KS2 History Resource

Ancient Egypt

Museum Gallery Archive

THE BOX








Contents

About this resource

This resource explores The Box's Ancient Egypt collection. It provides examples of objects from our collections that will be of use in a classroom setting.

The Box is Plymouth's new multi-million pound museum, gallery and archive With brand new exhibition spaces alongside state-of -the-art facilities for research and learning, it's the perfect place to teach, inspire and engage students of all ages.

Our thanks go to Dr Aidan Dodson of Bristol University for his contribution to the research on the objects in this publication.

Curiosity and curses: The fascination of Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt has fascinated us for thousands of years. The Egyptian civilisation lasted over 3,000 years, and the Greeks, Romans – and even the Egyptians themselves – thought of its history as ancient history.

During the medieval period, pilgrims to the Holy Land passed by the pyramids and were amazed by their size. Until the Empire State Building was built in 1931, the pyramids were the tallest buildings on Earth.

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte, then a General, invaded Egypt. As well as soldiers, he took artists and academics to record the monuments, people and animals.

In the early 1800s thousands of tombs were raided and mummies were sent to Europe. These early excavations were poorly recorded, but the finds they uncovered sparked a deeper interest in Ancient Egypt. Egyptian inspired books, art and even architecture became popular. In Devonport, architect John Foulston designed the 'Egyptian House'.

In 1922 Howard Carter (right) and his team discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun. When Carter's sponsor and one of his assistants died shortly after the tomb was opened, newspapers rumoured that it was due to a deadly curse. News of the discovery spread rapidly, and more novels, buildings and art inspired by Ancient Egypt appeared.

Library of congress

Digging and discovery: How Ancient Egypt came to Plymouth

Interest in Ancient Egypt grew during the early 1900s. British groups and societies were formed to support archaeological digs and research. As there was no government funding available, these societies paid for their activities by selling some of their finds to museums in the UK. The Egyptian Antiquities Service ensured that anything nationally significant was kept in Egypt.

Most of the objects in our collection came to The Box from these societies, or from their members who had their own collections of antiquities. In 1904 the Institute of Archaeology put a notice in The Times newspaper (right), offering crates of pottery excavated at Beni Hassan to worthy causes. Fred Hunt, the curator of Devonport Museum, wrote to the Institute and was awarded a crate.

In the early 1920s, W.L.S Loat from Gulworthy near Tavistock, donated his collection to The Box. Loat was an archaeologist, and member of the Egypt Exploration Society. In 1913 he excavated a cemetery in Abydos, where he found over 1500 animal mummies.

The largest collection to come to The Box was from Thomas Pease of Bristol. Pease gathered the collection during the mid 1840s. It contained over 200 objects, and included the inner coffins of Iyhat and Tairy.

GIFT OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES TO MUSEUMS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The Beni Hasan Excavations Committee finds itself able to offer to a number of museums in the United Kingdom and the Colonies a set of ancient Egyptian pottery, typical work of the XIth Dynasty, dating about 2,300 B.C.

The gifts will be allotted to the public museums firstly, by which is understood museums of towns or institutions which are open free of charge to the public. Educational institutions accessible to limited numbers are not debarred, but no grant can be made under any circumstances to private individuals. Applications from the continent of Europe or from America subject to these conditions would be considered equally. Letters should be addressed before March 20, 1904, to

THE DIRECTOR OF EXCAVATIONS.
Beni Hasan, Abu-Kirkas, Upper Egypt.

Locations

This photo shows modern Egypt as seen from space. It shows the archaeological sites where some of the objects now held at The Box were found.

Ancient Egypt was divided into two regions – Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Stretching from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to Egypt's border with Nubia (now Sudan) to the South, the terms 'Upper' and 'Lower' can be quite confusing. The terms derive from the flow of the Nile, so 'Upper Egypt' is actually the South of the country, with 'Lower Egypt' in the North. Lower Egypt stretched from Alexandria in the Nile Delta to just South of Cairo. Upper Egypt stretched from just South of Cairo to Aswan (marked in black on the image). Our objects from Abu Simbel fall outside this area, and are from the area called 'Kush' – modern-day Sudan.

The Nile would flood each year, resulting in lush green fertile swamps. These can be seen clearly on the image. The water would overflow the banks, leaving behind a rich thick mud that fertilised the land. This made farming possible in the area – as you can see, Egypt is mainly a desert region. The fertile areas were called the 'Black Land', while desert areas were called the 'Red Land'. Both were important, as the Red Land protected the Egyptians from invasion and was rich in precious metals such as gold, silver and copper.

The Nile was so important to the people that their lives were based around its yearly flooding cycle:

- Akhet was the time of the Nile flood (June – September)
- Peret was the time for sowing seeds (October – January)
- Shemu was the time to harvest (February – May)

Upper and Lower Egypt were unified c3000 BC – the pharaohs were known as the 'Rulers of the Two Lands'.


