The Mummy
adapted by David Levithan
based on the screenplay by Stephen Sommers
retold by Mike Dean

SUMMARY

In Ancient Egypt, 3000 years ago, Imhotep, the High Priest of the Dead, loves Anck-su-namun. Unfortunately, Anck-su-namun is also the Pharaoh’s lover and when the Pharaoh catches Anck-su-namun and Imhotep together in his lover’s bedroom, Anck-su-namun kills him to allow Imhotep to escape. Although he is reluctant to leave Anck-su-namun to face death, Imhotep knows that he has the power to bring her back to life, using the Book of the Dead. He travels to Hamunaptra, the City of the Dead, to perform the ceremony. But the Med-Jai, the Pharaoh’s soldiers, have followed him and they stop Imhotep before he can bring Anck-su-namun back from the underworld. They cut out his eyes and mummify him – half alive, half dead. To complete the job, they put on his face scarabs, the sacred beetles of the Ancient Egyptians. Then they pledge to stay and guard the mummy for ever, so that Imhotep cannot escape and turn the world into mummies...

Thus the scene is set for a love story with a horrific backdrop. Three thousand years later, in 1925, Evelyn, a young British woman, is working in Cairo Museum. When her brother Jonathan brings her a small box containing a map and key, they decide to pursue the search for the lost city of Hamunaptra. Jonathan got the box from an American, O’Connell, and before long the three adventurers have found the city. But they are not alone. Three American archaeologists are also there with a group of diggers and a Hungarian guide, Beni. They soon discover that the Med-Jai are there too, led by Ardeth Bay.

Between them, the searchers manage accidentally to release Imhotep from his half-life, along with his scarabs. He continues his age-old quest to bring his lover back from the dead, but for this he needs Evelyn’s heart. Whilst O’Connell fights off hoards of mummies, Jonathan finds and reads from the Book of Amun Ra, which sends all the baddies back to the underworld. One love story has ended unhappily, but perhaps Evelyn has found her Imhotep in the American O’Connell...

ABOUT THE FILM

The book is based on the 1999 film directed and written by Stephen Sommers and starring Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz. It was not the first film to follow the theme of the Mummy, two previous films, in 1932 and 1959, had already been made. The idea of a long-dead Egyptian being brought back to life in modern times is one that has provided a constant storyline for film and TV scriptwriters. This was an adventure film in the style of ‘Raiders of the Lost Ark’, whereas the previous two films were horror movies.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

Archaeologists believe that the ancient Egyptians invented embalming, the process in which a dead body is artificially preserved to slow down decomposition. They believed that the living body contained a vital life-force, which they called ka. This force left the body after death to take its place in the afterlife.

However, the Egyptians believed that the ka could not survive if the body which had housed it decayed. Therefore, the dead body was immersed in natural preservatives and then wrapped in cloths to create a mummy. The mummies were then put in tombs, furnished with a copy of the Book of the Dead, a guide to the afterlife.

There was certainly a real person called Imhotep but he lived around 2650 B.C. Like the ‘hero’ of the story, he was a priest but he is more famous as the architect of the earliest of all Egyptian pyramids at Sakkara.

The legend of the evil mummy, coming back from the dead to terrorize the world, may have originated with the discovery of the mummy of Tutankhamun by Lord Carnavon and George Carter on February 17th, 1923 and the apparently mysterious death of Lord Carnavon just two months later.
The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopyable Student’s Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Put students into groups to discuss these questions:

1. Do you like horror stories? Why/Why not?
2. This horror story is called The Mummy. What is a mummy? Look through the pictures in the book and try to find a mummy.
3. What can you guess about the story from looking at the pictures.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1–2

1. Put students into small groups. Ask them to think of new titles for the first two chapters. Then ask the whole class to decide which title is the best for each chapter.
2. Write the name of each character from the first two chapters on a piece of paper. Give each student a piece of paper. The other students have to guess who is who by asking questions.

Chapter 3–4

1. Put students into pairs to role play a conversation between O’Connell and Beni. Beni asks O’Connell how he escaped from Hamunaptra last time. O’Connell explains – students use the information from Chapter 2. Then O’Connell asks Beni how he escaped. The students must make up his answer.
2. Ask each student to imagine that they are an expert on Ancient Egypt. Tell them they are going to make a speech about the Book of the Dead and the Book of Amun Ra. Ask them to write one paragraph which explains what the books do and how you use them, using the information in the story so far.

Chapter 5

Explain to the whole class that you are going to act out the final chapter – as in the film version of this story. Make sure that there is one person for each of the main characters and groups of people for the mumified priests and the mumified soldiers. There should also be several people as narrators. Ask each narrator to read a section of Chapter 5 and tell the rest of the students to act out the scene. You could even be the film director, stopping the action if it goes wrong and giving further directions.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into groups to discuss these questions.

