New Discoveries in Ancient Egypt by Bryan Brown

from Junior Scholastic

1. For years, people have looked with awe upon the burial riches of ancient Egypt’s Pharaohs (Kings). The famous tomb of King Tutankhamen (TOO-tan-KAH-men), found in 1922, contained so many treasures, it took 10 years for archaeologists to remove them all. More than 5,000 items were found in Tut’s four-room burial chamber—everything from jewelry to gold masks to drinking cups!

2. But newer discoveries have revealed that a few Pharaohs went to the afterlife with more than just objects. Some even brought their servants!

3. Recently, archaeologists from New York University, Yale University, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum have made some startling discoveries at the ancient graveyard of Abydos (eh-BYE-des). Near the 5,000-year-old tomb of the Pharaoh Aha, they found six connected graves.

4. Archaeologists think the bones in the graves are those of officials, craftsmen, and servants in Aha’s royal court. The discoveries confirm a long-held suspicion among historians—that individuals were sacrificed in order to serve their ruler’s needs in the afterlife.

Words to Know

awe: (n.) a feeling of great respect or admiration
startling: (adj.) very unusual or surprising
confirm: (v.) to show that something is definitely true, especially by providing more proof
A Gigantic Leap

Paragraph 5: The kingdom of ancient Egypt lasted for 3,000 years, beginning around 3100 B.C. Historians often call Aha, also known as Menes (MEE-nez), the first Pharaoh. Many credit him with uniting Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt into one kingdom.

Paragraph 6: Egyptian civilization “took a gigantic leap under the ruler Aha,” says David O’Connor, who is leading the excavations at Abydos.

Paragraph 7: The human sacrifices offered for Aha also “indicate a great change of royal power,” says Laurel Bestock, a member of the Abydos team. During Aha’s time, Egyptians began to view their king as a god, or a divine representative.

Workmen excavate the Valley of the Kings.
Experts think individuals in Aha’s court were poisoned during the royal ritual. Still, tests on the skeletons do not reveal any signs of physical trauma. Court members may have thought they were gaining eternal life by following their King into death.

There are also bodies in graves linked to the tomb of King Djer, Aha’s successor. But O’Connor believes that the Pharaohs stopped making human sacrifices by the end of Egypt’s First Dynasty, in about 2986 B.C.

### Close Reading

#### Academic Vocabulary

8. What does the evidence in paragraph 8 reveal about how and why humans were sacrificed?

#### Key Ideas and Details

9. How does the author further develop the idea that servants were sacrificed for their kings?

#### Words and Phrases in Context

10. Explain the significance of the phrase “following their King into death” in paragraph 8. What does the author mean by following?

#### Text Structure

11. What information is provided by the time line that is not given elsewhere in the article?

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**Words to Know**

*ritual:* (n.) a ceremony that is always performed in the same way, in order to mark an important occasion

*trauma:* (n.) serious injury

*dynasty:* (n.) rulers from the same family
A Jumble of Bones

\section{Key Ideas and Details}

12. What is the historical importance of this new discovery in the Abydos cemetery? How is it different compared to previous discoveries?

\section{Words and Phrases in Context}

13. Describe the “boat graves” that the author mentions in \textbf{paragraph 11}. Why were they created?

\section{Writing}

14. Why does the author include quotations in \textbf{paragraphs 11 and 12}? Explain why the strategy is useful in this context.

\section{Key Ideas and Details}

15. How does the information about the disturbed graves emphasize the importance of the discovery?

\section{Words to Know}

\textbf{excavated}: (v.) carefully dug up in order to find ancient objects, bones, etc.

\textbf{seal}: (n.) a stamp made of metal or wax with a distinctive design used to authenticate a document or container
¶13 Scholars divide the time line of ancient Egypt into as many as 10 historical periods. The kingdom was ruled by 31 dynasties until Alexander the Great conquered it in 332 B.C. One of the greatest generals in history, Alexander spread Greek culture across much of the known world with his conquests.

¶14 In 30 B.C., the Romans defeated Queen Cleopatra, the last of the rulers who followed Alexander. Roman rule began to weaken when the empire split apart in 395 A.D. After that, the glory of ancient Egypt began to disappear under waves of new conquests and foreign control.

¶15 Today, clues to the great mysteries of one of the world's great civilizations are being dug out of the desert bit by bit. In Abydos, archaeologists have uncovered the tombs of all eight kings of the First Dynasty. But O'Connor's team believes that there are many more bones of the First Dynasty officials and servants to be found.

¶16 "There is still a lot of exciting work to do!" says Bestock.

Words to Know

scholars: (n.) intellectual, well educated people; people who know a lot about a specific topic

periods: (n.) particular lengths of time, with beginning and end points

waves: (n.) sudden increases in a particular behavior, activity, or feeling

Close Reading

Text Structure

16. What important information about the grave site at Abydos does the author save for the last section? What might his purpose have been in doing so?

Academic Vocabulary

17. Explain why "waves of new conquests" ended Egyptian rule.

Words and Phrases in Context

18. Why does the author use the word glory in association with ancient Egypt in paragraph 14? What does the word's connotation reveal about the author's perspective?

Writing

19. How does the work of archaeologists like Bestock change the way people look at history? Explain your answer using details from the text.