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# classroom TUTORIALS

## King Tutankhamun As a Child



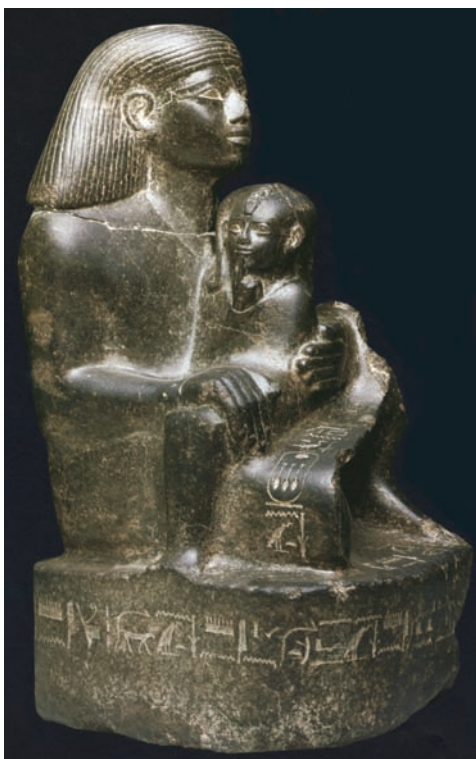
### CHILDREN IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART

Children often appear in ancient Egyptian art, most frequently with their parents, nurses, or tutors. The Egyptians developed artistic conventions for the depiction of children that distinguish them from adults. Women were shown wearing close-fitting dresses and men usually wear short kilts. Boys and girls are often differentiated from adults by their lack of attire. Girls may be shown wearing only a girdle, a type of jewelry made of beads and decorative elements strung on a cord and worn around the waist. Children in ancient Egypt also wore a unique hairstyle called a “lock of youth.” This was a braided lock of hair worn on the side of the child’s otherwise shaven head. Children are often shown holding a finger to their mouth. This gesture might allude to the childhood habit of sucking one’s finger.

In the statue of Benermerut and the princess Meritamun from the exhibition, the daughter of King Thutmose III is shown emerging from the cloak of her father’s trusted confidant, Benermerut. Represented as a typical child, she places her finger to her mouth and wears the side lock of youth.

Another image of a princess from the exhibition shows the royal child Neferure sitting on her tutor’s lap. The child wears a side-lock and holds a finger to her mouth. The man holding the young princess is Senenmut, her tutor and her mother King Hatshepsut’s chief steward. Senenmut holds Neferure close, his arms almost completely surrounding her, possibly to underscore his protective and caring role in the young girl’s life. Both the statue of Meritamun and that of Neferure are made of granodiorite, a dense stone that is difficult to carve. They were also both made between 50–100 years of one another in the reigns of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut in the 18th Dynasty.

A tiny figure of a child from the exhibition, below, was found in the Antechamber of King Tutankhamun’s tomb. Made of blue glass, it shows a king (either Tutankhamun, or his father Akhenaten) in a squatting position with his finger to his mouth. He wears the *kheperesh*, or blue crown. A loop on the back would have allowed it to be suspended by a chain.



TOP  
Statue of Benermerut and  
the princess Meritamun

BOTTOM  
Squatting statue of Senenmut  
holding Princess Neferure

Blue glass statuette

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## King Tutankhamun As a Child

### KING TUTANKHAMUN'S CHILDHOOD

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be the young King Tutankhamun? After the death of Akhenaten the young boy married his older half sister, Ankhsenpaaten, and was put in charge of the largest empire in the world! At 10 years old!

Pavement from Amarna Palace



Advised by two older officials, Ay and Horemheb, the boy king restored the traditional religion of Egypt and abandoned the worship of the one god, the Aten, which had been instituted by his father. Tutankhamun also moved the Egyptian capital from Akhetaten (which means "Horizon of the Aten") back to its original location at Thebes.

What was life like for the boy king? We know very little about Tutankhamun's childhood. The tomb of his nurse survives, and inscriptions on the walls describe the close relationship between the young king and his caregiver. We also know that the king was born into a world of royal privilege. He was raised in a palace, which probably had both a pool and a garden. It may have been decorated with images like the marsh scene (left), which was excavated from one of the palaces at Akhetaten, now called Amarna. The palace no doubt contained elaborate furnishings, like the carved, child-size throne that may have been used by the boy king in life and then placed in his tomb.



Child-sized throne made for Tutankhamun

He, his siblings, and other children of the royal court surely engaged in at least some of the games popular with other ancient Egyptian children, many of which are still played around the world today. Wrestling, racing, tug-of-war, playing with dolls and pets, and playing board games were all popular activities for children in ancient Egypt.

Perhaps the oldest board game in the world, Senet was already an ancient game in Tutankhamun's time. The word *senet* means "pass" in ancient Egyptian. The goal of playing was to make it from one side of the board to the other, avoiding obstacles along the way. In the New Kingdom, the obstacles had symbolic meanings, associated with passing from this life into the next. They included the "waters of chaos" and the "house of netting," an allusion to a place in the netherworld where enemies of Re were caught in executioners' nets. Decorated with the names and titles of the boy-king, this ivory game board was one of four found in King Tutankhamun's tomb.



*Senet*, perhaps the oldest board game in the world