



DIY: Ancient Egypt Teacher Notes

This DIY resource aims to support your teaching in the galleries. These ideas are a springboard and may need adapting. Each idea includes prompt questions in italics and information, and some extensions. Into Action sheets, which are linked to these teaching ideas, are available for pupils to use in the galleries.

Please be careful not to touch any artwork or object with waving arms when you are teaching. Sometimes it's tricky for children to see paintings or all parts of an object depending on where they are sitting.

Please be aware of particularly small or busy galleries whilst moving around with your class.

If you are visiting with two classes or you have only booked a self-led session, please take care with your self-led class to avoid galleries with other large groups in.

You will need to bring:

- A clipboard
- Paper and pencil for each pupil
- Into Action sheets

Galleries used: Galleries 19 and 20 (the Ancient Egyptian galleries)

Aims of the session:

- To develop children's ability to look closely at objects
- To encourage children to make deductions based on what they observe
- To introduce children to the use of symbolism in ancient culture
- To enable children to feel connected to a range of different ancient Egyptians as real people
- To encourage children to communicate with sincerity and consideration for different cultures
- To encourage reflection on how we study ancient Egypt



DIY: Ancient Egypt Teacher Notes

Teaching Idea: Introduction to Ancient Egypt in the Museum

Location: in front of the large sarcophagus lid of King Ramesses III.

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

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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.

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

Thousands of years! Explain that Ancient Egyptian culture lasted for thousands of years: from before 3000BC to around 30BC.

What would it be like there?

Hot and dry. People would need to live close to the Nile – can you students think why?

Do all materials survive for thousands of years in a desert?

Which types can you see?

How did some of the more fragile objects here survive for so long?

Many of these artefacts (historical objects) were found in the tombs of people who died in ancient Egypt. In the climate, and untouched, things were well preserved.

Do you think any evidence from ancient Egypt didn't survive? Whose belongings might be missing from museums?

Many poorer people would not have had the same access to sarcophaguses and tombs as other wealthier people. They would also have fewer belongings buried with them. We have less evidence of their lives.

INDEPENDENT LOOKING

Find some images of Ancient Egyptian people in this gallery. Look closely to work out which of the people you see are royal, which are ordinary people and which might be divine (gods or goddesses). Remember to look carefully without touching.



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Teaching Idea: Guided looking at King Ramesses III

Location: in front of the large sarcophagus lid of King Ramesses III

Supporting Into Action Sheets: Pharaohs and Kings

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.



3

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

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.
The shape of the object is a cartouche (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.

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

Ancient Egyptians believed that after death you had 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.



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

The smaller figures, raising their hands in adoration, are the snake-goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet.

Is anything else protecting Osiris/King Ramesses III?

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There is also a snake to the right of Osiris' legs and originally there would have been one on the other side, and one which goes all the way around the edge of the coffin. These snakes are looking out for Osiris.

How did this object get broken?

Egyptologists think that this was broken on purpose, in Ancient Egypt.

Why would somebody do that?

King Ramesses III's sarcophagus would have contained his mummified body 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.

Sometimes, the people who worked in the Valley of the Kings were not paid for long periods of time. These people knew where the Kings were buried and where their riches were, and some turned to tomb robbing.

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



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Teaching Idea: Preparing for the afterlife

Location: Gallery 19

Supporting Into Action Sheets: Packing for the Longest Journey

Go through to the end of gallery 19. This gallery is full of objects found in ancient Egyptian tombs. Give your class a short time to look around or sit the class facing the coffin of Userhet (at the far end of the central case) and ask them if they can see things that would be useful in the afterlife.



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

Examples:

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 protected the body of the dead person. The paintings on the coffins create a type of protection too, through the images of gods, goddesses and animals.

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

Mummified man – mummification was vital to preserve the body for the afterlife

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

Amulets – small models, often worn like jewellery or placed on the mummified person, representing animals, deities, symbols, or objects in miniature. It was thought they would help the person to come alive again in the afterlife.

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

Give the children time 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 feedback. Invite children to describe what they saw and its role in the afterlife.



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Teaching Idea: The ancient Egyptians and Us

Location: Gallery 19

Go back into the gallery containing the brightly painted yellow and blue coffins of Nespawersheft (say Ness-pow-er-sheff-it). Sit in the corner of cases 14 and 15 with the children facing the case of scribes' objects (case 15).

6 So far, ancient Egyptian people might seem very different to us. How are we alike?

Indicate Nespawersheft's coffin (case 17). This coffin belonged to a scribe.

What is a scribe?

Scribes – people who read and wrote - were important people. Being a scribe was a job. Only about 1-2% of Ancient Egyptians learnt to use hieroglyphs. *Who here is learning how to read and write?*



However, when ancient Egyptians learnt 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. *Who can see one of those?*

They practiced writing on surfaces. *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... *What do you like doing in your free time?*

Ancient Egyptian children liked playing. There is a toy mouse and a senet board game in 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!

For the remainder of the session, our Into Action sheets may give you ideas, 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. Find resources on our [Schools website](#).