1. Which parts of the book would make good film scenes?
2. Which parts would need lots of special effects?

GLOSSARY

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the Before You Read sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapters 1-2

- candle (n) a stick of wax that you burn to produce light
- curator (n) someone who is in charge of a museum
- desert (n) a large area of hot dry land where not much grows
- god (n) a being who is believed to have power over some part of nature or the world
- gold (n) valuable soft yellow metal
- heart (n) the part of the body inside your chest that pumps blood around your body
- high priest (n) the most important leader of a religious group
- key (n) something that you put into a lock to open a door, cupboard etc.
- kiss (v) to touch someone with your lips
- mummy (n) a dead body that has been preserved and wrapped in cloth, especially in ancient Egypt
- museum (n) a building where people can go and see important objects connected with history, science, art etc.
- scarab (n) a kind of beetle
- scream (v) to make a loud high noise with your voice
- soldier (n) a member of the army, especially someone who is not an officer
- statue (n) a stone or metal object that is made to look like a person or animal
- sword (n) a weapon with a long sharp blade and a handle
- temple (n) a building where people in some religions go to pray, sing, etc.

Chapters 3-4

- brain (n) the organ inside your head that controls how you think, feel and move
- coffin (n) the box in which a dead person is buried
- dig (v) to move earth or make a hole in it using a tool, your hands or a machine
Activities before reading the book

Read the introduction. Are these sentences true or false?

(a) Scarabs can fly.
(b) Imhotep had a lover.
(c) O’Connell and Evelyn come from the same country.
(d) O’Connell and Evelyn fall in love in the story.
(e) There are two films called The Mummy.

Activities while reading the book

Chapters 1–2

1 Match each of these people, places and things from Chapter 1 with one of the descriptions.

(a) Thebes
(b) Imhotep
(c) Anck-su-namun
(d) Seti the First
(e) The Med-Jai
(f) Hamunaptra
(g) Anubis
(h) scarabs
(i) The Book of Amun Ra
(j) The Book of the Dead

Are these sentences about the events in Chapter 1 true or false?

(a) The Pharaoh found Imhotep in Anck-su-namun’s bedroom.
(b) Imhotep killed the Pharaoh.
(c) The Med-Jai found Imhotep in Anck-su-namun’s bedroom.
(d) Imhotep mummified his lover.
(e) Imhotep brought Anck-su-namun back from the underworld.
(f) The Med-Jai mummified Imhotep.

3 The events in Chapter 2 happened in three places:

• in the Cairo Museum
• in a Cairo bar
• in the City of the Dead

Chapters 3–4

1 In Chapter 3, who or what did these things? Choose from the list in each case.

• Ardeth Bay and the Med-Jai
• Beni
• Evelyn
• Imhotep
• scarabs
• Jonathan, Evelyn and O’Connell
• O’Connell
• the Americans
• the diggers
• the Egyptian diggers
• Imhotep and the scarabs
• the priests
• the three Americans

Who or what...

(a) did Evelyn and Jonathan see when they arrived at Hamunaptra?
(b) arrived with three Americans and a lot of Egyptian diggers?
(c) found a dark room and got in through a wall?
(d) made mummies in the room?
(e) did O’Connell see with guns in their hands?
(f) put her hand over O’Connell’s gun?
(g) came on horses?
(h) found a big box with Egyptian writing on it?
(i) understood the old language
(j) opened the box?
Chapter 5

1. Complete each of these sentences from the first part of Chapter 5 with a word from the box.

bird    book    coffin    desert    face    girl    god    gun
hand    heart    legs    mummy    nose    priests    statue
story    water

(a) ‘How do we know this ...?’ asked O’Connell.
(b) ‘He has a big ...’ said Jonathan.
(c) ‘Look for a big ... That will be him.’
(d) Beni had a ... in Evelyn’s back.
(e) At the same time, Ardeth Bay and the Med-Jai were on their way across the ... .
(f) Imhotep had the gold box with Anck-su-namun’s ...
(g) He threw some ... from the box at a wall.
(h) His mumified ... walked in.
(i) Jonathan and O’Connell found the ... of Horus, and the priests found them.
(j) Back in the Sah-Netjer, Evelyn was in a ...
(k) She couldn’t move her arms or ... .
(l) Next to her was the ... of Anck-su-namun.
(m) Imhotep had the Book of the Dead in one ...
(n) ... and he put the other hand on Anck-su-namun’s ...
(o) ‘This is a love ...’ thought Evelyn.
(p) Jonathan and O’Connell found the ... of Amun Ra.
(q) ‘Take it and help the ...’ Ardeth Bay shouted.

2. Match each sentence from the second part of Chapter 5 with a reply.

(a) I found it, Evy!
(b) Open the book. That’s the only way.
(c) Are there any words on the front of book?
(d) Tell the soldiers that you’re the boss.
(e) This Egyptian letter ... there are two lines at the top, one line at the bottom ...
(f) Why are you looking at me?
(g) Can you fight with Imhotep for three or four minutes? Please!
(h) Thank you very much.
(i) Is there a key?
(ii) It’s an ankh.
(iii) No problem.
(iv) Not lthank you. From all my people.
(v) Stop talking! Get me out of here.
(vi) Who? ME?
(vii) Words? Yes, Rasheen ... oooloo ... Kashka!
(viii) You’re their boss now.

Discuss with a friend.

1. Did you like the book? Why? Why not?
2. Which part of the book was ...?
(a) the most frightening
(b) the most exciting
(c) the silliest
(d) the most difficult to understand