



Ancient *Egypt* Year 7 – Teacher Information

This program for schools is made possible through the partnership between the Department for Education and Child Development and the South Australian Museum. It is part of Outreach Education, a team of DECD educators seconded to public organisations.

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Curriculum *links*

Investigating the ancient past

A visit to the Ancient Egyptian gallery supports the *Australian Curriculum: history* by encouraging students to engage in the study of an ancient society in ways not possible in a classroom.

Viewing actual mummies and other ancient artefacts involves emotions as well as academic observation. Students will enhance their research into the legacies of ancient Egypt. They will also gain valuable, first-hand insights into how historians and archaeologists investigate history. They will expand their understanding of the range of sources that can be used in a historical investigation (including archaeological and written sources) and discover the importance of conserving the remains of the past, using examples from ancient Egypt.



Timeline *information*

The Egyptian exhibition covers a range of periods and sites from ancient Egypt. Some examples are:

Pre Dynastic

Flintknife

Eastern Desert

Red & black pottery 3800–4500 BCE

Early Dynastic

No materials displayed

Old Kingdom

Tomb carving – Hesy-Ra 3rd Dynastic 2600 BCE

Granite-Cheops' pyramid 4th Dynastic 2500 BCE

Tomb carvings – Ti 5th Dynastic 2370 BCE

Beads

First Intermediate Period

No materials exhibited

Middle Kingdom

Throwing stick 12th Dynastic 1800 BCE

Mummified hawk

Second Intermediate Period

No materials exhibited

New Kingdom

Picture of Akhenaten 18th Dynastic 1350 BCE

Parade of Hozremkeb 18th Dynastic 1300 BCE

Pillar (Rameses II – Usertesen II) 18–19th Dyn 1300 BCE

Stelle of Smen – Tau I 18th Dynastic 1350 BCE

Memorial Slab -Tuthomosis III 18th Dynastic 1500 BCE

Later Period

Coffin of Nekht-Asar 30th Dynastic 380 BCE

Ptolemaic Period

Mummy of Renpit Nefert 300 BCE

Nubian Mummy 300 BCE

(copy) Rosetta Stone 196 BCE

Background information

The items in the collection have come from a range of sources which include official archaeological collections and copies from other museums (well documented), as well as private donations (not always well documented). Items in the Museum's collections and this exhibition reflect the importance and effort the ancient Egyptians put into religion and preparation for the afterlife. Most of the objects displayed are genuine artefacts although some are casts of originals and are labelled accordingly. Many of these objects have modern equivalents and students can be asked to find the objects and name the equivalent.

The Red Syenite Column

This column, which stands in the foyer, just inside the entrance of the South Australian Museum, was presented to the Museum in 1891 by the Egyptian Exploration Fund. Early in 1892 a letter was received from the Egyptian Exploration Fund indicating that the President and committee desired, on behalf of the Society, to present to the National Museum of South Australia an inscribed column which was described as 'two large fragments (155 cm and 200 cm respectively) of an inscribed column from the ruins of the Great Temple of Harshefi, made from the red granite of Syene, Rameses II, 19th Egyptian Dynasty, circa 1320–1200 BCE'.

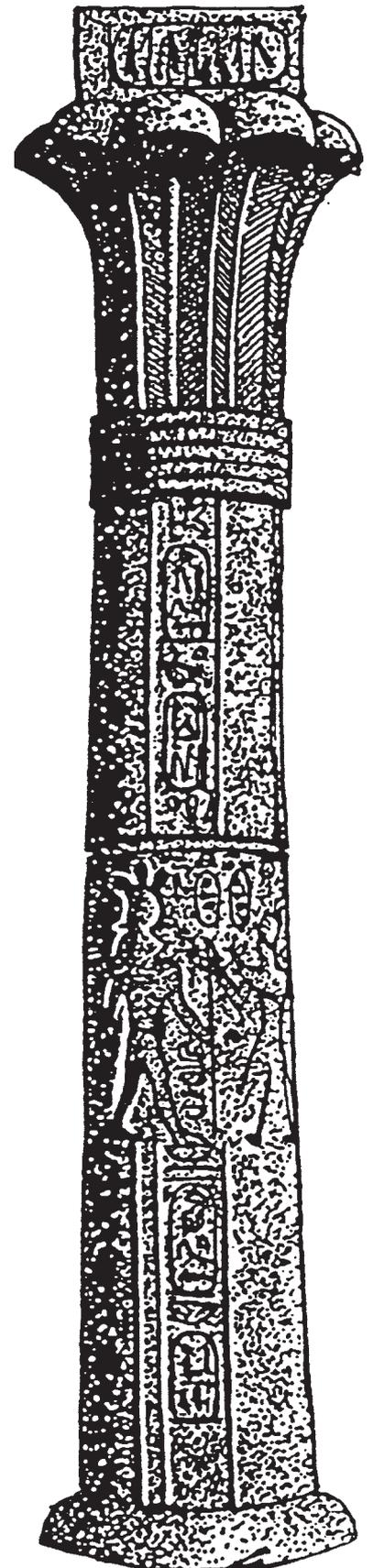
The temple in which the column originally stood was re-constructed by Rameses II in honour of the ram-headed god Harshefi. The column shows the king making an offering to Harshefi.

After the death of Rameses II in 1225 BCE, his son Merneptah took this and other pillars from the Great Temple of Harshefi in upper Egypt, and set them up in another building which he erected to the gods at Heracleopolis.

When found, the top of the column (capital) was missing. A mould was taken of a similar column, from the same site, which had been presented to the British Museum. A capital was reproduced from this mould in South Australian granite soon after the column arrived and a few years later the column was erected just outside the Museum.

