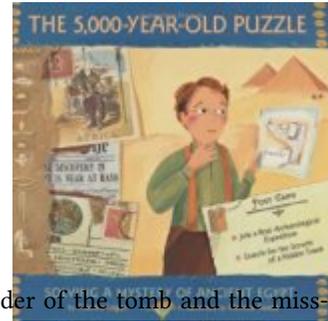


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Claudia Logan. *The 5,000-Year-Old Puzzle: Solving a Mystery of Ancient Egypt*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002. 41 pp. \$17.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-374-32335-6.

Reviewed by Emily Teeter (The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)  
Published on H-AfrTeach (April, 2003)



This charming and attractive book tells the story of the discovery of the tomb of queen Hetepheres, the mother of Khufu who built the Great Pyramid. The narrative is based upon the excavations in 1924 by George A. Reisner who worked on behalf of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The story is related by a fictional boy, Will Hunt, who accompanies his archaeologist father to Egypt.

The book does a very good job blending the narrative of Will's adventure with facts about ancient Egypt. Illustrated information about the Giza plateau, mummification, archaeological tools, cartouches, and hieroglyphic writing appear in sidebars without impeding the flow of the story. The major strength of the book is the information relayed about how a scientific expedition is conducted. Rather than focusing on the tomb and its golden treasures, Will recounts how carefully and slowly the archaeologists must work, painstakingly collecting each tiny piece of evidence, photographing all finds *in situ*, and documenting the finds in the expedition log. Aspiring young archaeologists are sure to be impressed by this information about how an excavation actually works.

An intriguing feature of the book is the "puzzle" that surrounds the re-burial of Queen Hetepheres. The tomb was disturbed. A golden cup was found in a different area of the tomb than its saucer. Grave goods were placed in the tomb in the reverse of the expected order. To make it all more inexplicable, the sarcophagus was empty. The author does an excellent job of presenting these "clues," and encouraging the reader to develop a reasonable sce-

nario to explain the disorder of the tomb and the missing mummy. Ultimately, the divergent explanations of Reisner and modern archaeologist Mark Lehner are presented, further encouraging the reader to evaluate each and make a judgment. It is a thought-provoking book that will lend itself to creative discussion.

It is refreshing that unlike so many Euro-centric books on ancient Egypt in which Egyptians do not even appear, here Will befriends the Egyptian foreman, Said. He is presented as an important member of the expedition rather than merely as local color. The story of his death allows the author to present poignant information about local customs and also to comment upon the interdependence of the Egyptian workmen and the European scientists.

The book is very beautifully illustrated in acrylic and watercolor by Melissa Sweet. Sections of old maps, archival black and white photos of the excavation (supplied by the Museum of Fine Arts), old post cards, postage stamps, coins and currency are combined with the illustrations to add lots of atmosphere and interest. I did however wonder why the illustrator mixed contemporary bank notes with vintage stamps and photos.

Archaeology is a passion that afflicts many young readers. This book is an ideal source for them. It presents a true, yet unresolved, story, and imparts a great amount of information about archaeological field method. It is engaging, well-researched, and can be strongly recommended.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-afrteach>

**Citation:** Emily Teeter. Review of Logan, Claudia, *The 5,000-Year-Old Puzzle: Solving a Mystery of Ancient Egypt*. H-AfrTeach, H-Net Reviews. April, 2003.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=7420>

Copyright © 2003 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).