

Ötzi- The Ice Man

Thursday, September 19, 1991 – 1.30 p.m.

Tisenjoch - 3210 m above sea level

Ötztal Alps (South Tyrol, Italy)

On a sunny day two hikers, Erika and Helmut Simon, from Nuremberg in Germany, were walking in the Ötztal Alps. Descending from the Finail peak in the Tisenjoch area, the Simons decided to take a shortcut and left the marked footpath. As they walked past a rocky gully filled with meltwater, they noticed something brown on the gully bed. At first they thought it must be some sort of rubbish, but on closer inspection they realized with horror that they had discovered a human corpse.

Only the back of the head, the bare shoulders and part of his back jutted out of the ice and meltwater. The corpse lay with its chest against a flat rock and its face obscured. Beside the corpse the two hikers noticed several pieces of rolled-up birch bark. Before leaving the scene, they took a photograph of what they thought to be the unfortunate victim of a mountaineering accident a few years back.

At this point nobody could have imagined that the dead man and the objects around him were soon to gain worldwide fame.

The story of a 20th century archaeological sensation was about to unfold. **Stop and discuss who, what, where, when, how, why?**

The Recovery: Friday, September 20, 1991

The day after the corpse was discovered, an Austrian team undertook the first attempt to remove the man from the ice. In the days following as they attempted to extricate the body, they found several artifacts nearby:

- * Flint-tipped arrows
- * Bone dagger
- * Bag filled with medicinal moss
- * Bear skin cap
- * Box
- * Ox skin shoes
- * Grass socks

STOP AND INFER: What can you infer about the body that was found using the objects that were found with it?

At this point, the team realized that the body was much older than expected, about 5,300 years old in fact. This made the body about 700 years older than the Egyptian pyramids and what is more, he was perfectly preserved.

Ötzi, the iceman, named for the Ötztal mountains in which he was found, quickly became a sensation. Fans and scientists from all over the world worked to find out as much as they could about this ancient ancestor. Austria and Italy fought over rights to the body. An entire museum was built for Ötzi and people started websites and fan clubs dedicated to Ötzi. Even Brad Pitt got a tattoo of Ötzi on his arm.

Scientists examined the body to find out more about Ötzi. For example, we know that he was bearded and about 45 years old. He was about 5'2" and had incredibly developed thigh muscles, perhaps from hunting or herding in the high mountain area. However, the biggest question they wrestled over was what killed Ötzi. They began to put together clues that might help us guess how this ice man met his end.

Our mission: Try to infer what Ötzi's story was. How did he die? What happened? Was anyone else involved?

Work with your group to put together clues. It is most helpful to work with a few clues at a time to build your hypothesis.

Ötzi has been waiting over 5,000 years for you to solve this mystery!

Clue 1: In 2001, scientists found an arrowhead buried in Ötzi's left shoulder blade. This would've caused his death in about 20 minutes.

Clue 2: Ötzi had deep cuts on his right hand, all the way down to the bone. These appear to be defensive wounds. The wounds were approximately 2 days old.

STOP AND INFER: Start to build your hypothesis. What can you infer about Ötzi's death based on his wounds? Consider time frame also.

Clue 3: Ötzi's digestive system showed 2 types of pollen, probably from drinking water from mountain streams.

Pollen 1: High mountain conifer pollen from about 10,000 feet above sea level

Pollen 2: Mid mountain flower (hornsbean) pollen from about 5,000 feet above sea level; this pollen is released in June each year.

Pollen 2 was sandwiched between 2 layers of pollen 1.

STOP AND INFER: What can you infer about Ötzi's movements/travels over the last few days of his life based on these clues?

Clue 4: Of his 14 arrows, only 2 were flint-tipped; the rest had no arrowheads.

Clue 5: He had run over 12 miles and climbed about 5,000 feet in 2 days

Clue 6: In his stomach, scientists found 1 ½ lbs. cooked goat meat and bread, all eaten about an hour before his death

STOP AND INFER: What can you infer how Ötzi spent the last few days and hours of his life based on these clues?

