

Ancient Egyptian Art and Culture

The Albany Institute's collection of art and artifacts from ancient Egypt and its two mummies provide students with an opportunity to learn about ancient Egypt hieroglyphs and symbols; funerary object, religious practices; and culture and customs of daily life.

New York State Standards:

Elementary and Intermediate

The Visual Arts – Standards 1, 2, 3, 4

Social Studies – Standards 2, 3, 4

ELA – Standards 1, 3, 4

Pre-Visit Lesson

For Grades 3 – 8

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

Discover the difference between a relic and an artifact

Reference Art, English and Social Studies to complete activity

Think critically about objects

Teacher planning:

Time required: 45 minutes

Materials/Resources: Worksheet (available on website), markers/crayons, chalkboard, pencils, Ancient Egyptian books or pictures.

Preparation: Study the characteristics of Ancient Egyptian Art and historical objects.

Activity 1: Start a discussion with students about art and historical objects from Ancient Egypt. Begin a list on the chalkboard of the different characteristics the class can name. Some example characteristics: Old, symbolic, colorful, stone, decayed.

Next, talk about the characteristics of a relic and artifact. (Allow students to define the terms and guide them to the real meanings.)

Artifact: Something hand-made

Relic: Preserved human or animal body part

How are they different?

Can the students name any examples of a relic or an artifact?

What characteristics do they share with art and historical objects?

Which is more valuable, a relic or an artifact?

The above questions can be used as rhetorical thought-provoking questions to prepare for the below activity or can be used to lead the students to understand what a relic and an artifact are.

Give each student a [worksheet](#). Ask them to follow the directions and draw an artifact and a relic, using objects from today found 500 years from now. Remind them they must explain why they drew each object and defend their choices. After the students have completed the lesson, choose a few to share their responses. Allow the entire class to decide if each is really an artifact or a relic.

Assessment: Students may be evaluated on their differentiation between artifacts and relics and class participation

Optional Closure Activity: Have students create an Ancient Egyptian artifact sculpture.

New York Curriculum Alignment

Elementary and Intermediate:

The Visual Arts – Standards 1, 2, 3, 4

Social Studies – Standards 1, 3, 4

ELA – Standards 1, 3, 4

Post-Visit Lesson

For Grades 3 – 8

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

Apply knowledge gained from the Albany Institute's presentation of Ancient Egypt collection.

Be creative and relate the present to the past

Relate to an ancient culture and understand their quality of living.

Teacher planning:

Time required: 45 minutes

Materials/Resources: Worksheet (available on website), markers/crayons, chalkboard, pencils, Ancient Egyptian books or pictures.

Preparation: Study the characteristics of Ancient Egyptian Art and historical objects.

Activity 1: Discuss the experience and the artifacts the students saw during the Ancient Egyptian Art and Culture tour at the Albany Institute. Would the objects be useful in contemporary society? Can they relate the objects to their own lives? What kinds of people would have owned them in Ancient Egypt? What profession were they?

Think about what a day in the life of an Ancient Egyptian was like. What objects would be used? What would the landscape and climate be like?

Use [worksheet 2](#). Allow students to be creative and imagine what it really would be like to live in Ancient Egypt. Prompt them with descriptive words and images from website resources found on www.albanyinstitute.org.

Assessment: Students may be evaluated on their differentiation between artifacts and relics and class participation

Optional Closure Activity: Have students perform as they Ancient Egyptian citizen they described. Use traditional dress, objects and terms.

New York Curriculum Alignment

Elementary and Intermediate:

The Visual Arts – Standards 1, 2, 3, 4

Social Studies – Standards 1, 3, 4

ELA – Standards 1, 3, 4

GLOSSARY

AFTERLIFE TERMS

Afterlife- The Egyptian concept of the afterlife was a complex one. While the body remained in its coffin, other aspects of the person such as the ba, ka, and akh moved within the realms of heaven and earth.

Ba- Usually depicted as a human-headed bird, the ba represented one aspect of the human being. It was free to leave the body after death and move in the afterlife, and to return at will.

