

PHILIP GLASS AKHNATEN



AKHNATEN

an opera by Philip Glass

Egypt, 14th century BCE

The pharaoh Amenhotep III has died, and it is time for his son, Akhnaten, to take the throne. Akhnaten has a series of bold new ideas for the people of Egypt, including a brand-new religion. But will his citizens accept these changes, or will they reject both the new religion and Akhnaten himself?

Main Characters



AKHNATEN



NEFERTITI



QUEEN TYE



GHOST OF
AMENHOTEP III



HOREMHAB



HIGH PRIEST
OF AMON



AYE



KING TUT

The pharaoh Amenhotep III has just died. The many gods of ancient Egypt look on as his body is prepared for burial. Amenhotep's ghost recites a poem about eternal life in the land of the dead.

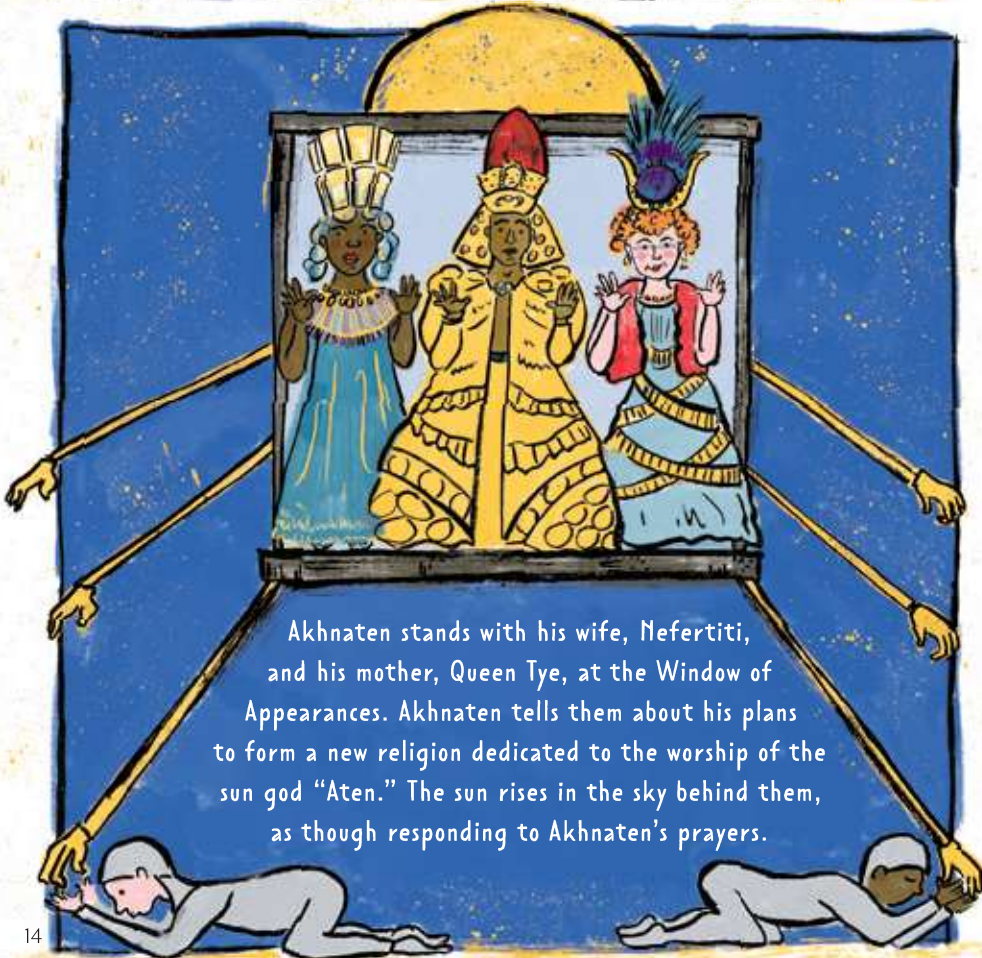




Amenhotep's son, Akhnaten, is crowned emperor. He receives the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt from the high priest.



The old priests, however, are not convinced that this new religion is a good idea. They meet in secret to pray to Amon, one of the old Egyptian gods.



