
ART SMART

6th Grade / December

THEME:

Egypt

WORKS:

1. *Mummy Case of Paankhenamun - 22nd Dynasty*
2. *Head of Princess - 18th Dynasty*
3. *Man Plowing with Oxen - 11th Dynasty*
4. *Maid Servants Attending to Ladies at a Banquet - 18th Dynasty*



1.



2.



4.

October

6th Grade Art Smart November -Egypt

Mummy Case of Paankhenamun- Third Int. Period 22nd Dynasty (c. 945-715 BC)

If time allows...

Head of a Princess- 18th Dynasty (c. 1353-1336 BC)

Man Plowing with Oxen- 11th Dynasty (c.2050-1788 BC)

Maid Servants Attending to Ladies at a Banquet, 18th Dynasty (1430 BC)

Optional-----24 Prints from the Art of Ancient Egypt portfolio

The 6th grade has been studying Egypt for a few weeks now. Since you are Egypt experts, you probably know a lot of the information we are going to discuss today.

1. Show Mummy Case of Paankhenamun, 22nd Dynasty

- What are mummies? (preserved corpses) Was everyone in Egyptian society mummified? (No, just important people like royalty)
- Why did the Egyptians mummify their dead? (Ancient Egyptians believed upon their death they would be reborn into the afterlife---an eternal existence similar to the one they left behind. They believed that their souls would need a body to inhabit in the afterlife.)
- What are tombs? (structures that housed the material goods needed for the afterlife. Pyramids are one kind of tomb.)
- Why did Egyptians put so many material goods in their tombs? (they believed the resurrected dead would eat food, wear clothes, and carry on a full physical life, so the deceased would need all these items.)
- 1 / 2 ☞ This is the mummy case of Paankhenamun, a middle-aged man who is thought to have lived in the city of Thebes along the Nile in Central Egypt. This case still houses his body. X-rays show us that he was 5'5" tall.
- Do you know what mummy cases were made of? (material called cartonnage, in which linen or papyrus strips were joined together using a gummy substance. Once the body was inside, the cases were coated with a layer of gesso or plaster. Experts think the decoration was added after the body was in place. The result was a mummy case strong enough to withstand 3000 years of wear.)
- 3 2 ☞ Do you think the face on the case looked like Paankhenamun? (No, the face is an idealized human face)
- 2 ☞ Can you guess what else this case tells us about the man? (his name and title. He was the doorkeeper of the temple of the god Amun.)
- Let's talk about the images and the symbols on this case.
- The central scene over the torso area shows (right to left) Paankhenmun being led by the god Horus to the gods Osiris, Isis, and Nephthys. The four little figures between Isis and Osiris are the four sons of Horus four deities who protect the organs during the mummification. They stand on a lotus blossom---a symbol of rebirth.
- All these gods are associated with the afterlife.
- The scarab beetle is painted over Paankhenmun's heart and represents rebirth.
- The gold face on the case represents the illumination of the faces of the dead as the sun god, Re-Atum, shines his light upon them.
- The bird at the throat is Ma'at the goddess of truth.
- Egyptians believed that the deceased had to be judged by Osiris and 42 assessors in order to enter into the afterlife.

(See attached for "Reading the Mummy Case of Paankhenamun" for further detail.)

****** It might be a good idea to start the art project at this point and discuss the rest of the artwork as the students are working on the project.**

2. Show **Head of Princess**, 18th Dynasty

- 2 ✱ This piece is from the 18th dynasty,, during the reign of Akhenaton. Do you remember anything about Akhenaton (ah kuh NAH tuhn)? (He was the king who gave up all the old gods and encouraged his people to worship only one god---Aton the life giving god of the sun.)
- Did the Egyptian people accept his one god? (No, after his death they went back to worshipping many gods.)
 - 1 ✱ The princess portrayed here is believed to be Nefertiti, Akhenaton's wife and a famous queen in Egyptian history.
 - Akhenaton is the predecessor and possibly the father of King Tut. King Tut returned Egypt to the worship of many gods. This is one of the reasons that King Tut was so well loved by his people.

