

## Background

On a bright and sunny day in September 1991, two German tourists are hiking in the Alps. The mountain that Erika and Helmut Simon are climbing is ten thousand feet high. They stop to take some amazing photos near the summit.

It is just after their lunchtime. In a hurry to get back to their car they take short cut down the mountainside. They leave the main path and pick their way down a steep, stony gully at the side of a section of ice.

The gully is full of drifts of snow. Helmut notices something brown against the whiteness of the snow. He thinks it might be litter. He carefully climbs down to take a closer look, before turning to his wife. "I think we've found a dead body," he says.

The body has skin like old leather, and its backbone is sticking out. The lower part of the body seems to be still frozen into the ice. It doesn't have any hair. There are signs of clothing and other items close to the body.

This same year, five or six other bodies have already been found in the mountains, as the summer sun melts the thinnest areas of ice. Often, they are the bodies of climbers who have fallen to their deaths down cracks in the ice. Some have been missing for as long as fifty years.

The first officials on the scene quickly realise that this is not a recent body, but has been in the ice a lot longer. They ask local scientists to come and take a look.

Whose body is it? How did it get there?

### What happens next?

The body has been preserved for hundreds of years because it was frozen inside a massive block of ice. Being out in the sun will soon make it start to rot. It needs to be freed quickly.

Ski-poles, ice axes and drills are used. They are not ideal because they can damage the body, but there is no time to lose.

The body is taken to a nearby university and placed in deep freeze to stop it rotting further from contact with the air.

Over the next few months, scientists confirm the body is that of a man. But they make a much more surprising discovery. This man is over 5000 years old.

Amazingly, his body has survived in the ice since the Neolithic period. The first clue comes from his copper axe, which is dated by an expert. This date is then confirmed by measuring the age of his bones.

A fully clothed man from this long ago, with his belongings has never been found before.

## Questions

### Basic:

1. How was the body discovered?
2. What did the body look like?
3. How did the body stay in such good condition for so long?

### Simple:

1. How did the body stay in such good condition for so long?
2. Why did the officials not want to damage the body?
3. Why were officials so desperate to move the body as quickly as possible?

### Detailed:

1. Why did it take so long for the body to be discovered?
2. Why were officials so desperate to move the body as quickly as possible?
3. Why was this discovery so important? What could the discovery provide?