Ka- One form of the human "soul," the ka was viewed by the Egyptians as a spiritual double which continued to exist after death among the living. The ka received the offerings given to the deceased at the temples and tombs.

Akh-The akh was the eternal part of the spirit, which existed forever. The akh went into the heavens and circled the stars.

Ma'at-The Egyptian word for "what is right." It includes the idea of truth instead of lies, and a good balance instead of evil chaos. Ma'at is also the name of an ancient Egyptian goddess who wears a feather on her head. This feather is balanced against the heart of a person who died before they pass into the afterlife. If the heart remains as light as the feather, the person can move into the afterlife.

Book of the Dead- A collection of spells for a person who had recently died. Papyrus rolls, containing the name of the person who died, were made up of this collection of spells with the dead person's name inserted at appropriate points.

SELECTED GODS AND GODDESSES

Anubis- God of mummification. He is usually shown with the head of a jackal and the body of a man. He is often shown in paintings leading the deceased to the "weighing of the heart ceremony."

Horus- Originally a falcon god of the sky, Horus became associated with the role of the king early in Egyptian history. Later he was connected with Osiris as his son and the avenger of his death. He is usually depicted as a falcon or a falcon-headed man.

Isis-The wife of Osiris and mother of Horus, Isis is usually depicted as a woman with the hieroglyph for the word throne on her head. She is often shown in Egyptian art as mourning her husband Osiris or nursing her son Horus.

Nephtys- Sister of Isis who helped bring all the pieces of Osiris together after his death. She protects the bodies of deceased persons, along with Isis, Neith, and Selket.

Osiris- Supreme god of the underworld, Osiris was associated with kingship. As a king who died and was returned to life through mummification, he represented all who had died, and especially a deceased pharaoh. He is usually shown as a mummified man with a crown and the crook and flail of kingship.

Sons of Horus-These were the four minor deities who guarded the organs (lungs, stomach, liver, intestines) which were removed from the body and embalmed during mummification. They were usually portrayed with the heads of different creatures: Imsety, human-headed; Duamutef, jackal-headed; Hapy, ape-headed; and Qebesenuf, falcon-headed.

Thoth- God of the moon and of writing, wisdom, and learning. Thoth was depicted as an ibis-headed deity, or in the shape of an ibis or baboon. He was often depicted in scenes showing the "weighing of the heart ceremony", where he recorded the verdict of the judges.

SYMBOLS

Ankh- Looking like a cross with a loop on top, the ankh was the symbol for eternal life. It is often seen in the hands of the gods in tomb paintings.

Cartouche- Shaped like an oval loop, the cartouche was a way of separating hieroglyphics from the rest of the words that were written. Hieroglyphics are written inside the oval, which showed that these symbols stood for a person's name.

Scarab- Another name for the dung beetle. The beetle rolls a ball of dung across the ground, and lays its eggs inside. Eventually the eggs hatch, and young beetles emerge. The ancient Egyptians considered the scarab lucky, and some believed that a scarab moved the sun across the sky.

Shen- A symbol, shaped somewhat like a squished circle. The symbol meant "for all eternity" to the ancient Egyptians.

WRITING TERMS

Hieroglyphic-The primary script of ancient Egypt. It was used for inscriptions on monuments and tombs. The word hieroglyphic means "sacred carved sign."

Hieratic-A cursive script based on hieroglyphics and used as handwriting by scribes in ancient Egypt.

Demotic-A cursive script used in the later years of ancient Egypt. Found on the Rosetta stone and used to first crack the "mystery" of hieroglyphics.

MISCELLANEOUS

Natron- A natural salt composed of sodium chloride (common salt) and sodium bicarbonate, which is similar to baking soda. Together they are very effective for drying out the body during mummification.

BRIEF HISTORY

Egypt was a powerful nation, a 1000 years before the Minoans of Crete built their palace at Knossos, and about 900 years before the Israelites followed Moses out of Egypt. Egyptian civilization continued for more than 3,000 years. Its geographical location, deserts surrounding the Valley of the Nile, discouraged hostile invasions. The Mediterranean Sea, to the North, encouraged commerce and trade.