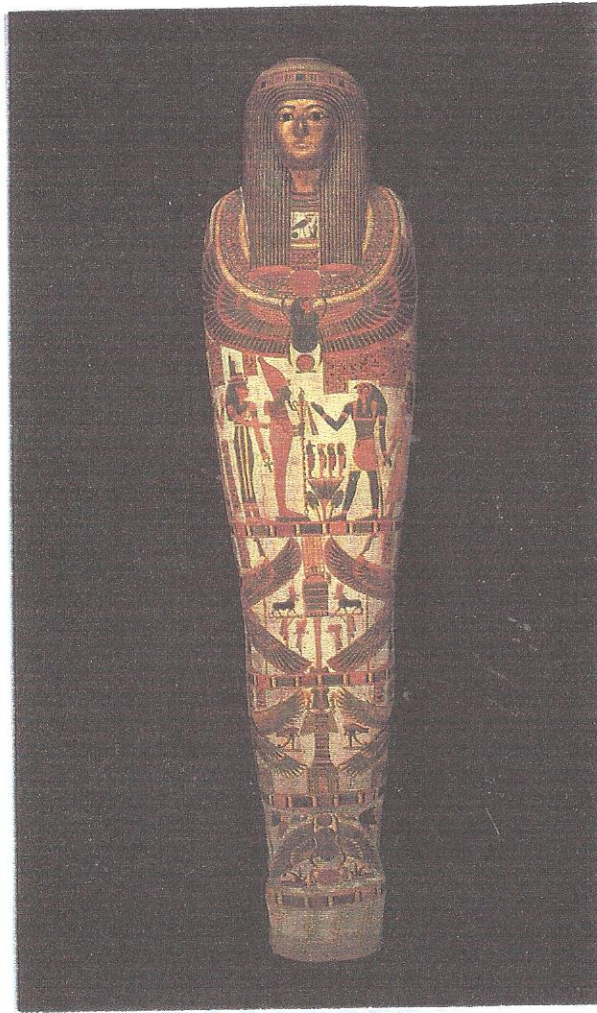
3. Show **Man Plowing with Oxen**, 11th Dynasty

- This piece is called a funerary model. Do you know what that means? (funerary means sculpture used in tombs of the deceased.)
- What is going on here? (Two oxen are pulling a plow directed by a farmer with a stick.)
- Why do you think such scenes are useful to archaeologists? (It is an important document that shows the method of tilling the soil and the dress of the period.)
- Why would the Egyptians have placed this object in a tomb? (Agriculture was vital to survival. The deceased may have been a landowner who had workers tilling his land. This model was a reflection of day-to-day Egyptian life.)
- Why do you think this little wood sculpture has not succumbed to rot over 3000 years? (the air in Egypt is so dry that many wooden objects have survived over 4000 years.)

4. Show **Maid Servants Attending to Ladies at a Banquet**, 18th Dynasty

- ✱ This painting is one of many from the tomb of Vizier Rekhmire. He was the governor of Thebes and the chief advisor to Pharaoh Tuthmosis III and Amenophis II. The paintings show scenes from Rekhmire's life and his funeral procession. The paintings even show the craftsmen that worked on his tomb. These tomb paintings are considered to be among the finest in Egypt.
- ✱ Why are paintings like this valuable to egyptologists? (like the funerary models, these tomb paintings show everyday life in ancient Egypt They are an amazing record of work, worship, politics, customs and culture of the New Kingdom period)
- ✱ What's going on here? (Servants are attending to important ladies in Rekhmire's court.)

Suggested project: Using a template, cut out 6"x 20" mummy case shapes out of paper or poster board ahead of time. Have the students imagine that they are an important figure in ancient Egypt. Give each student a mummy case shape, and using pencil, markers, and gold paint have each student create a mummy case that reflects herself. Encourage the students to use the "Write Like an Egyptian" handout to spell their names. They may also want to use some of the symbols discussed today (scarab, gods, lotus, gold face, etc.)



Mummy Case of Paankhenamun

Egypt

Third Intermediate Period, dynasty 22 (c. 945–715 BC)

Poster Packet

The Art Institute of Chicago
Department of Museum Education
Division of Student and Teacher Programs
The Elizabeth Stone Robson Teacher Resource Center

Mummy Case of Paankhenamun

Egyptian

Third Intermediate Period, dynasty 22 (c. 945–715 BC)

Cartonnage (gum, linen, and papyrus), gold leaf, and pigment

William M. Willner Fund, 1910.238

Ancient Egyptians believed upon their death they would be reborn into an eternal existence similar to the one they left behind. In this afterlife, the resurrected dead would eat food, wear clothes, and carry on a full physical life. The spirit or soul of the deceased would need a body to inhabit the afterlife. In order to accomplish this, Egyptians preserved the **corpse** through a process called **mummification**. Decay was avoided at all costs, as it would signify a separation between the body and the soul. Completed mummies were then placed within a **tomb** structure that housed most of the material goods needed for the afterlife and also prevented any further ruin.