The Collection

A large proportion of the exhibits in the South Australian Museum's Egyptian Room (including the coffin and mummy of Renpit Nefert) were secured for the South Australian Museum by the Rev WR Fletcher shortly before his death in 1894. The murals in the Egyptian Room were painted by Mr HT Condon, Curator of Birds, in 1940.



Treasures for the dead

The objects displayed from daily life are from tombs and were intended to give the deceased all the comforts they would need in the afterlife.

These objects and the pictures on tomb walls are the best records of the daily lives of the ancient Egyptians. The types of personal articles displayed are cloth (linen, cotton, silk), wooden objects (various uses), decorative objects (make-up, jewellery) and food (both real and pictures).

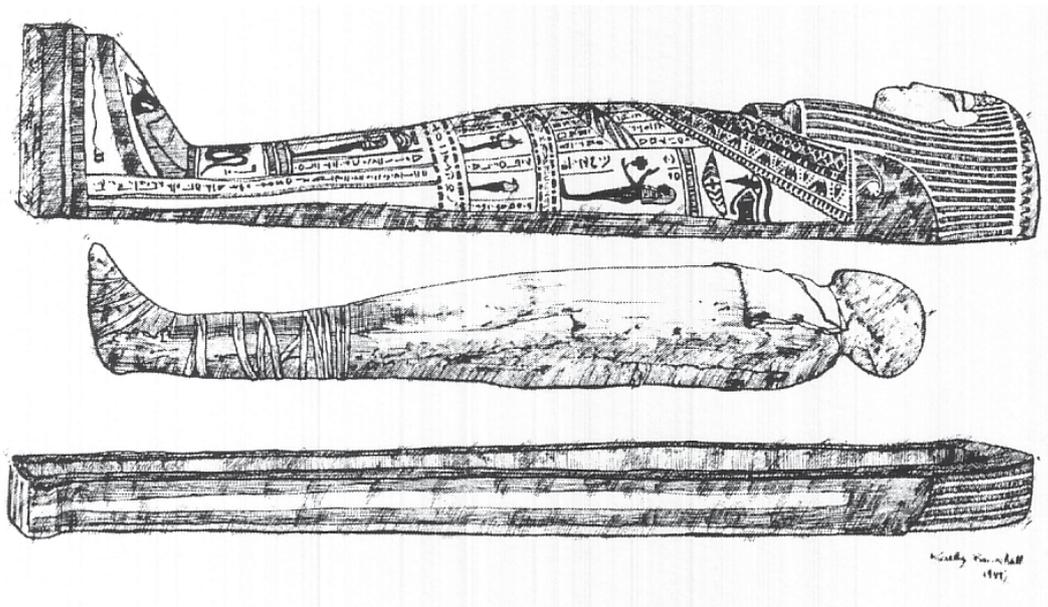
Making a mummy

One important aspect of the belief in an afterlife was the thought that the spirit would need a physical body to which it could return. Various methods of mummification were used over the years. They depended on drying the body and using preservatives.

In many cases, the viscera were removed, and sometimes dehydrated, wrapped and placed in Canopic jars. Often the jar has the head of a god who protects the particular organs inside. Copies of Canopic jars are in the male mummy case.

The method of embalming and tomb preparation depended on the wealth of the deceased. The two mummies displayed show obvious differences in wealth. The (red) male mummy from Nubia was relatively poor and came from an area where bodies were often buried together.

Renpit Nefert has an elaborately painted wooden coffin which would have been an expensive item, the wood being imported. She was also found with many costumes and other personal artefacts.



Magic

Tomb robbers and other hazards meant the safety of the body could not be ensured, so magical substitutes were provided. Often these were 'Ka' statues, named after the Ka, one of the three spirits believed liberated at death. It was believed the spirit could rest in the Ka statue if the owner's mummified body had been destroyed.

Animals were also mummified. These were usually animals sacred to a particular god. Examples are the cats, kestrel (hawk) and Nile cod.

Writing

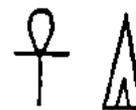
The display which deals with writing includes information about the Rosetta stone and some tools used by scribes (the official Egyptian writers). Papyrus is not displayed but pottery fragments are.

These were used as cheap 'note paper' for memos, etc. Not all Egyptians were taught to write. In fact, only carefully selected boys were usually chosen to learn to copy the intricate picture writing called Hieroglyphics.

Pictures could represent either words, letters or combinations of letters. Some common sign combinations are:



Son of Ra (the sun god)



Giver of life

Gods

The Egyptians worshipped a large number of gods – some 2000 are recorded. Many of these were of minor importance but the better known gods were often 'state' gods. Some of these are shown in the paintings and statues in the exhibition.

Anubis	god of embalmers
Osiris	god of the underworld and fertility
Isis	the Queen goddess or mother
Nut	the sky goddess
Shu	the god of air and light
Geb	the god of earth
Ra	sun god

A	B	D	F	G
H	I	K	M	N
P	Q	R	S	T
W	Y	CH	DJ	SH
TJ	King of upper & lower Egypt	The good god	Sun, day	Daylight



Gods

Most of the gods are easy to see in the paintings, but the carved hawk with its wings protecting the statue of the seated Pharaoh, and the cow representation of the sky goddess on the western wall are often overlooked.

Burial

Hesy-Ra was a scribe. People who were able to read and write were important. In addition, Hesy-Ra holds a staff representing his high status even amongst this privileged class. The label associated with these panels gives this information. Evidence of the wealth of Lady Renpit Nefert is shown in the artistic work in painting the coffin, and the better quality linen of her wrappings.

Lifestyles

Look for make-up on both men and women, decorations on artefacts and paintings. The wooden object referred to is a boomerang. It was used for bird hunting.

The Timeline

The timeline case in the south-western corner of the exhibition places a number of the exhibits into a chronological context. Other items in the exhibition are grouped according to function.

