Lord Carnarvon laugh and joke outside Tutankhamun's tomb just six weeks before he died. When it happened, Weigall was reported to have turned to a fellow reporter to utter the spooky words, "I give him six weeks to live."

In 1925, the archaeologist, Henry Field, explained how Howard Carter's friend, Sir Bruce Ingram, was given an ancient Egyptian paperweight as a gift. It was shaped like a mummy's hand with a scarab bracelet on its wrist. On the bracelet were carved the words:

Cursed be he who moves my body.
To him shall come fire, water and pestilence.

Not long after receiving the gift, Ingram's house suffered a terrible fire. When it was eventually rebuilt, the house then suffered a great flood.

In all, eight people who were present when Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered died within 12 years. It seemed as though the pharaoh's curse was real.

The Truth

However, the curse doesn't seem quite as frightening when the facts are looked at more closely.



Although eight people died within 12 years of the discovery, there were 46 others who lived long and healthy lives – including Howard Carter himself. Lady Evelyn Herbert, who was one of the first people to enter the tomb, lived for a further 57 years.

Additionally, Lord Carnarvon's death was not quite as sinister as it was made to appear in the newspapers. The truth was that he had been suffering from poor health before the expedition and actually died from a mosquito bite.

Surprisingly, some people even suggested that it was Howard Carter himself who created the idea of the curse to scare intruders away from his amazing discovery.

Whatever the truth behind the pharaoh's curse, one thing is for sure: it made for a fantastic story.