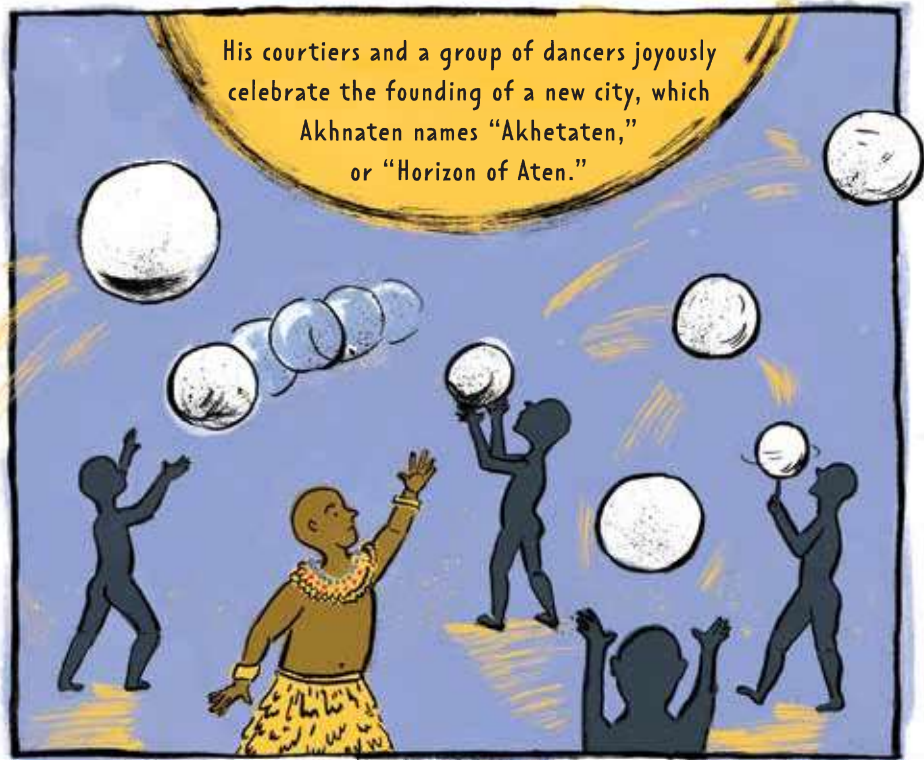
Akhnaten stands with his wife, Nefertiti, and his mother, Queen Tye, at the Window of Appearances. Akhnaten tells them about his plans to form a new religion dedicated to the worship of the sun god "Aten." The sun rises in the sky behind them, as though responding to Akhnaten's prayers.



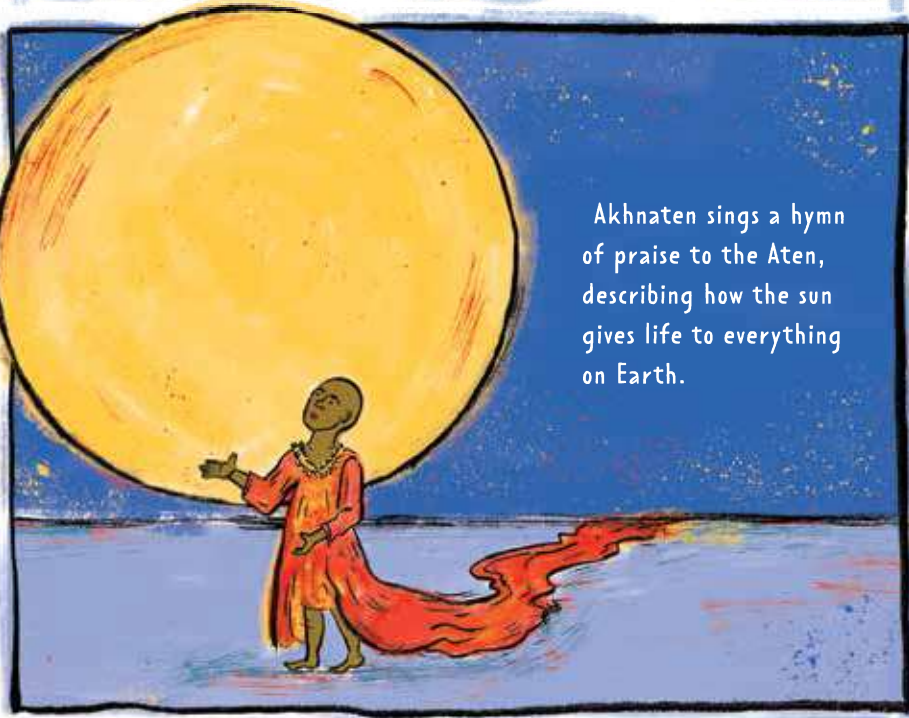
When Akhnaten finds out, he is furious and demands the temple be destroyed.

Ahnaten and Nefertiti sing a love poem. First, they sing it to each other. Then they turn toward the sky and sing the same poem to the Aten, expressing their love for their new god.

