

**The story...**

The secret recipe for ancient mummification

**Learn language related to...**

Stopping deterioration

**Need-to-know language**

**preserved** – kept in a good state; not damaged or destroyed

**embalming** – using chemicals to keep a dead body in good condition

**antibacterial** – reducing or killing bacteria

**prevent something from decaying** – take action to keep something in good condition

**intact** – complete and not damaged or lacking parts

**Answer this...**

Which three ingredients are mentioned as part of the embalming recipe?

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**Transcript**

Fabric fragments of ancient history. These six-thousand-year-old pieces of linen contain the chemical secret of mummification. The Egyptian Mummy - the body **preserved** as a vessel for the eternal soul - is an icon of this ancient civilisation.

It's been resurrected in many a Hollywood film. But far from Egypt's great tombs, here in a storage facility for Bolton Museum in Northern England, the ancient Egyptians' **embalming** recipe has finally come to light, contained in textiles in the collection.

## **Dr Stephen Buckley, University of York**

With things like these textiles that don't look much to look at at all... but you do the chemistry, and suddenly they become hugely significant to our human past, and really gets to the heart of what they were about at this time through the science, which you simply can't tell by looking. So really the science brings this material to life.

The recipe they revealed, an embalming liquid containing plant extracts, was probably mixed in a base of sesame oil.

You can actually still find some of those key ingredients from that embalming recipe today. So this is one of them - gum arabic, which is a plant-based confectioner's gum that's on sale in Egypt. And this - this is a really key ingredient - this is pine resin, **antibacterial** to **prevent** the body **from decaying**.

The same mixture of substances was found on this **intact** Mummy from 3500BC showing that the process is much older than previously thought.

## **Pierrette Squires, Bolton Museum**

Pushing the timeline of mummification back by 1500 years, it shows to us that it wasn't just at the point where mummification we know was very popular: it was happening much earlier.

So, who knows what secrets scientists will unearth next in the storeroom of a local museum?

### **Did you get it?**

Which three ingredients are mentioned as part of the embalming recipe?

Gum arabic, pine resin and a base of sesame oil are the three ingredients mentioned.

### **Did you know?**

While excavating ancient Egyptian pyramids, archaeologists have discovered 3,000-year-old honey in the tombs. It is still perfectly edible!