

Ancient Egyptian Death Masks

Death masks were hugely important for the pharaohs of Ancient Egypt.

In ancient Egypt, burial rites for the dead were a sacred duty, and needed to be performed to help put the soul to rest. Egyptians would make death masks in the likeness of the deceased to help their souls recognize their own body and return to it, ready to be led by the Egyptian god Anubis to be judged if they would be allowed to pass on to the realm of the dead.

Early masks were made from wood, in two pieces and connected with pegs. After that Egyptians used, so called, cartonnage, a material made from papyrus or linen and soaked in plaster and then moulded on a wooden mould. That was, of course, a cheap variant intended for lower class. Royal death masks were made from precious metals, first of all - gold or gold leaves on bronze.

One of the most famous death masks is the mask of the Tutankhamen (see below). It is made from two layers of gold, and the eyes and collar are made from coloured gemstones and glass, such as lapis lazuli, quartz and obsidian.

Imagine you are in the times of the Ancient Egyptians. You have been asked to design the pharaohs death mask, what treasures and gems would you include?
Design on paper or in your book.

