The boy king's skin is black and shriveled, and his eyes are empty sockets. But the way his buckteeth lift his lips, King Tutankhamen seems to be smiling.

In the 3,300 years since King Tut died at age 19, only a handful of people have seen his face. Now, for the first time, visitors entering his tomb in Egypt's Valley of the Kings can view the famous boy king in the flesh.

As reporters watched on November 4, archaeologists carefully lifted King Tut's mummy from an elaborate gold casket nestled inside a stone sarcophagus. What remains of King Tut is black from age and the resin used to embalm him. Some of his bones are broken. However, his feet and head are easy to recognize. The archaeologists draped a white linen shroud over the rest of his thin body and sealed him inside a climate-controlled glass case.

This is King Tut's empire now. The case will keep moisture from further deteriorating his body. It also will allow millions of people to catch a glimpse of history while preserving one of the world's best-known mummies for future generations to study.

"With his beautiful buckteeth, the tourists will see a little bit of the smile from the face of the golden boy," Egypt's antiquities chief, Zahi Hawass (above, center), said at the unveiling.

King Tut may be the golden boy of archaeology today, but he was pretty much unknown until a British adventurer stumbled upon his tomb. The year was 1922. Howard Carter was exploring the Valley of the Kings.

Carter dug out the tomb's steps and unsealed the entrance. Once inside, he put a candle through a crack in a door. He describes what happened next in the book The Tomb of Tut.ankh.Amen: "At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to
flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues and gold—everywhere the glint of gold.”

Gold statues of gods surrounded a giant stone sarcophagus. Inside the sarcophagus was a delicately carved coffin. Inside that was another, even more elaborate coffin (left). Finally, Carter opened a solid gold coffin that held King Tut. On King Tut’s face was the most spectacular of all the treasures, a finely crafted gold death mask.

Today, objects from King Tut’s tomb tour the world’s museums. The Museum of Ancient Art in Switzerland estimated the traveling exhibit’s value at $850 million. That doesn’t include what remains in the tomb.

King Tut was buried with treasures the ancient Egyptians believed he would need in the afterlife—board games, a chariot, plenty of gold, and food befitting a king, from casks of red wine to jars jammed with fruit.

LONG LIVE THE KING!
The new glass case adds the king himself to the exhibit inside the tomb. Hundreds of tourists enter its stone passageways each day. Over the years, moisture and germs from their bodies have slowly damaged King Tut’s mummified remains. Hawass says the mummy would have crumbled within a few decades if nothing had been done. “People entering the tomb and their breathing [would] change the mummy to a powder,” he says.

Hawass discovered the problem when scientists removed the mummy to study it in 2005. Medical scans told the story of a king who had been about 5 feet 6 inches tall and well fed. King Tut took the throne when he was just 9 years old. He died less than a decade later. There were rumors of murder, but the scientists found no evidence of a violent death. Instead, they discovered a priceless mummy in desperate need of preservation.

“I can say for the first time that the mummy is safe,” Hawass told reporters once King Tut was inside his glass case. “This will make the golden boy live forever.”

TIME TRIP

THE MUMMIFICATION OF TUT

It takes more than cloth bandages to make a mummy. In King Tut’s time, the whole process took 70 days. Everything was done according to religion. First, the embalmer removed the stomach, liver, lungs, and intestines. They couldn’t stay in the body—they would decompose too fast. Each organ was dried with a salt called natron and sealed in a jar or, in King Tut’s case, a gold box. The heart was also dried, but it stayed in the body. Ancient Egyptians believed the dead faced a trial in which Anubis (right), god of the dead, would weigh the heart against the feather of truth. The heart was thought to hold a record of a person’s life. It had to be lighter than the feather to be admitted to the afterlife. The body was also dried and rubbed with resin. Finally, it was wrapped in linen, adorned with jewelry, and interred.