

THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Do- It- Yourself

The Ancient Egyptians

Key Stage 2

This is one of our range of DIY resources, which aim to provide you with what you need to teach your pupils in the galleries. We hope that the following teaching ideas include some which are suitable for your needs. As we do not know your pupils, or the specific aims of your visit, these ideas may need adapting, but we hope they will act as a springboard. Each idea includes signpost sequences all of which point to pupil interaction with the exhibits, *example prompt questions written in italics*, and information. Many are followed by suggested extension ideas that can take place in the galleries. 'Into Action' sheets, which are linked to these teaching ideas, are available for pupils to use in the galleries.

When you are talking in front of any work of art in the Museum, be very careful not to touch it yourself. Also, as the children sit down in front of the object make sure that they can all see it – the gallery lighting can make this difficult if the children sit too close. Often it is better to sit the children a little further back to give them a good view.

Aims of the Ancient Egyptian session

- To develop children's ability to look closely at objects
- To encourage children to make deductions based on what they observe
- To gain an understanding of Ancient Egyptian beliefs about the life after death, and how these are shown in their art
- To introduce children to the use of symbolism in ancient culture
- To enable children to feel connected to the Ancient Egyptians as real people

Galleries used in this session

Galleries 19 & 20

INTRODUCTION: THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PEOPLE

Take children to Gallery 20, the first of the Ancient Egyptian galleries, and sit the class facing the large sarcophagus lid of Ramesses III.

So why are we here?

Ensure the children understand that they are surrounded by things that are really from Ancient Egypt, and that looking closely at them can give tell us things about the people that made, owned and used them. Being close to these objects is the next best thing to travelling back in a time machine to Ancient Egypt.

How far back in time would we need to travel to see these things being made and used?

Thousands of years – explain that the Ancient Egyptian culture itself lasted for thousands of years from before 3000BC to around 30BC.

What would it be like there?

Hot, dry, people would need to live close to the Nile. *Why?* Recap on work covered in school: farming linked to the inundation cycle, uses of water for everyday survival, transport etc. There is a map of Egypt on the right hand side as you enter the gallery.

INDEPENDENT LOOKING

Let's see if we can find some images of Ancient Egyptian people in this gallery. They can be big or small, and it doesn't matter if some of the person is missing. Try to look closely to work out which of the people you see are royal, which are ordinary people and which might be divine (gods). Remember to look carefully without touching.

GUIDED LOOKING: RAMESSES III

Briefly feedback about the things children have seen, and then draw their attention to the sarcophagus lid. Let's use our observation skills to work out who this is.

What clues are there to tell us what type of person this might be?



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Atef crown (ram's horns, sun disk and ostrich feathers)	Crown worn by Osiris, king of the afterlife
Uraeus (rearing cobra on forehead)	The protective goddess Wadjet – a symbol of royalty and divinity
Crossed arms holding the crook and flail	Symbols of Osiris
Narrow plaited fake beard	Feature of Osiris – fake beards are usually a sign of a pharaoh or other high ranking official
Mummified legs	Feature of Osiris, referencing the story in which he is cut into pieces by his brother Seth and bandaged back together by his wife, Isis.
Cartouche shape of object (oval ring with line at the bottom)	A hieroglyph representing kingship and a reference to the journey of the sun around the world implying the king has dominion over everything in it.
Huge size of the object	Only a very important person would have had something on this scale made for them
Made of granite (identifiable by the sparkly crystals in it)	This type of granite is very beautiful and comes from the desert areas of Egypt away from the Nile where people lived. It would have taken a lot of time and effort to quarry, transport and carve it, so again we know we are looking at a rich and powerful individual.

So we have some clues that tell us that we are looking at a human being, a king of Egypt, and some that make us think of Osiris, the god who ruled in the afterlife.

Is there anyway he could be both these things?

Remind the children about the Egyptians' belief in the afterlife. They believed that after death you would have a new life in the afterlife, continuing what you had been doing in your life on Earth. In the case of pharaohs they would become Osiris and so would continue to rule even after death.

What about the other people on the coffin?

These are goddesses who will protect him in the after life. The two larger goddesses are Isis, Osiris' wife (to his left, identifiable by the throne on her head) and Nephthys, his sister who has a hieroglyph on her head meaning 'mistress of the palace', and who here is standing on the hieroglyph for gold.

