A Thoroughly Modern Mummy
Experimental Archaeology – Step by Gruesome Step, the Egyptian Way.

Read the article and answer the following questions.

1. Who was the first historian to document how the mummification process was done?

2. Summarize Herodotus’s description of the mummification process.

3. List the ways that modern scientists have been able to confirm Herodotus’s description of the mummification process.

4. List the tools that were used during the mummification process.

5. What is Natron? Where is it found?

6. What are canopic jars?

7. Summarize the history of the canopic jars.

8. Why are the Egyptians considered resurrectionists?

9. What are ushabtiu?

10. How did the scientists find a cadaver to use for the mummification?
11. Describe how scientists believe the brain was removed.

12. Why was an obsidian knife used and not a bronze knife to make the flank abdominal incision?

13. Despite the Egyptians knowledge of mummification, why is it thought they may not have known much about human anatomy?

14. Why was the man who made the abdominal incision ritually pelted with stones?

15. What was the only organ intentionally left in the body? Why?

16. What was the only organ that was not preserved during the mummification process? Why?

17. Why do scientists believe the Egyptians used natron dry rather than a soaking solution?

18. What evidence was found to determine how many days the natron should be used?

19. How many days passed from death to burial?
20. Describe the results of the mummification process after 35 days of waiting.

21. What are some of the answers that this mummy experiment may help provide regarding DNA?

22. The final question that is most often asked is – Did the body donor know he would be mummified? What is the answer?

23. How does the mummification process reflect the Egyptians’ religious beliefs?

24. The article mentions that the Egyptians are not the only mummies from history – what are some other example of mummification?

25. Many think this article is gross. Which do you think is the cleaner and more effective way of embalming, the Egyptian mummification process or modern embalming? Is the ancient process better?

26. Now that you have read a detailed account, what do you think about the mummification process?