In 3,100 BC the civilization stabilized and flourished when Upper and Lower Egypt were united under a single monarch, the first of 30 dynasties of pharaohs. A few centuries after the unification, during the period of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties III-VIII) from about 2,700 BC to 2,150 BC, a strong political and social society grew. Egyptians regularly traded cargoes of lentils, textiles, papyrus to other countries in exchange for copper, bronze, gold, silver, ivory, rare woods, turquoise, and exotic animal skins.

Arts and sciences were also studied and explored by Egyptian citizens. A system of writing called hieroglyphics was introduced, promoting the creation of stories, poems, and religious texts. The Egyptians created mathematical methods for calculating taxes, land surveys, weights and measures, distance, and time. They also explored astronomy, engineering, and medical sciences.

Egyptian architectural accomplishments were spectacular and remain so today. Belief in life after death led to the construction of huge permanent temples and tombs with massive stone walls covered with hieroglyphics and pictorial carvings and flat roofs. Other striking structures included pyramids and obelisks. Fine art kept pace with architecture and is distinctive in concept and character. Sculpture featured strong massive forms, while the highly stylized paintings were brightly colored and intricately designed.

The Egyptians were social and light hearted and among the most industrious of ancient peoples. Enamored of life on earth, they envisioned death merely as its continuance and prepared for it elaborately. The Egyptians beliefs about death and the after life combined with the dry climate in Egypt are largely responsible for the preservation of many aspects of their civilization for scholars to study today.

EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

During the late 18th and early 19th century, research of Egyptian history began. People became fascinated with ancient cultures, including Greece, Rome, and Egypt. During the French Revolution in 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte and his troops, found themselves stranded in Egypt after defeating the British army. Though they were trapped in Egypt for 3 years, Napoleon had brought 150 scientists with him to study Egypt. Much of our knowledge of the country came out of their studies.

Since that time, ancient Egypt has interested archaeologists and historians from all over the world. For the last 200 years, excavations and research in Egypt continues and understanding of the culture comes from the study of tomb paintings, artifacts, mummies, and hieroglyphics. Various scientific breakthroughs have led to greater understanding of the culture of Egypt under the pharaohs that lasted for almost 3000 years.

Carbon-14 Dating One way scientists are able to date mummies and artifacts from ancient Egypt is through carbon-14 dating. This process measures the amount of carbon-14, a chemical element made from living material, in an artifact. This includes wood, linen and human remains. After a living material has died, the amount of carbon-14 gradually declines over time. By measuring the amount of carbon-14 in an artifact it is possible to know how long ago it lived.

The Rosetta Stone During the occupation of Egypt by Napoleon, various structures were built to provide soldiers with places to live and train. Near the town of Rosetta, a young French soldier found a block of stone which contained three bands of writing in three different languages. One language, ancient Greek, was known to modern scholars. The second, demotic, was not familiar to them, and the third, hieroglyphics, was a complete unknown. It was first deciphered through comparing the known and unknown languages. Many linguists (people who study languages) and historians attempted to translate hieroglyphics. Although it took almost 25 years, a scientist named Jean Champollion finally broke the code of the hieroglyphics by matching up the names of the pharaohs in their cartouches with the names in Demotic and Greek, a process of learning the phonetic sounds of different images and the words represented by individual symbols. The Rosetta Stone is now on display in the British Museum in London.

X-Rays and CT-Scans Many people are familiar with x-rays. X-rays allow doctors to look inside the human body without making an incision. A CT (computer tomography) scanner examines objects in thin sections and displays each section or "slice" on a high-resolution, black and white television screen. These images can then be transferred to film and viewed like conventional x-rays with a light box. When viewing photographs of CT scans note that the dense area such as bone appear white, and areas that are not dense, like air, are black. Structures such as resin, used in mummification, as varying shades of grey. The mummies at the Albany Institute were x-rayed and scanned in 1988 (9).