Giza
Cairo
Saqqara
Memphis
Hawara
Beni Hassan
Abydos
Valley of the Kings
Karnak
Thebes/Luzor
Aswan
Abu Simbel
© NASA / http://visibleeasrth.nasa.gov/

Life

mied Cat. In Egypt the cat-
ried & pasht - the cat-headed god
mummies are found in great
s in Egypt especially at Thebes.
are bound up with the wood
head alone left like a real shape.
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Life:
Early Egyptian pots

The Ancient Egyptians made pottery from the silts of the Nile, and from a type of naturally occurring clay called marl. In the Pre-dynastic Period (6000BC – 3200BC), pots were simply shaped by hand using coils of clay and simple smoothing tools.

As technology developed over time, new techniques of kiln building and even a form of potter's wheel led to new types of shape and decoration.

These pots were used in life to store, cook and serve food, and after death they were packed into the grave to supply the dead person in their next life.

The Pre-dynastic pot (left) dates from between 5300 – 3000BC. The storage jar (right) is a lot later in date, and is decorated with painted marks and bands.

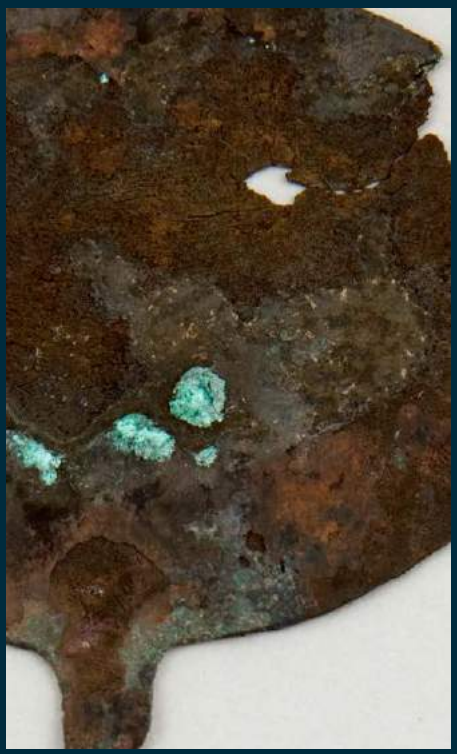
Life:
More than just a pretty face

To Ancient Egyptian women and men, wearing makeup was part of daily life.

Slate palettes (left) were used for grinding black galena (lead ore) into a paste. The powder was then used to line the eyes, providing protection from flies, a disinfectant treatment and spiritual protection too.

Once ground up, eyeliner pigment was mixed with water and stored in small alabaster jars such as this one (centre).

Ancient Egyptians made mirrored surfaces by polishing copper very finely. Originally this mirror (right) would have had a decorative handle attached to the point.



Life:
Gods, goddesses & sacred animals

The Ancient Egyptians had many different gods and sacred animals in their lives. Each god had a special association or responsibility, such as giving protection, bringing the Nile floods, ensuring a good harvest, or looking after people on their journey to the afterlife.

Apis (below) was an intermediary between humans and Osiris and was worshipped mainly in the Memphis region.

Isis (pictured on the front cover) was worshipped as the ideal mother and wife, as well as being a patron of nature and magic.

Life:
Animal mummies

Whilst some animals were mummified to keep their owners company, or to provide a source of food for the afterlife, most were mummified as offerings to the gods. For the Ancient Egyptians, paying to have an animal mummified and presenting it to a temple was a way of asking a particular god for support.

In the Late Period (650BC – 350AD), the animal mummy industry grew up around temples. Sometimes dodgy dealers would sell fake mummies to customers, mixing odd bits of bone, mud and straw together to look like the real thing.

Take a look at the image below. Wrapped to keep it looking like a kitten, this mummy may once have had a painted outer layer of bandages.

Not more than a few months old at death, this crocodile has lost the end of the tail. Crocodiles were associated with the god Sobek. At Sobek's temples priests kept live crocodiles and decorated them with jewellery.

Associated with the goddess Bastet, cats were often mummified like this with the head on top of a long column. Originally, there would have been a pair of stiff linen ears attached to the top of the head.

With its wings neatly folded along the side of its body and legs extended, parts of this bird are visible through holes in the bandages.

Death

Death:
Serving the dead

In life, most people in Ancient Egypt had to perform certain duties by order of the Pharoah. In order to avoid being called up for this service in the afterlife, many were buried with model servants called shabtis, who would do their owner's share of the hard manual work.

Shabtis were often carved with the name of their master. They were kept safe inside the tomb in special boxes, waiting for their call to action.

Overseer shabti of Am
946 – 735 BC (right)

Shabtis of this type became popular around 1000BC. They have one hand to their side and one shown holding a whip. Overseer shabtis were placed in tombs to keep the other shabtis under control.

Death:
Inside the tomb

The stomach, liver, lungs and intestines of the dead were removed to protect them. They were stored in canopic jars such as this one (below), which is made of limestone.

The jackal head on the lid represents the god Duamutef, which means this jar would have held a stomach. Cartonnage is the name used for the layers of plaster and linen that the Ancient Egyptians used to make masks, panels and coffins.

Death:
Journey to the afterlife

In Ancient Egypt, the idea of life after death was very important. To reach the afterlife, you needed to keep your dead body in good condition so that it could be an eternal home for your soul.

