

Ancient Egypt at Eton College Collections

Teacher Instructions

Welcome!

Eton College Collections holds a remarkable collection of ancient artefacts, many of which are on display in the Eton Museum of Antiquities. These four activities are based upon this collection, which is free to visit and book education sessions for classes, once this becomes possible. For further information, please visit the Eton College Collections website:
<https://collections.etoncollege.com/learning-engagement/schools/>

Mummies

Discuss with your students:

1. Why did the Ancient Egyptians make mummies?
 - a. For the Ancient Egyptians, this life was only a preparation for the afterlife – and to enter the afterlife your body had to be complete.
2. How did mummy-making develop?
 - a. Egypt is mostly desert outside of the reach of the Nile River, so the first mummies occurred naturally when bodies left out in the desert dried out. However, what were these bodies vulnerable to? Wild animals looking for dinner! That's no good if you want to enter the afterlife.
 - b. So they moved on to putting bodies into coffins. What happens? They rot. Still no good.
 - c. So over the centuries the process of artificially mummifying bodies, and then placing them in coffins, was developed. This could be a very expensive process – poor people would often still have to leave bodies out in the desert and hope.

Activity: Using the worksheet, can students put the steps of mummification in order? Can they figure out the reasons behind each of these steps?

Answers (on 1st powerpoint section):

1. Wash the body
2. Remove most of the internal organs (except the heart!) and put them in canopic jars
 - a. *If left in the body organs would rot, but their preservation was essential so that the person could eat, breathe etc in the afterlife*
3. Remove the brain through the nostril, throw it away
 - a. *It was considered unimportant!*
4. Cover the body with natron (a kind of salt found in the desert) and leave for 40 days
 - a. *This dehydrates the body so it won't rot*
5. Clean off the salt, rub the body with oil
 - a. *That body is pretty dry by now – needs a bit of moisturising!*
6. Stuff the body with sawdust, hay, spices, whatever you have going around. Make sure you fill the eye sockets as well! Sometimes small onions or garlic were used
 - a. *Need to make the body look more like the person it was, now it's all dried out and empty. Sometimes the onions or garlic would sprout . . .*
7. Wrap the body in bandages, making sure to tuck amulets in.
 - a. *The bandages are to keep the body together - it's pretty breakable by now! Amulets are to help guide the spirit on its trip to the afterlife*
8. Add a death mask, decorate the mummy
 - a. *How else is the family going to know who it is?*
9. Put in a coffin
 - a. *To keep out the scavenging animals. Not so useful against tomb raiders, unfortunately*

Masks

Discuss with your students:

1. Use the 2nd section of the PowerPoint. Slide 1:
 - a. Death masks were created so that the soul would recognise the mummified body and return to it after death, as well as protect the person from evil spirits in the afterlife.
 - b. These are all masks on display at the Eton College Museum of Antiquities. Which of these look “Egyptian”? Do any of them remind students of other ancient cultures? *Depending on previous knowledge they may note that number 5 looks Greek, while 1, 3 and 6 look Roman.*
 - c. Trick question! They are all from Ancient Egypt. However, they are from different time periods. The “Egyptian” ones are earlier (the earliest is 2 from c1425 BCE), but then Ancient Egypt was conquered by the Greeks (remember Cleopatra was in fact the last of the Greek rulers) and then the Romans (the latest, 1, 3, 5 and 6, are from the 2nd century AD)– each culture was incorporated into Ancient Egyptian traditions.
2. Slide 2: Close ups. Now look closer.
 - a. What is the same about all of the masks?
 - b. The eyes are all open!
 - i. Unlike Christianity – if you look at figures on medieval tombs they are usually shown with eyes closed because in Christianity after death you sleep until the Last Trump
 - ii. For the Ancient Egyptians, after death it was straight to the trials. These would judge whether you could enter the Afterlife, or if your soul would be found wanting against the Feather of Truth and be swallowed by Ammut the Devourer to disappear forever.
 - c. Use of gold. What is special about gold? Many cultures have valued it – why?
 - i. It’s relatively rare
 - ii. It’s heavy for its size, so it’s more difficult to transport
 - iii. Most importantly – it’s non-reactive
 1. what does this mean? Ask if anyone has seen silver jewellery that’s been left out for awhile? It goes black – the silver reacts to the air and has to be cleaned. Gold doesn’t do this – if you dig it up out of the ground thousands of years later it will still be bright and shiny – magical! Gold therefore becomes a symbol of eternity

Activity: have students design their own mask – they can choose from one of the templates provided based on Eton masks from different periods, or create their own.

History Mystery - Be an archaeologist

Your students have probably looked at scarabs, shabtis, and canopic jars by now, but how will they manage with something that might seem obvious but is actually mysterious? Why not have them think like an archaeologist!

