

Grades 9-12

Secrets of the Dead, “The Woman in the Iron Coffin”:

SECRETS OF THE DEAD “The Woman In The Iron Coffin” follows forensic archaeologist Scott Warnasch and a team of historians and scientists as they investigate this woman’s story and the time in which she lived, revealing a vivid picture of what life was like for free African American people in the North.

After watching this episode, choose from the following questions and/or tasks to extend your learning

Question Box 1

- How was the body of the woman addressed in this program discovered?
- What was so unusual about the discovery of the woman in the iron coffin’s body?
- How were the different chemicals in the woman’s body determined?
- What stories of her life did these chemicals tell?
- What is a forensic archeologist?
- What did the scientist discover about the woman and her relationship to smallpox?
- Why was New York a very unhealthy place to be in the 19th century?
- What tests did they run on the cadaver to determine her cause of death? What would these tests tell the examiners?
- What does a “mummy man” do? Why was this important to solving the mystery of the “Woman in the iron Coffin”?
- What did the cutting edge technology reveal the secrets of the “Woman in the Iron Coffin”?
- How did the iron coffin contribute to the preservation of the woman within?
- How does the “Woman in the iron Coffin” provide a lens into the world in which she lived?

Question Box 2

- One thing I would like to know more about on this topic?
- What would you like to research further? Why?
- Now that it’s over, what are your first thoughts about this program? Are they mostly positive or negative? Explain?
- How do you think the woman in the iron coffin felt about her life? Put yourself in her shoes and her circumstance.
- Why is this technology important?

Box 3 (Tasks)

- After research, it is believed that the woman in the iron coffin was a 26 year old woman who lived with the brother-in-law, neighbor and business partner, Almond Dunbar Fisk,

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the creator of the iron coffin. The iron coffin was only used by the wealthy. The iron coffins cost between \$7 and \$40, compared to a wood coffin which cost approximately \$2. Today, a lower end casket costs approximately \$1000. What is the percent of increase from \$2 to \$7? From \$2 to \$40? If there was a linear relationship, what would be the cost of the iron casket today? Use mathematics to justify your reasoning.

Box 4 (Enrichment)

- Research and Discuss techniques used by scientists in order to discover the age of the Woman in the Iron Casket. Create an infographic to share with others.

Box 5 (Extend/Real-Life)

- Modern crime scenes are processed by Forensic Technicians. Watch this short video: <https://www.careeronestop.org/Videos/careeronestop-videos.aspx?videocode=19409200>
- What surprised you the most about this career?
- Would you consider a career as a Forensic Technician? Why or why not? (ELD)
Create a T-Chart and list the Pros and Cons of being a Forensic Technician.
- Take this quiz to see if you have the personality for this type of career: <https://www.owlguru.com/career/forensic-science-technicians/quiz/>
- Scroll to the bottom of the page to answer the following questions:
 - What is a typical day like for a Forensic Technician?
 - What personality type is best suited for this career?
 - Which one of the related careers do you find the most interesting and why?