

The Investigation

The experts arrived at the bog. They gently removed dirt from the body. It was a man. He looked peaceful, as if he were resting. But investigators would soon discover that the man had been in the bog for a long time. And he hadn't died peacefully.

The Question

How could investigators discover what had happened to the man in the bog? Why are murder investigations—from any time period—so fascinating?

The police and the museum experts joined the Hojgaards at the bog. The experts from the museum would take over the investigation.

They carefully uncovered the body of a small man. He had a well-preserved face. And he looked as if he were sleeping. But as the experts brushed away bits of dirt from the man's body, they discovered something shocking. He had a rope tied around his neck!

Workers gently removed the body, placed it in a box, and took it to the museum. Scientists there confirmed that the body had been mummified, or preserved, in the bog. The Tollund Man, as he is now called, had been killed about 2,400 years before. Now they had to figure out why.



A BOG BODY called the Stidsholt Woman was found in a bog in Denmark in 1859.

Bog Mummies

Why don't bodies left in bogs decay?
Scientists say there are three main reasons.

1. Running water takes in oxygen from the air. Living things such as plants, fish, and most bacteria need oxygen to survive. But the water in bogs is very still. It doesn't contain much oxygen. So in a bog there are few—if any—organisms that feed on bodies and cause them to decay.

2. Bogs contain a kind of acid released by plants. This acid preserves bodies much as vinegar preserves pickles.

3. Many bogs contain sphagnum, a kind of moss. This moss produces a chemical that can preserve a body. It also dyes bodies a deep, dark brown.



Sphagnum moss

The Other Mummies

The ancient Egyptians preserved the bodies of their dead—especially members of the royal families. They believed that the bodies and spirits would live again in the afterlife.

Here's how they made a mummy!



A STONE TOMB holds the gold-covered coffin of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh.

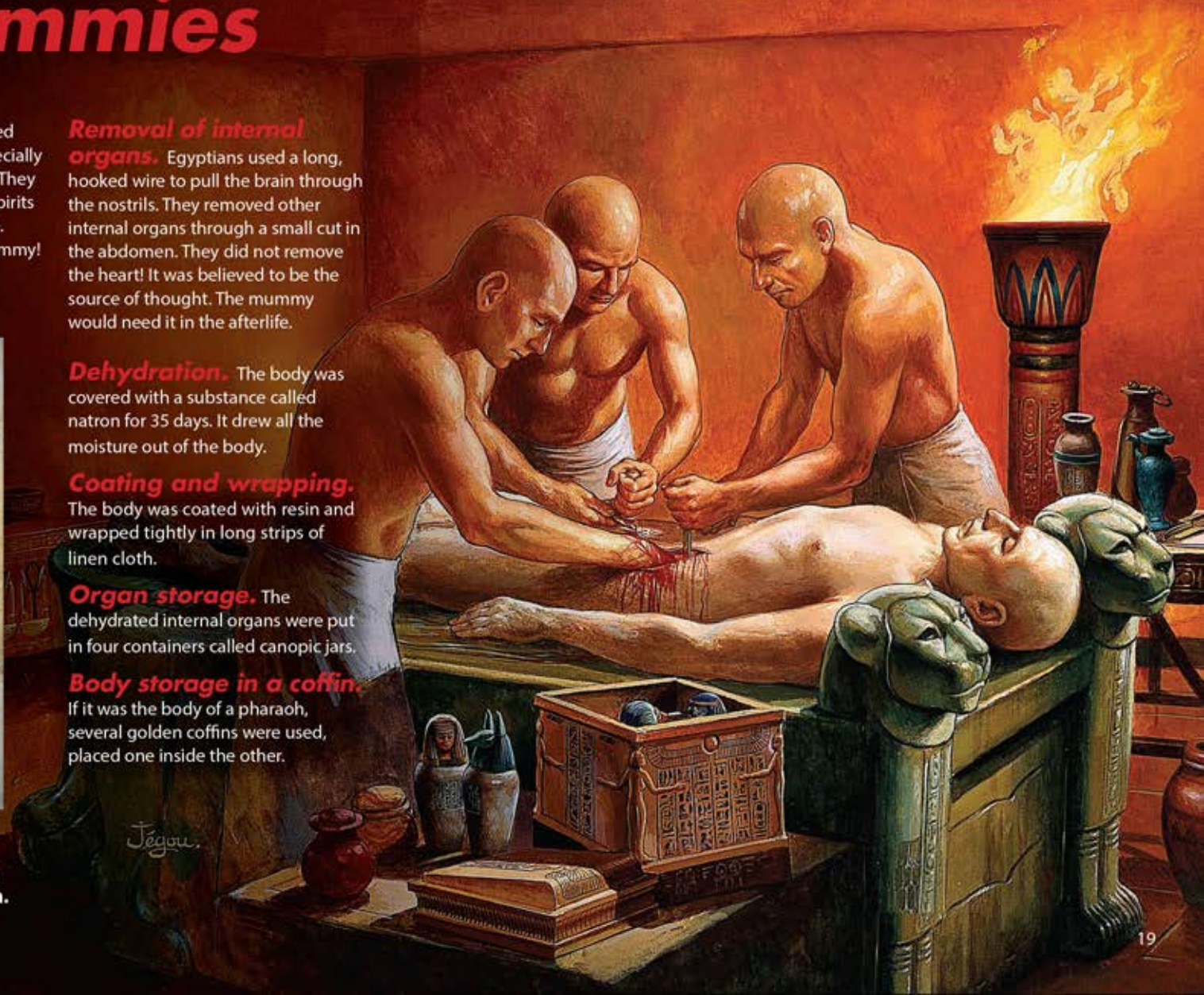
Removal of internal organs. Egyptians used a long, hooked wire to pull the brain through the nostrils. They removed other internal organs through a small cut in the abdomen. They did not remove the heart! It was believed to be the source of thought. The mummy would need it in the afterlife.

Dehydration. The body was covered with a substance called natron for 35 days. It drew all the moisture out of the body.

Coating and wrapping. The body was coated with resin and wrapped tightly in long strips of linen cloth.




Organ storage. The dehydrated internal organs were put in four containers called canopic jars.

Body storage in a coffin. If it was the body of a pharaoh, several golden coffins were used, placed one inside the other.



Here's a selection of mummies from around the world.

Meet the Mummies!

Who?		Where and when mummified?	How?	What do we know?
<p>Nazca child</p>		<p>Peru, about 1,500 years ago</p>	<p>Buried in sand that is rich in salt and nitrates, which preserved the body</p>	<p>The Nazca culture thrived in Peru between 300 BCE and 800 CE. Their dead were usually buried in a fetal position.</p>
<p>Inca girl</p>		<p>Northern Argentina, 500 years ago</p>	<p>Naturally frozen and buried under several feet of rock and dirt</p>	<p>The Inca Empire ruled northwestern Peru from 1438 to 1533. This Inca girl was one of three child mummies found on a burial platform. She was between eight and 15 years old, and was probably left as a sacrifice to the gods.</p>
<p>Italians from the Middle Ages</p>		<p>Palermo, Italy, about 400 years ago</p>	<p>Dehydrated on racks, then washed with vinegar. Some were embalmed.</p>	<p>Priests in a monastery mummified a monk. So the locals decided to preserve their loved ones, too. But they had to pay for upkeep or the bodies would be removed from the catacomb where they were stored.</p>