

READ THE PASSAGE Read slowly. Reread any section you do not understand.**Medical Practices in Ancient Egypt****Learning from the Dead**

To find out why people have died, today's medical examiners perform autopsies (AW-top-seez). They cut open the body and study its parts. Ancient Egyptians also performed autopsies to help understand causes of death. In addition, autopsies helped ancient Egyptians study the human body. By comparing the hearts of people who were different ages, for example, Egyptians could determine what a young, healthy heart was supposed to look like.

Keeping a Written Record

The Egyptians not only studied the human body, but they also kept detailed records of what they discovered. They wrote and drew their observations on papyrus, a form of paper. The papyrus records became the medical textbooks of that time. Their observations allowed Egyptian doctors to share their knowledge, including how to treat various diseases.

Edwin Smith Papyrus

In 1862, an American named Edwin Smith purchased a medical papyrus in Luxor, Egypt. Smith was not a medical expert, but he knew a lot about old documents. He knew that what he had found was valuable. The papyrus turned out to be an ancient textbook on surgery. The papyrus was probably written around 1600 BC, but it was based on information from a thousand years before that. The papyrus presents the information as case studies, including an analysis of how patients survived or died.

STRATEGY PRACTICE How did autopsies help ancient Egyptians learn about the human body?

SKILL PRACTICE Read each question. Fill in the bubble next to the correct answer.

- Which one best describes what the headings do?
 Ⓐ They tell the main idea of the passage.
 Ⓑ They describe when events happened.
 Ⓒ They tell what each section is mostly about.
 Ⓓ They compare modern and ancient medicine.
- What is the passage mostly about?
 Ⓐ Edwin Smith made an important discovery.
 Ⓑ The ancient Egyptians cut open bodies to study their parts.
 Ⓒ The ancient Egyptians knew a lot about the human body.
 Ⓓ Detailed records were written on papyrus.
- Choose the detail that best supports this idea:
Autopsies helped the Egyptians learn about the human body.
 Ⓐ Egyptians were able to compare body parts.
 Ⓑ Today's medical examiners perform autopsies.
 Ⓒ Medical examiners learn a lot about bodies.
 Ⓓ Egyptians made records of their findings.
- What are doctors in the year 3020 most likely to learn by reading a medical textbook from 2020?
 Ⓐ how to perform the best surgery
 Ⓑ ancient Egyptian medical practices
 Ⓒ how to preserve bodies
 Ⓓ early twenty-first century medical practices