Discuss with your students:

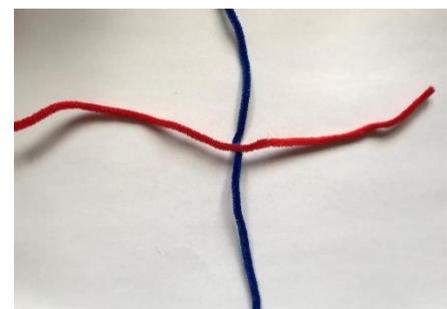
1. How do archaeologists figure out what things are?
 - a. They use:
 - i. Prior knowledge
 - ii. The object
 1. Appearance, size, materials
 - iii. Context

1. Where was it found? What else was found with it?
2. Use the 3rd section of the powerpoint:
3. Slide 1: Here is an object from the Eton College Collection, from 2160-2055 BCE
 - a. What do you think it is, and why?
 - b. Who do you think might have used it? *Most students will probably say a doll, used by a child*
4. Slide 2: More information about the object
 - a. The object is 8 cm long (here you may want to show them on a ruler or compare to something you have in class)
 - b. It's made out of linen thread and glass beads (this is some of the earliest glass ever found from Ancient Egypt). It is very small and delicate. Do you still think it is a child's toy? Why / why not? *Are delicate / valuable toys a good idea for children?*
5. Slide 3: Context – *model brewers, c 1981-1975 BCE, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art*
 - a. The object was found in a tomb, along with a model brewery (where beer is made) like this one. Do you still think it is a child's toy? Why / why not? What else could it be? Possibly:
 - i. a random religious figure
 - ii. some sort of shabti (but if it were intended to carry out a job in the afterlife it would usually have something that would show what kind of job it was meant to do)
6. What conclusion have you come to? Maybe take a poll of students' opinions. The truth? .
 - a. We don't know. Sorry! It's something that is being debated by Egyptologists. There's still lots to discover and learn about Ancient Egypt – maybe one day one of your students will find the answer!

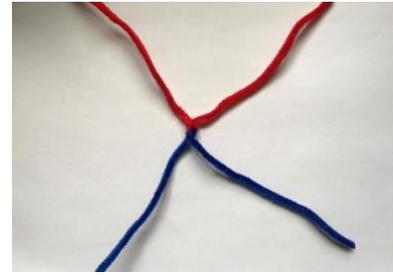
Activity: Why not have students make their own dolls?

Materials: pipe cleaners (2 per child), pony beads (approx. 12 per child), twine (optional, approx. 90cm -1m per child)

Take 2 pipe cleaners. One will be the body, the other the hair. Lay the hair pipe cleaner half way across the body pipe cleaner



Twist each pipe cleaner so they are connected



Take the body pipe cleaner and make a star shape for arms and legs. Twist each limb together



Add beads to the hair pipe cleaner – make sure to space them out and fold the ends over



Twist the hair pipe cleaner around itself



If desired, wrap twine around the body, tucking in or tying the loose end.



Dress to Impress

Discuss with your students:

1. Why do people wear jewellery?
 - a. To look pretty. To show someone how rich you are. For religious reasons (for example, a Star of David, a cross or a St Christopher's medal). To show a certain status (for example, an engagement or wedding ring). For sentimental reasons. For superstition (a "good luck charm" or a "lucky" item).
2. 4th PowerPoint Section, Slide 1: *Pectoral Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty, 1985-1773 BCE.*
 - a. Jewellery would have been worn by nearly everyone in Ancient Egypt. The poor wore pieces made from materials they had around them, such as bones, animal teeth and painted clay. The wealthier would have semi precious stones, valuable metals, and glass, which was difficult to make and therefore very valuable. Jewellery was not just decorative, but was thought to have magical powers, such as protecting one from danger or disease or to bring good fortune. Any other reasons?
 - b. This is a kind of necklace called a pectoral. It's big for jewellery, designed to be worn on the chest.
 - c. Can you identify any of the gods on it?
 - i. On left: Seth (Set) – like a jackal, chaos and violence
 - ii. On right: Horus – sphinx with falcon head, harmony and ma'at
 - iii. In the middle: Hathor – cow headed, goddess of sky, women, music, maternity
 - iv. There is a symmetry in the design – the gods balance each other
 - d. Do any symbols look familiar?
 - i. Sun disk
 - ii. Cobras
 - iii. Eyes of Ra or Horus
 - e. Can you guess what materials it might be made of?
 - i. Gold (actually electrum, a gold-silver alloy. This particular electrum has major peaks of gold with minor ones of silver)
 - ii. Precious stones: Lapis lazuli - highly prized and expensive mineral, second only to gold and silver; the vibrant blue represented the heavens. It was mined and imported from what is now Afghanistan.
 - iii. Semi-precious stones including carnelian and feldspar.
 - f. Knowing all this information, what can you deduce about the purpose / message of this piece and who might have worn it?
 - i. Exact origin is unknown, but probably from Dashur, from the tomb of a princess

Activity: Students can colour in the pectoral using the colouring sheets provided, or design their own using their knowledge of the Ancient Egyptian gods. They may want to think about what the purpose of their pectoral is as that may influence the design (for example, which gods or symbols they choose).