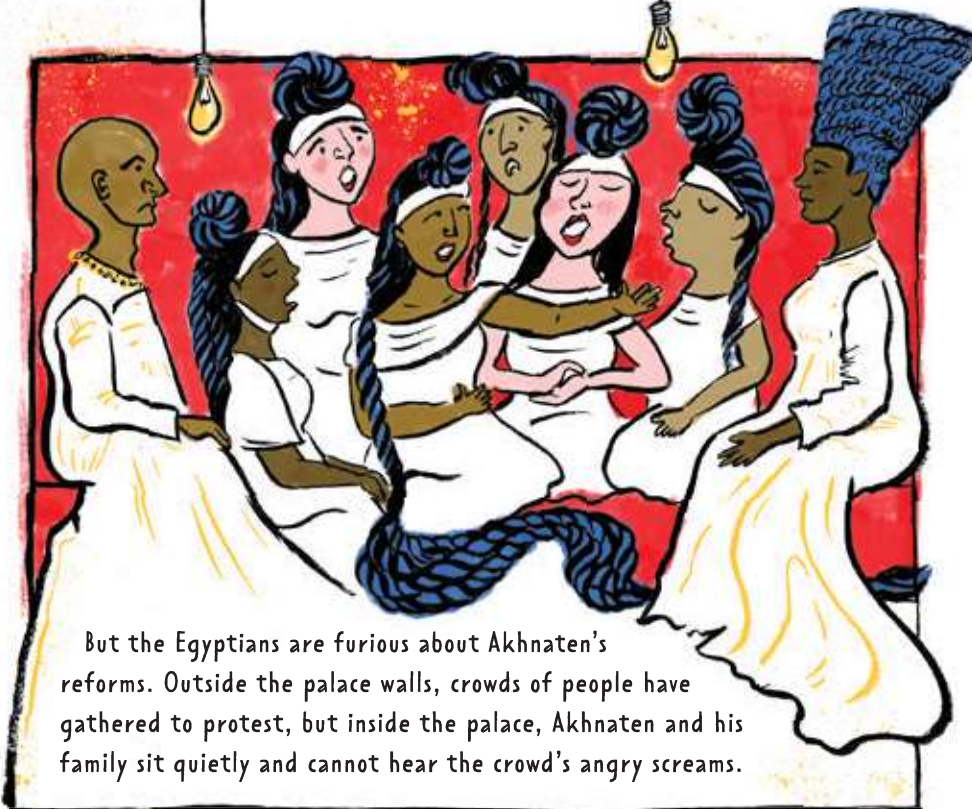




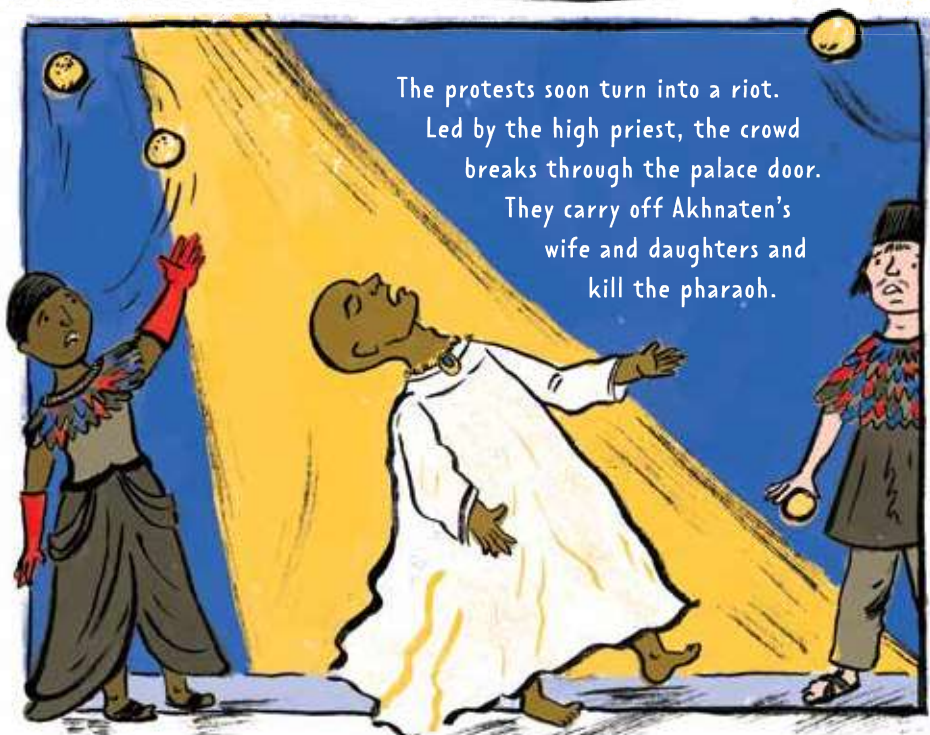
His courtiers and a group of dancers joyously celebrate the founding of a new city, which Akhnaten names "Akhetaten," or "Horizon of Aten."



Akhnaten sings a hymn of praise to the Aten, describing how the sun gives life to everything on Earth.



But the Egyptians are furious about Akhnaten's reforms. Outside the palace walls, crowds of people have gathered to protest, but inside the palace, Akhnaten and his family sit quietly and cannot hear the crowd's angry screams.



The protests soon turn into a riot. Led by the high priest, the crowd breaks through the palace door. They carry off Akhnaten's wife and daughters and kill the pharaoh.

The opening scene of the opera returns, but now it is Akhnaten's body being prepared for burial, and it is the new pharaoh, Tutankhamun, who is being crowned.



High above their heads, a modern professor tells a group of students about archaeology and ancient Egypt.



The ghosts of Akhnaten, Nefertiti, and Queen Tye look out over the ruins of the city they once ruled.