Mortuary architecture in Egypt was highly developed and often very grand. The tomb was not simply a place in which a corpse might be protected from destruction; it was the home of the deceased, provided with material objects to ensure continued existence after death. Part of the tomb might reproduce symbolically the earthly dwelling of the dead person; wall paintings might be of scenes that would enable the individual to pursue an afterlife suitable and similar to other worldly existence. For a pharaoh (king) the expectations were quite different; his tomb became the vehicle whereby he might achieve his privileged destiny with the gods in a celestial afterlife.

Most tombs comprised two principal parts—the burial chamber (the tomb itself) and the chapel, in which offerings for the deceased could be made. In royal burials the chapel rapidly developed into a temple, which in later times was usually built separately and at some distance from the tomb. These great superstructures contained many storage chambers stocked with food and provisions for the deceased, who lay in a rectangular burial chamber below ground. Some of these provisions included human slaves sacrificed in order to serve their master in the afterlife. It became more common, however, to substitute statues or painted images for actual human beings. Existing Egyptian sculpture from the time period of this mummy is mostly funerary—

statues used in tombs of the deceased. By itself, however, a statue could represent no one unless it carried identification in **hieroglyphs**.

The processes of preparing a body for mummification and creating the actual mummy case were meticulous. After being packed in salt for seventy days, the corpse was wrapped in linen that enclosed **amulets** for good luck. The heart was left in the body, while the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines were stored in **canopic jars**, which were left in the tomb with the body. If the family of the deceased could afford it, a **graduated** series of cases was constructed to surround the mummy. The innermost, such as this mummy case, was created with a material called cartonnage, in which linen or **papyrus** strips were joined together using a gummy substance. The cartonnage mummy case itself was formed around a temporary core. A lengthwise seam along the back allowed for the insertion of the wrapped mummy. The seam would then be laced closed and a separate footboard would be inserted at the base. Since the cases are normally coated with a layer of inflexible gesso or a plaster-type material, scholars assume that the painted decoration was added after the body was in place. The result was a mummy case strong enough to withstand wear for almost 3000 years. This mummy case still houses the preserved body of **Paankhenamun**, a middle-aged man who is thought to have lived in the city of **Thebes** along the Nile River in Central Egypt. X-rays of the mummy show that Paankhenamun was a middle-aged man approximately 5'5" tall when he died.

The rules for successful rebirth required that a representation of the person's face be rendered on the surface of the case. The face of Paankhenamun is not a portrait of the deceased, but an idealized human face. Also required was the representation of the name and title of the dead because ancient Egyptians believed that the occupation and status achieved in life would persist in the afterlife. Hieroglyphs on the mummy case state that Paankhenamun was "the doorkeeper of the temple of **Amun**" and that his father had held that position before him.

Egyptians believed the scenes depicted on a mummy case would later take place in the deceased's afterlife. The symbolic images on this case

relate to Paankhenamun's eventual rebirth to eternal life.¹ The central image on the torso of the mummy case is the introduction of the deceased Paankhenamun to *Osiris*, ruling god of the afterlife, by the god's hawk-headed son *Horus*, who leads Paankhenamun by the hand. The green face of Osiris symbolizes rebirth, as does the lotus blossom (at Osiris' feet) holding the four sons of Horus, or deities that exist to protect the canopic organs. The lotus blossom is a symbol of rebirth because it grows pure white out of mud. A scarab beetle, believed to push the sun into the sky to start each new day, is painted over Paankhenamun's heart and represents his rebirth. *Re-Atum*, the sun god, was believed to proceed into the underworld each night after setting in the west to be reborn each morning. The gold face molded at the head of the case represents the illumination of faces of the dead as Re-Atum's light shines upon them. The phoenix seen at the throat of the mummy case is a fabulous bird that symbolizes rebirth because it is thought to rise reborn from the ashes every 500 years.

Before Paankhenamun could begin his new life after death, however, his character had to be judged by Osiris and 42 assessors. At Paankhenamun's throat is a representation of *Ma'at*, the goddess of truth. If Paankhenamun's heart balanced with Ma'at's feather, he would unite with Osiris and live in the Fields of the Blessed in the peaceful, everlasting existence of the Egyptian afterlife. While the painstaking steps taken to preserve bodies of the dead were believed to ensure their everlasting presence in the afterlife, they also make it possible for modern viewers to learn about the lives and beliefs of ancient Egyptians.

¹ See "Reading the *Mummy Case of Paankhenamun*" in this packet for a detailed look at the symbols on the case.

READING the *MUMMY CASE OF PANKHENAMUN*

- A. *Ma'at* with a phoenix bird. *Ma'at* is the goddess of truth who was present at the weighing of the heart when the deceased was judged before the gods. The phoenix bird represents rebirth.
- B. "Broad collars": layers of floral necklaces.
- C. Beetle with hawk head below the sun disk. This is a representation of the combined form of *Re*, the hawk-headed sun god, and *Khepri*, the beetle who was thought to push the sun across the sky each day in a never-ending cycle of death (sunset) and rebirth (sunrise). The wings are also a reference to the winged goddess *Nut*, deity of the sky, who often occupies this position on mummy cases.
- D. The shen hieroglyph meaning "eternity" references the eternal cycle of the sun.

Scene of Paankhenamun with the gods

- E. Paankhenamun, with a cone of scented fat on his wig, is led into the presence of the gods. The hieroglyphs above his head say that he was the Doorkeeper in the Temple of Amun, the son of the Doorkeeper, *Ainka*, in the Temple of Amun, and the grandson of a man named *Ankhefenkhonsu*. The remainder of the inscription is a plea for funerary offerings in the afterlife.
- F. The hawk-headed god Horus, son of Osiris.
- G. The god Osiris, the main deity of the afterlife. He holds the crook, whose hieroglyph means "to rule," and the **flail**, which symbolizes the ability of the god to provide for his subjects. His long staff is made up of hieroglyphs that promise life, dominion, and stability.
- H. *Isis*, the sister of Osiris. *Isis* and *Nephthys* (see I) often act as mourners for the deceased.
- I. *Nephthys*, sister of Osiris. Here she is called "The Mistress of the West." There are many "Mistresses of the West;" "the West" is an allusion to the area of the setting sun, hence the land of the dead (see K and L). She is also called the "Mother of the God, the Lady of Heaven, Mistress of all the Gods."
- J. The four sons of Horus—four deities who protect the organs removed during the mummification process. They stand on a lotus flower—a symbol of rebirth.

The geographic symbol of the city of Abydos, the place where Osiris was supposed to be buried. Abydos was among the most sacred cities in Egypt. It is flanked by:

K. Winged deity: "*Hathor*, Mistress of the West."

L. Winged deity: "Ma'at, Mistress of the West." Both deities hold the hieroglyph for Ma'at (truth) in their arms.

M. Rams on stands: unclear symbolism. The geographic emblem of *Mendes*, a city associated with Osiris? *Khnum*, one of the creator gods?

N. A bundle on a stand: unclear symbolism.

O. Double plumed headdress with a central sun disk on a stand, another geographic emblem.

P. *Djed* pillar: a representation of the personification of the backbone of the god Osiris. He holds the crook and flail (see **G**), and wears a double plumed crown with sun disk. He stands on the depiction of the facade of the royal palace.

Q. Falcon god, "The *Behdite*, Lord of Heaven," with wings outstretched to protect the *djed* pillar.

R. The eye of Horus: a symbol of well being.

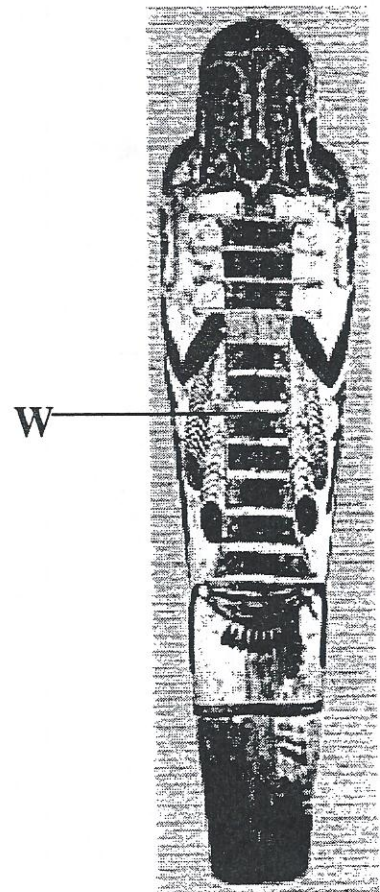
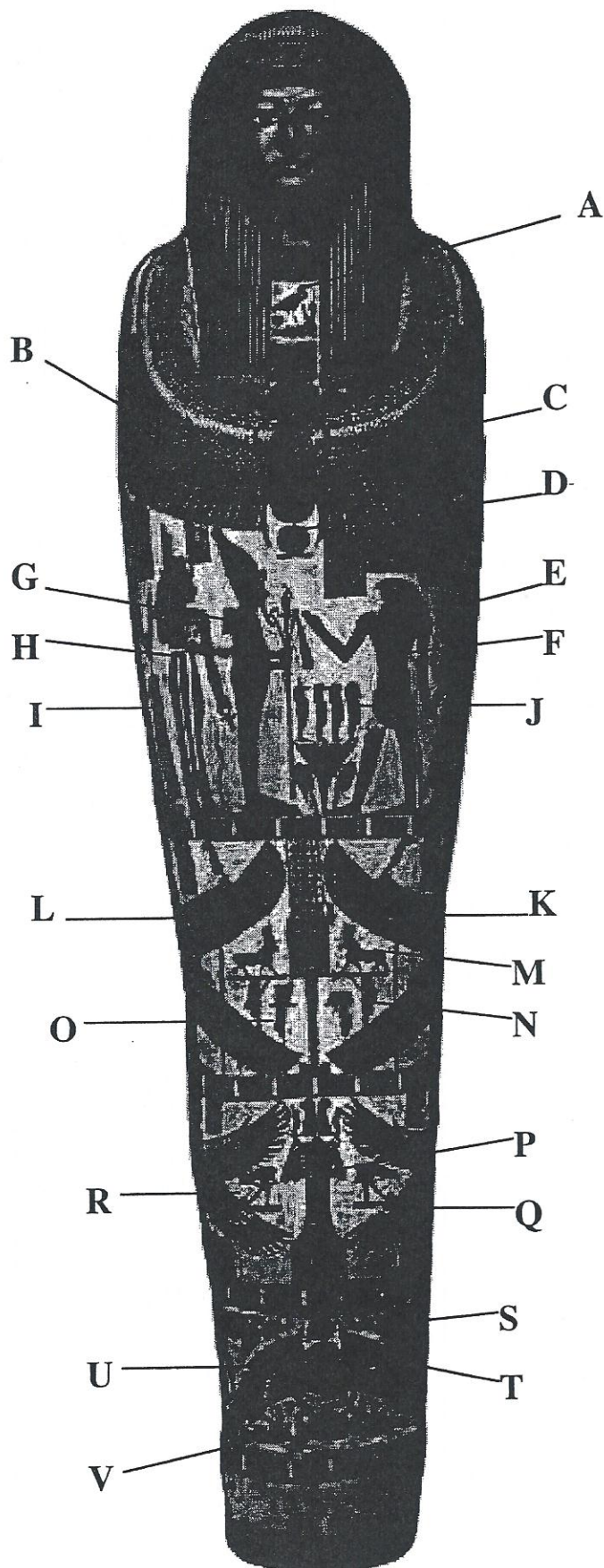
S. The shen hieroglyph meaning "eternity," a reference to the eternal cycle of the sun.

T. Demons who live in the underworld. They hold long knives.

U. Another winged scarab, pushing the sun disk (see **C**).

V. Eyes of Horus (see **R**).

W. The back of the coffin is decorated with a single large *djed* pillar (see **P**). On either side, below its elbows, are hieroglyphs for "the West" (see **I**).



GLOSSARY

afterlife: an existence believed to follow death.

amulet: a charm used to ward off evil or injury. Egyptian amulets took the form of *ankhs*, the eye of *Horus* (a symbol of healing), and scarab beetles.

canopic (cah-noh-pic) **jar:** a vessel constructed specifically to hold the preserved organs (stomach, liver, lungs, and intestines) of the dead. The stoppers sometimes resembled the owner's head or the four sons of *Horus* with human, jackal, baboon, and falcon forms.

corpse: a dead body, especially of a human being.

Djed (jed) **pillar:** a symbol of stability that may represent the backbone of *Osiris*.

flail: a long wooden staff and a free-swinging switch attached to its end used to thresh (beat) the edible grains out of wheat and other grain crops.

graduated: arranged according to size, with each case fitting inside a larger case.

hieroglyphs: characters used in the picture script of the ancient Egyptians; this language is no longer active and is not related to the modern-day Arabic language of the region.

mortuary: of or relating to the burial of the dead.

mummification: the act of embalming or preserving a body for burial with preservatives in the manner of the ancient Egyptians.

papyrus: an ancient paper-like material used as a writing surface made by pressing together thin strips of the papyrus; a tall, aquatic plant found in the Nile valley.

tomb: the site in which a corpse is buried; a grave; often an excavation but sometimes an above-ground structure.

PRONOUNCIATION of EGYPTIAN NAMES

Abydos (ah-high-dohs): the cult center of the god **Osiris**; the most holy site in Egypt; believed to be where the body of Osiris was buried and was a pilgrimage site.

Ainka (ah-ink-ah): believed to be the father of **Paankhenamun** because so stated on Paankhenamun's mummy case.

Ankhenfenkhonsu (ahnk-en-fehn-kon-soo): believed to be the grandfather of **Paankhenamun** because so stated on Paankhenamun's mummy case.

ankh (ank): a symbol of life; shaped like a cross with a loop as the upper vertical arm.

Amun (**Amun-Re**) (ah-moon; ah-moon ray): state god of the Egyptian city of **Thebes**; cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) god of invisibility; means "the hidden one;" represented as a ram with horns curving down or as a man with a crown topped with two tall feathers; as Amun-Re, he wore the sun disk on the crown in front of the tall feathers.

Hathor (ha-thor): goddess of fertility; frequently associated with other goddesses, like **Isis**.

Horus (hor-us): the sky (cosmic) god; son of **Osiris**; ruled the earthly world while his father ruled the next world; represented as a falcon or as a man with the head of a falcon.

Isis (igh-sis): cosmic goddess; wife of **Osiris** and mother of **Horus**; she, along with her sister, **Nephthys**, was a protector of the dead; pictured as a woman wearing on her head either a throne or a sun disk between two horns.

Khnum (knoom): cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) god who created humankind and other deities on a potter's wheel; guardian of the source of the Nile; depicted as a ram with horizontal, wavy horns or as a man with the head of this same ram.

Ma'at (Maat) (mah-**ah**t): goddess of truth, justice, and order; pictured as a woman with a feather on her head; the feather was a symbol of truth against which the heart of a deceased person was weighed in the judgement before **Osiris** to determine whether the deceased entered "heaven" or the kingdom of Osiris in the next world.

Nephythus (nehf-this): cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) goddess and sister of **Isis**; protector of the dead, along with her sister Isis.






Osiris (oh-sigh-ris): cosmic god of fertility, resurrection, and the next world; usually pictured wrapped as a mummy, holding a crook and flail as sceptors; his skin is sometimes green to show his connection with vegetation and growth.

Paankhenamun (pah-**ahnk**-ehn-ah-moon): name means "the one who lives for the god **Amun**;" the individual whose mummy is in the mummy case at the Art Institute.

Re-Atum (ray **ah**-toom): when associated with the sun god Re, Atum became a manifestation of the setting sun; as such, he is represented as an aged man wrapped as a mummy.

Thebes (theebs): capital city of Egypt during the New Kingdom; located in upper (southern) Egypt; modern-day name is Luxor.

CLASSROOM QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

English Language Arts		Fine Arts	
Mathematics		Science	
		Social Science	

1. Happily Ever After



Egyptians believed that life after death was just like life on earth. They therefore stocked tombs of the dead with models of items the deceased would use in the afterlife—a house, furniture, clothing, food, boats, animals, etc. Have students make a list of things an individual needs to lead a happy and full life. Each student may then select a few items to draw or sculpt in clay.

2. Write Like an Egyptian



Paankhenamun's name is spelled out in hieroglyphs on the mummy case. Distribute the attached sheet "Write Like an Egyptian" and have each student spell his/her name with hieroglyphs. Collect examples and distribute to students. Can students translate the hieroglyphs to determine the name?

3. Miniature Mummies



Have students each create a miniature mummy case out of newspaper and papier maché. Wad up sheets of newspaper tightly into the smooth form of a body. Wrap masking tape tightly around the newspaper bunches to secure. Wrap the "mummy cases" with strips of newspaper dipped in papier maché and let harden. Using tempera paints, decorate the case with Egyptian-inspired symbols and colors. Or, "modernize" the case with decorations of modern-day symbols and themes.

Alternate: Have each student lie down on individual long sheets of butcher paper and have a classmate trace his/her outline. Each student or group of students can color and decorate the cover of a "mummy case."

4. Organizing the Body

When preparing a mummy, the deceased person's liver, stomach, intestines, and lungs were saved for the afterlife. Discuss with students the important role that each of these organs plays in keeping their bodies healthy. Have students research these organs further. Then they can draw their bodies with the organs in the proper locations, insert these organs onto templates of the human body, or insert them onto the attached x-ray of Paankhenamun.

5. Symbolic Meanings

Hieroglyphs are characters or symbols that represent something. What symbols are present in our own societies? Have students draw the symbols they see while crossing the street, riding in a car, going to a movie theater, etc. on poster board. After they color and cut them out, put all of the students' symbols into a bag and have each person pick one out and guess what the meaning is. Arrange the symbols together on a display board to create a collage.

6. Remembering the Dead

Have students research burial practices from different cultures and time periods. How are cultures' practices and beliefs similar? How are they different? How have the burial practices of the United States changed throughout its history? What aspects of American burials are similar to those of ancient Egypt? What do you think burial practices in the future will be like?

Additional: Have students research cemeteries in their area, either by searching online or by visiting in person². What is the oldest grave in the cemetery? Who is the youngest/oldest person buried there? Make a rubbing of a particularly interesting tombstone—hold a piece of paper flat against an interesting part of a stone and rub or color the paper completely with a crayon. The letters or designs that are on the stone should show up on the paper as white or without color.

² Note: Graceland Cemetery in Chicago is perhaps the city's best-known cemetery where many famous Chicagoans are buried; monuments include Egyptian obelisks, pyramids, and tomb structures that resemble Egyptian architecture.

7. Law of Averages



We know Paankhenamun was 5'5" tall. With a measuring tape, have students measure each other's height. Convert Paankhenamun's height into inches. What is the student's height in inches? Using these two figures, determine the ratio of Paankhenamun's height to that of each of the student's.

Additional: Have students survey the heights of male adult family members and friends. After converting these heights into inches and taking the average of all of the heights, compare Paankhenamun's height of 5'5" to the average height of today's men. What do the results possibly tell us about life in ancient Egypt versus life in modern times? Research the region of Egypt, its geography and weather conditions, and the daily life of ancient Egyptians, specifically males. What were the roles of men in society (jobs, family capacities, social responsibilities, etc)? Compare/contrast the lifestyles of ancient Egyptian men to modern-day men in the United States. How has evolution changed according to lifestyle?

8. All the Afterlife's a Stage...



Have students create a dramatic interpretation of the judgement of Paankhenamun before Osiris, including script, costumes, props, etc. to present before the class. Further research into this ancient Egyptian myth and customs of the time may be necessary to accurately portray ancient Egypt, although improvisation is appreciated.

These activities meet the following Illinois State Goals:

English Language Arts

State Goal 2: Understand explicit and implicit meaning in literature representing individual, community, national, world, and historical perspectives.

State Goal 5: Use language arts for inquiry and research to acquire, organize, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information.

Fine Arts

State Goal 26: Understand and demonstrate knowledge of the processes, traditional tools and modern technologies used in the arts.

State Goal 27: Analyze and demonstrate knowledge of how the arts function in history, society and everyday life.

Math

State Goal 6: Demonstrate and apply a knowledge and sense of numbers, including basic arithmetic operations, number patterns, ratios, and proportions.

State Goal 7: Estimate, make, and use measurements of objects, quantities, and relationships and determine acceptable levels of accuracy.

Science

State Goal 12: Have a working knowledge of the fundamental concepts and principles of the life, physical and earth/space sciences, and their connections.

State Goal 13: Have a working knowledge of the relationships among science, technology, and society in historical and contemporary events.





























Social Science

State Goal 17: Demonstrate a knowledge of world geography, as well as an understanding of the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the United States.

State Goal 18: Understand, analyze, and compare social systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

WRITE LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

The ancient Egyptians wrote and spoke in a language called Egyptian. It is a dead language (it is no longer spoken) and it is not related to Arabic which is now used in Egypt. The following hieroglyphs are rough equivalents of the English alphabet.

English letter	Hieroglyph	Symbol
A		vulture
B		foot
C		basket with loop handle
D		hand
E		two reeds
F		snake (horned viper)
G		jar stand
H	 or 	reed shelter or twisted rope
I		single reed
J		snake (cobra)
K		basket with loop handle
L		lion
M		owl
N		water
O		quail chick
P		stool
Q		hill side
R		mouth
S	 or 	folded cloth or door bolt
T		bread loaf
U		quail chick
V		snake (horned viper)
W		quail chick
X		basket with loop handle
Y		double reed leaves
Z		folded cloth

2.12 EGYPTIAN ART

XIth Dynasty (2050-1788 B.C.), Egypt

A Man Plowing with a Yoke of Oxen

painted wood, 19 1/2" (50 cm) long

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Gift of Valdemar Hammer Jr., in memory of his father, 1936

Egyptian Art

It is a commonly held belief that the ancient Egyptians devoted their major artistic efforts to the gods and the afterlife. This concept has evolved because these objects of their daily life, including their homes and palaces, which were constructed from simple materials, have been destroyed over the course of time. Thus, our knowledge of this ancient people is based almost entirely upon the huge stone temples and funerary monuments that have survived. Ironically, it is from the impressive funerary sites, and the grave goods contained within, that we learn most about the day-to-day existence of the ancient Egyptians. Because these people regarded the afterlife as an enhanced extension of this world, they readied themselves for the hereafter by filling their graves with an abundance of objects that would ensure their comfort and social standing in the magical future.

When we consider that ancient Egyptian history covers more than 3000 years, the notion of a static society quickly evaporates. Egyptian history is fraught with internal power struggles, natural disasters, and wars with the empires that surrounded their territory. Clues that reveal many of the Egyptians' worldly concerns can be derived from the grave goods of a particular generation.

The XIth dynasty, circa 2133-1991 B.C., was a period of considerable internal strife. The alliances of the old kingdom had collapsed and were in the process of being restructured under Theban control. Relative peace was quickly restored but many provinces refused to work in unison; therefore no general policy for irrigation could be enforced. This resulted in widespread famine. The famine exacerbated the fragile situation and archeologists have found that fortified towns became characteristic, and weapons became a more frequent funerary object. Also, the resulting emphasis on local resources altered the Egyptian outlook toward grave goods. These objects now paid homage to the self-reliant aggressive individual and praised private entrepreneurial activity. Tombs often contained remarkable miniature groups in wood, representing every kind of daily event.

In *A Man Plowing with a Yoke of Oxen*, a funerary wood model from the XIth dynasty, the importance of farming is brought to the fore. Obviously, this work commemorates the agricultural skill of this ancient period.

The image

In *A Man Plowing with a Yoke of Oxen*, we see two oxen pulling a plow, rendered fairly naturalistically. The farmer directs them in their work by brandishing a stick. This work is an important document, for not only does it reveal the costume of the period, the draped sheet around the farmer's loins and his "page-boy" haircut, it also indicates the early method used in tilling the soil. This painted wood model has retained its charm for close to 4,000 years. Its ability to conjure up children's toys from the beginning of the 19th century is a testament to humankind's creativity, which repeats itself, though often in response to diverse impulses. One may wonder about the fact that this little sculpture in wood has not rotten; the fact is that the air in Egypt is so dry that many wooden artifacts are 4,000 years old.

Dominant Elements and Principles of Design

The two dominant elements of art used are:

Form This is a three-dimensional sculpture that can be looked at from all sides. A single item, it is nevertheless divided into four parts: the wooden base, the man, the plow and the oxen.

Pattern The sculpted oxen were painted. The artist who created them covered them with white paint which he decorated with black spots, creating a very decorative pattern of curved shapes.

The two principles of design used are:

Movement The image is not static although it does not show fast movement. But the oxen are undeniably moving forward; you can see this from their hind legs. The man is walking as well, placing his left foot in front of his right.

Symmetry Seen from in front, the sculpture is almost symmetrical. The oxen and the plow are symmetrical; the man is too, if one ignores his staff and the fact that one foot is in front of the other.

Suggested Activity

Theme Man has driven animals through the ages: horses, reindeers, oxen, camels, dogs. Have students illustrate a man driving a team of animals.

Media Pen and black ink on 9" x 12" (23 x 31 cm) white cardboard (Donvale type).



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Tomb of Rekhmire

(click and drag in image, left or right, up or down)

1430 BC

Rekhmire was a governor of Thebes during the reigns of Tuthmosis III and his son Amenophis II. His tomb is one of more than 500 found in the Valley of the Nobles in ancient Thebes. Like most such tombs, Rekhmire's featured a reverse T shape, with a shallow front chamber followed by a long inner corridor. His is one of the finest painted tombs in the Theban necropolis.



Detail of Rekhmire's funeral procession from his tomb's inner corridor.

You begin facing east towards the door to the outside and the unseen entrance chamber (which forms the top of the T). After workmen finished carving this corridor, which slopes higher as one moves farther into the tomb, they prepared the wall surface with a mixture of earth and straw overlaid with a layer of plaster. Artists then painted scenes both from Rekhmire's life and funeral procession, and of the craftsmen whose efforts he oversaw: carpenters, goldsmiths, sculptors, masons, and many others.



Close-up of a woman high on the wall of the inner corridor.

As you spin around, zoom in closer to examine the fine paintings. See if you can make out the painted pair of small funerary obelisks, which Egyptians of the 18th Dynasty often placed before their tombs in honor of the sun god. At the opposite (western) end of the tomb, notice the empty niche, where statues of Rekhmire and his wife likely once stood.

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