The smaller figures at the back raising their hands in adoration are the snake-goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet. There is also another snake to the right of Osiris' legs, and originally there would have been a symmetrical one on the other side, and one which goes all the way around the edge of the coffin.

So there are lots of things here that will protect him in the afterlife. But there was one thing he couldn't be protected from.

Can you see that this object is broken? It was actually broken back in Ancient Egypt and on purpose. *Why would somebody do that?*

Remember this was the lid for a king's sarcophagus. The sarcophagus would have contained his mummy and valuable objects for him to use in the afterlife. Tomb robbers knew these were there and broke the lid to get to the treasure inside.

Let's go and look now at some of the treasure that people had put into their tombs.

TEACHING IDEA: PREPARING FOR THE AFTERLIFE

Go through to the end of gallery 19 and sit the class facing the coffin of Userhet (at the far end of the central case.

Now we are surrounded by objects from ancient Egyptian tombs.

Can anyone see anything that may have been useful in the afterlife?

Examples may include:

Canopic jars – used to protect the intestines, lungs, liver and stomach removed from bodies before mummification.

Coffins – a variety of shapes and materials on display but all concerned with protecting the body of the dead person. Notice how the paintings on the coffins create a type of protection too, through the images of gods, goddesses and animals and so forth.

Shabti figures – small figures that grow to full size in the afterlife and are able to carry out work in the name of the dead person – farming tasks for example.

Mummy – vital to preserve the body for the afterlife

Jewellery – for looking good in the afterlife, just like in everyday life

Amulets – often in the shape of scarab beetles – good luck charms that will help the person to come alive again in the afterlife.

Tomb models – figures engaged in tasks such as baking bread or slaughtering a cow. These would come to life to provide provisions for the deceased.



CLOSE LOOKING AND DEDUCTION

At this point give the children the chance to have a closer look at the objects in this room. Either split them into groups searching for

- 1) protective objects (coffins, amulets, spells)
- 2) objects from everyday life (necklaces, mirrors, boats)
- 3) objects to do with eating and drinking (jars, images of food, bowls)

or alternatively distribute the Into Action sheet 'Packing for the Longest Journey' to complete at this point.

Gather the children together and have them feed back by going through some of the things they have seen with a member of a different group. Invite children to describe what they saw and its role in the afterlife.

TEACHING IDEA: THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS AND US

Go back into the gallery containing the brightly painted coffin of Nespawersheft. Sit in the corner of cases 14 and 15 with the children facing the case of scribes' objects (case 15).

So far we've met an Ancient Egyptian pharaoh and had a good think about what the Egyptians believed the afterlife would be like. Their lives seem very different to ours. But are we alike in anyway?

Indicate Nespawersheft's coffin (case 17). This belonged to a scribe. You can see from it that scribes were seen as important people. Only about 1-2% of Ancient Egyptians learnt to use hieroglyphs. However, when they were learning to write they had a similar experience to us. We can see some of the things they used here (case 15). They used pens. *Can anyone see them?* They had pen cases. *Ask someone to find it.* They used note pads and sketch books – *can you see them here? What are they made from?* Stone.

Over in the corner (case 16) you can see jewellery and make up containers. *Do you know anyone who wears these things nowadays?*
What about Ancient Egyptian children – were they anything like you? What are some of the things that you like doing in your free time?

The children will usually mention things they like to play – games consoles, playing with friends, sports etc. Ancient Egyptian children like playing just like you. Show the children the toy mouse and senet board game (case 14). So although the Ancient Egyptians lived in a different place and at a different time from us some aspects of their daily life were actually not so different at all!

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

For the remainder of the session work with the children either individually or in small groups to explore the galleries for themselves. Our Into Action sheets may

give you ideas, or the children may sketch objects of interest or try to find answers to some of their own questions. Giving adult helpers access to our Fact Sheets before the visit will enable them to talk to the children in more depth about what they are seeing.

RESOURCES

Downloads available:

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/education/learningresources/>

Into Action worksheets on the following topics are available for you to customise as appropriate to your group:

Then and Now
Design a Postcard
North to South and Back
Gods and Goddesses
Learning to Scribe
The Making of Bread and Beer
Not to be Missed!
Packing for the longest journey
People at work
Pharaohs and Kings

The following **Factsheets** for adults are available from the Education Department website:

Boats
Animals
Gods and Goddesses
Magic
Mummification
Sarcophagus Lid of Ramesses III
Coffins
Food and Farming
Tools and Technology

Further information about many exhibits is available on our website
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/pharos

