

THE MUMMY!



A TALE OF THE TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY

JANE WEBB

INTRODUCTION BY LISA TUTTLE

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SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM USE

1. Jane Webb's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* is the first story in English language to feature a revived mummy. Later authors went on to envision their own concepts of reanimated mummies, such as Théophile Gautier's *The Mummy's Foot* (1863), H. Rider Haggard's *Smith and the Pharaohs* (1912–13), Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Ring of Thoth* (1890), etc., where the subject mummy is often an instrument—not necessarily of horror—but of time travel, dreams, and love. What has been a favorite or memorable book or movie for you that features a reanimated mummy?
2. Author Jane Webb wrote of surprising and broad advancements for the future, in terms of socio-political changes, religion, fashion, and especially, technology. Published in 1827, before such things were plausible, she envisioned automated industry, mobile homes, long-distance telecommunications, and transportation through air travel. What do you think of the futuristic predictions made in this book? What else can you imagine will be invented in the future?

3. Would you want to live in the 2126 time-era of futuristic England as it is described in this book? What are some positives or highlights of living in this depicted time? What seem some drawbacks or things you disliked?
4. *The Mummy!* crosses several genres of fiction, notably Science Fiction (along with the subgenre of Steampunk), with Political Thriller, Romance, Satire, and Horror. Do you prefer books written solely within the confines of one literary genre, or does it matter to you if a book crosses multiple genres and lets the story go where it will? How would you describe this book to a friend, or what would you compare it to?
5. The character of Edric Montagu is often compared in the role of “mad scientist” with Victor Frankenstein (*Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley) due to his obsession for reanimating life. At the book’s end, as Cheops the mummy turns rigid once again, he implies an answer to the question which propelled this book from the start: *What occurs after death?* With this final information, what can you imagine that Edric might do after the book’s conclusion?
6. *The Mummy!* explains that universal travel is realized by aerial balloons (hot-air balloons), providing a means where “journeys were performed without either trouble or expense.” Imagining such means, where in the future world would you like to travel to and why?
7. Cheops makes the following statement to Father Morris and Rosabella: “*Did I not warn you that the throne and misery were inseparably connected?*” What does this statement mean to you? What do you see as the hardships

and/or responsibilities of ruling over a large group of people?

8. Feminism is defined as the advocacy of women's rights based on gender equality. *The Mummy!* has been debated as to its place in feminist literature, but what is inarguable is that it was written by a young woman in 1827 England, a time when women were oppressed and relegated to expected social standards without equal rights. *The Mummy!* explores a matriarchal-succession of ruling by unwed queens, but only men can vote (as was custom of the author's day), even though it is envisioned women are as well-educated and sensible as men. What else do you think speaks to hopes for an equalized society in the future, or of gender inequality as to the normalizations or customs of this book?
9. From the titular mummy, King Cheops, to the searching, wistful Edric, to the redemptive Queen Elvira, this book is filled with a variety of characters. Who was your favorite? Who did you most sympathize with? Who was the least liked or least believable? What do you think causes you to root for, or align with, certain character types?
10. If you could change anything in this story, would you do so? Whether plot points, characters, dialogue, motivation, etc., what would you write differently?
11. What is the significance of having automated lawyers and judges to represent and decide the fate of accused humans, such as at trial of Prince Ferdinand? Do you think it could be considered fair to have, essentially, a "free-thinking" computer assign guilt or innocence to human deeds and motivations?

12. Generally in contemporary stories of reanimated mummies, the subject mummy is a horror-inducing monster, similar to a zombie, in its slow-yet-relentless amble toward malfeasance. What did you think of this author's vision of the mummy, wise and politically-minded, articulate though troubled, sharing insight and rational advice to a world centuries ahead of what he has experienced? Do you prefer this imagining of the mummy as a supernatural being of seeming divinity, or do you prefer the horror-version of a mummy as a ghoulish-monster trope? What other types of monsters or supernatural creatures do you enjoy to read about? Or do you prefer books grounded in realism?
13. Author Jane Webb was twenty-seven years old when she wrote this novel. She had known wealth and poverty both, and had known the death of all her family (parents and infant brothers) during her younger years. Having few prospects at the time, she sought to make an income by writing fiction. Imagine if the plans of your own life became suddenly derailed. What would you do differently that might be unexpected, even to yourself?
14. This book is filled with beautiful, memorable passages, such as the following: *"Is it not extraordinary, Emma, that this passion, which seems so universally extended throughout all nature, should be alone a stranger to my breast?"* Were there any other passages that particularly affected or resonated with you?