The Iceman

The date was September 19, 1991. A German couple, returning from a day of hiking in the ten-thousand-foot high Otztaler region of the Alps made a gruesome discovery. The head and shoulders of a body protruded from the glacial ice in a shallow trench in the rock. With the nose and upper lip twisted up to the side, the face was set in a terrible grimace. The couple believed that they had discovered some unfortunate hiker. They reported their find at the mountain lodge where they were spending the night.

The first endeavors by mountain rescuers to free the body were unsuccessful; the location was remote and winter weather was beginning. A day or two later, the police asked medical experts from Innsbruck to assist in the recovery. Flying by helicopter to the site, they proceeded in a gingerly manner to chip away the ice until the body was free. Quickly placing it in a plastic body bag, they had it transported to Innsbruck for examination.

There it was stored in a freezer that simulated the conditions on the mountain. At the same time, an inventory of the objects found with or near the body was taken. Because some of these items appeared to be at least a hundred years old and to have historical significance, scientists at the University of Innsbruck were consulted. When they estimated that the find was 4,000 years old, everyone was astounded. Further tests established that the remains were actually 5,300 years old, an age later corroborated by tests at several independent institutions.

Scientists were electrified by the discovery. Not only would they be able to study the man’s body, but also they would be able to derive information from his clothing and equipment about the age in which he had lived, the Late Neolithic period or Late Stone Age. A cursory examination of the body showed it to be in a remarkable state of preservation. Scientists believed that soon after the man succumbed to the cold, his body was dehydrated by the dry, icy winds of the high Alps. Subsequently, it was buried in snow, which filled the trench. As time passed this turned into packed ice, sealing the body and protecting it from harmful exposure to the air.

Further investigation revealed several interesting details. From the abrasion of his front teeth and the wear on his joints, scientists estimated the man’s age at death to have been somewhere between thirty and forty years.
His height was just over five feet. He had been **clad** in neatly sewn deerskin garments, with a grass cape to keep out the cold. With him were an ax with a long wooden handle, an unfinished bow and a leather quiver filled with arrows. He also had a small leather pouch containing a flint scraper and some arrow tips, and a small knife.

At first, scientists were puzzled by several tattoos on the man’s body—a blue cross on the back of one knee and a number of small parallel lines grouped together on his back and ankles. But examinations showed that in each of these places the man’s joints and bones showed wear or injury. The scientists **surmised** that the markings may have been associated with some kind of primitive medical treatment.

Eduard Egarter Vigl was the official caretaker of the 5,300-year-old mummy at the Archaeological Museum in Bolzano, Italy. In March 2003, he announced that he had found a deep knife wound on the mummy’s right hand. “It is a severe, painful wound, certainly caused during a struggle,” Vigl said. He believes the man died following a violent encounter with one or more people. The startling announcement followed the discovery a year earlier of an arrowhead wound in the man’s left shoulder.

The exact details of what happened on that day more than 5,000 years ago will never be known. However, the Iceman has provided us with a revealing glimpse of life in the Late Stone Age. Both his well-preserved body and the clothing and tools that were with him are unique remains of a time before writing or cities had come into existence.

**Answer each of the following questions in the form of a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from the lesson’s word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once.**

1. How do we know that the Iceman had been prepared for cold weather?

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2. What is the meaning of **succumb** as it is used in the passage?

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3. What did the German climbers **surmise** about their discovery?

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4. What kind of **abrasion** did scientists examine on the Iceman?

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5. Would you describe this story of the Iceman as **gruesome**? Explain your answer.

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6. Why was it necessary to remove the body from the ice in a **gingerly** manner?

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7. Why do you think it was important to place the body in conditions that **simulated** those on the mountain?

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8. From the **inventory** of items found with his body, what conclusions would you draw about the Iceman's life?

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9. What is one thing the scientists learned about the Iceman that could not be determined by a **cursory** examination?

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10. How can we be certain that the body was 5,300 years old?

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11. Why do you think the Iceman's face looked as it did?

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12. How did weather conditions in the Alps preserve the body?
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13. What was the first step after the body was discovered?
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14. What information could the scientists derive from the amount of wear on the Iceman's teeth?
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15. Why would it be inaccurate to say that scientists had no interest in the Iceman?
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**FUN & FASCINATING FACTS**

- The prefix *de-* has a number of meanings, including “to remove.” To *dethrone* a king is to remove him from the throne. This prefix is combined with the Greek root *hydro*, “water,” to form *dehydrate*. To *dehydrate* something is to remove the water from it. Other words formed from *hydro* include: *hydrogen*, “a gas that combines with oxygen to form water,” and *hydrant*, “a closed pipe with a spout from which water is drawn to fight fires.”

- An adjective is usually changed into an adverb by adding the *-ly* suffix; a *slow* driver is someone who drives *slowly*. But what if the adjective itself ends in *-ly*, as is the case with *gingerly*? Faced with writing *gingerly*ly as the adverbial form, users of the English language wisely decided that the adjective and adverb forms would be the same.

- *Simulate* means “to imitate.” (An animal will sometimes prevent an attack by *simulating* death.) Don’t confuse this word with *stimulate*, which means “to make active.” (Light *stimulates* growth in plants.) A word related to *simulate* is *dissimulate*, which means “to hide one’s true feelings” or “to put up a false appearance.” (The judge’s penetrating questions made it very difficult for the witness to *dissimulate*.)