Inner Coffin of Iyhat 700BC

The coffin (on page 22) originally held the body of a man called Iyhat (pr. eye-hat). The hieroglyphic inscriptions tell us that before Iyhat died he was a priest living in Western Thebes. Iyhat's body is no longer inside the coffin. As well as safeguarding bodies from animals and thieves, coffins such as this one acted as 'houses of the spirit'. The hieroglyphs and pictures on coffins were thought by the Ancient Egyptians to help the dead on their journey to the afterlife. This is why texts from the Egyptian Book of the Dead are painted inside and outside of Iyhat's coffin.

Inner Coffin of Tairy 700BC

This coffin (on page 23) originally held the body of a woman. The hieroglyphic inscriptions tell us that she was Lady of the House Tairy, daughter of Ashery and Denitenbastet.

The depiction of her arms and hands makes this coffin very distinctive and quite unusal. Both her hands are painted to look 3D. The right hand is relaxed while her left hand is clenched and once held some kind of emblem.

Activities

Activities:
Break the code

1 

2 

3 

Can you break our secret hieroglyphic codes?

We'll give you a clue – each word is a part of the yearly flooding cycle of the Nile. After you've mastered this, why not try writing your name or longer sentences in hieroglyhics?

1 _ _ _ _ _

2 _ _ _ _ _

3 _ _ _ _ _

Activities:
Hieroglyphic alphabet

 A	 B	 C	 D	 E	 F	 G
 H	 I	 J	 K	 L	 M	 N
 O	 P	 Q	 R	 S	 T	 U
 V	 W	 X	 Y	Z		

Activities:
Craft a necklace

Use two of our beautiful necklaces for inspiration to create your own colourful pasta version.

What you'll need:

- Dried tube pasta (such as rigatoni, macaroni, penne)
- Paint and brushes
- String or cotton
- Cocktail sticks
- Polystyrene or foam blocks

1. Make a drying stand by using the polystrene or foam as a base for propping up your pasta to allow it to dry – if you leave painted pasta flat it will stick to whatever you've left it on. Press the cocktail sticks into your base leaving a little space between them so you can add the pasta easily.
2. Choose your colours – our necklaces utilise a small range of colours, from the common bluegreen of faience (an almost glass-like material used throughout Egypt) to red and yellow ochre colours of the pottery beads.

   You can easily research Ancient Egyptian colours online – one thing is certain, they liked blue and gold!
3. Using a full cocktail stick to 'hold' the pasta, paint in a range of the colours and allow to dry.
4. Once dry, string the 'beads' onto the string or cotton. Be careful to allow enough length in the necklace to prevent choking. Can you make equally spaced patterns like the necklace pictured below, or would you rather have a more random combination, like the necklace pictured above?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Activities:
Mummify an orange

Mummification is the process by which Ancient Egyptians were able to preserve their dead. Embalmers were so skilled in the process that people mummified 4,000 years ago still have skin and hair intact. We're not going to preserve a body – that would be messy and frankly, you won't have space in the classroom. Let's try oranges instead!

What you'll need:

- An orange
- Cooking salt (enough to half fill your orange)
- Bicarbonate of soda (enough to half fill your orange)
- A roll of crepe bandage
- Knife and spoon
- Spices
- Two bowls
- Kitchen paper

1. Make a slit in the skin of your orange from the top to the bottom. You may need help for this part.
2. Scoop out the inside into a bowl. Save it for a fresh fruit juice later!
3. Stuff the orange with kitchen paper until the inside is completely dry. Remove the paper.
4. Sprinkle some of the cinnamon and cloves into your orange.
5. In the other bowl, mix the salt and bicarbonate of soda together. Add this to the orange until it is full.
6. Wrap your orange mummy up. Make sure it is formed back into the shape of an orange and then start to wrap it up with the bandage.
7. When it is completely covered, cut your bandage leaving enough length to tie it into a knot.
8. Your orange now needs to go somewhere warm and dry for a few weeks. The cinnamon and cloves come into their own at this point – it may whiff a bit. You will notice that after a few weeks, your orange will dry and change colour.

Congratulations – you've mummified an orange!

Activities:
Protect your orange

Now you've mummified an orange, let's create a suitable sarcophagus or coffin for it to rest in its orangey tomb.

Our beautiful head of a cat coffin dating from 664 – 525 BC should give you plenty of inspiration. To the Ancient Egyptians cats were special animals. This cat head is made of wood, and has been decorated with gold leaf. Originally it would have been part of a cat's coffin.

Using whatever materials you like, create a coffin for your orange. We'd suggest using papier mâché or clay.

Your coffin does not need to look like an orange. Perhaps choose an animal sacred to the Egyptians and create a coffin that reflects the animal – our cat coffin will either have been linked to Bastet or Sekmhet. Paint the coffin – use the hieroglyphic alphabet to write a message on your coffin. After all that, drink some orange juice!

Visit our website for the latest offers, news and projects for schools, and to book your experience with us;

theboxplymouth.com

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Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND