

Pre-Visit Activities for an Ancient Egyptian Session

1. Understanding the time scale

- a. Analogies; e.g. Compress the history of civilisation into one year - where and what part do the Ancient Egyptians occupy?
- b. Graphic representation e.g. along the classroom wall
- c. Drawing from children's experience e.g. putting a series of historical photographs into chronological order

2. Working with evidence - How do we know?

- a. Non-written evidence - domestic and tomb artefacts
- b. 'Written' evidence e.g. the Rosetta Stone / hieroglyphics
- c. Graphic evidence e.g. tomb paintings / carvings / sculpture

3. Generating empathy with the people of Ancient Egypt

- a. Role playing e.g. acting out legends of the Gods and Pharaohs
- b. Simulation activities e.g. organising the building of a pyramid
- c. Discussion e.g. how do beliefs about after-life differ to ours?

4. Appreciating cause and effect

- a. Why the Ancient Egyptian civilisation centred itself around the Nile Valley
- b. Unstable warring tribes in pre-dynastic times result in little cultural achievement, but dynastic civilisation brings peace and prosperity and cultural advance
- c. Why beliefs of Ancient Egyptians are interlinked with the changing of the seasons and the activities of animals (particularly scarab beetle)

Handling Objects

The list below gives ideas for teachers on ways of using artefacts in the classroom. They are not in any particular order, nor are they aimed at any particular age group, but can be adapted to meet the needs of the class.

The Learning Department of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery operates a loans service for schools. Teachers may borrow up to four loans for a half term. Telephone 0121 303 3890 for a loans catalogue giving further details and booking form.

1. Sequencing

- Place these objects in their chronological order. For younger groups, start with three objects only, chosen from as wide a span of age as possible
- Say why you put them in that particular order. (This may be an exercise that would be more appropriate after the children have thought about the following questions)

2. Materials

- What is this made of?
- Is it real?
- Is it man made, or natural?
- Why was this material used? Because it's stretchy, flexible, waterproof,?
- What material would be used today?
- Do we have things like these nowadays?
- Are modern ones different?

3. Use

- How would you hold it?
- What would you do with it?
- Where would you use it? Inside / outside? What room?
- Who would use it?
- What sort of clothes would they have been wearing?
- Is an equivalent tool / item used today?

4. Change with age

- Is any part of this object missing?
- How can you tell?
- Are there any signs of wear and tear?
- Are there any signs of decay?
- Do the missing parts prevent us from knowing definitely what this is / how it worked? - i.e. is there an element of guessing here?

5. Labelling

- Write your own label for the object. This could include drawing, describing, measuring, dating (approximately), weighing or estimating weight

6. What is it?

- Try a 'Brains Trust' game where the children have to ask 'animal, vegetable or mineral' type of questions to try to identify it
- Pairs of children play a 'describing' game: the children sit at tables with a screen between them; one child has the object on his / her table, the other child (who cannot see the object) has a paper and pencil. The child with the object describes it as clearly as possible while the other child tries to draw the object as described. Observational and descriptive skills are tested here!
- Think of ten possible uses for the object

7. Relating to other evidence

- Match the artefact to contemporary objects / pictures of contemporary room settings, etc
- 'Pair' objects of similar age or usage found in the box
- Use your knowledge of the present day, or of a particular period, to try to identify the object
- Use IT skills to retrieve information that will help you identify the object
- What other objects would you expect to find with this object?

8. Putting the object in the context of place and time

- If you were an archaeologist, where would you expect to find it?
- "This was found in..... granny's kitchen, an Egyptian tomb, the foundations of a building, a garden....." What clue does this give about where and / or when it was used?

9. Drama

- Do a mime to communicate to the rest of the class what the object was used for
- In groups of 3-4, improvise a short play to demonstrate to the rest of the class the use of the object

10. Restitution

- Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery has a collection of ancient Egyptian objects which the Egyptian government would like us to return them for display in Cairo Museum. Should we send them back?

Advantages of the 'Discovery Box' Approach to Handling Objects

1. Encourages pupil participation and collaboration
2. Develops skills of:
 - Observation
 - Use of evidence
 - Speaking and listening, recording-drawing, writing, reading, measuring
 - Discussion and communication
 - Collaborative drama
 - Predicting
 - Estimating
 - Hypothesising
 - Comparing