Scientific Study The Manchester Museum in Manchester, England, has a large collection of mummies, animals, and artifacts from ancient Egypt. Over the last 30 years they have begun to try to use science to learn more about the mummies and their lives. Recently the museum has begun the Egyptian Mummy Tissue Bank. This bank will hold tissue samples from collection of Egyptian mummies worldwide. The tissue can be used for various studies, including trying to discover the cause of a disease called schistosomiasis. This disease still affects as many as 300 million people in the world today. The Albany Institute's mummies have already been included in the tissue bank.

TIMELINE

700,000 BC

Earliest evidence for hominids in Egypt.

500,000 BC

Evidence for lower Paleolithic culture in Egypt.

250,000 - 90,000 BC

Earliest evidence found of buildings in Egypt -(Homo Erectus).

100,000 - 30,000 BC

Hunter and gatherer society (Homo-neathanderthalensis).

60,000 BC

The Nile defines present course.

30,000 - 13,000 BC (?)

Humans enter the Americas.

15,000 - 10,000 BC

Cave paintings at Lascaux (France) created.

13,000 - 9,000 BC

Evidence of ritual burial in Egypt. Some evidence for agriculture in Egypt.

10,000 - c. 5,500 BC

Evidence for more consistent settlement along the banks of the Nile.

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8000 BC+

Wheat and barley were cultivated in the Near East. This is the most important development in ancient civilization.

7000 BC+

Flax is cultivated in Syria and Turkey for fibers and seed. Agriculture in the Americas.

5110 BC

Domesticated animal in Nubia.

4000 - 3000 BC

Predynastic Period

3500 BC

Possible Sumerians use the cuneiform alphabet on clay tablets. People begin living in cities.

3200 BC

Approximate date for earliest hieroglyphics.

3150 BC

Possible date for unified Egypt.

3000 BC

Late Predynastic Period evidence individual rulers of Egypt. Evidence for Egyptian trade (especially myrrh for incense) with other lands.

2929 - 2770 BC

Early Dynastic Period - Archaic Period - Egypt is definitely united.

Dynasty I

Dynasty II

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2800 BC

The first stage of Stonehenge built in present day England. The horse is domesticated in Asia.

2750 BC

First recorded exploration expedition from Egypt.

2600 BC

The wheel comes into use in the Indus Valley.

2575 - 2134 BC

Old Kingdom - theocracy develops - Pharaohs were gods on earth.

Dynasties III - VIII

Dynasty III

King Djoser's step pyramid (designed by Imhotep) built at Saqqara. It is the first monumental building of stone.

Dynasty IV

Pyramids of Khufu, Khafre, and Mankare built at Giza. The sphinx is sculpted from rock. Astronomers create a solar calendar based on 365 Days

Dynasties V and VI

Powerful and wealthy individuals have mastaba tombs.

2500 BC

Polynesians begin migrating through the South Pacific.

2400 BC

Date of earliest papyrus scroll with writing.

2200 BC

Cultivation of grain and livestock in Europe.

2134 - 2040 BC

1st Intermediate Period

Dynasties IX - X

Egypt splits into provinces that war with each other. Famine results.

2000 BC

Bronze age in the Middle East.

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2040-1640 BC

Middle Kingdom

Dynasty XI - (early) XIII

Commoners practice mummification.

Dynasty XI

King Menuhotep reunites Egypt.

Dynasty XII

Lower Nubia is conquered, irrigation practiced, pyramids are built again. Literature becomes an important art form.

Dynasty XIII

The Hyksos, a foreign people settle in Egypt. Egyptians abandon Nubia.

1800 BC

Book of the Dead appears in tombs. It contains instructions for entering the afterlife and protective spells. (we have a fragment in our exhibition).

1640 - 1532 BC

2nd Intermediate Period

Dynasties XIV-XVII

Dynasty XIV

Phoenicians and Palestinians settle in Egypt.

Dynasty XV - XVI (Hyksos)

The Hyksos usurp Egyptian Rulers, make contact with rulers of Nubia.

Dynasty XVII (Theban)

Thebes dynasty rules with the Hyksos, but then try to expel the Hyksos. Egyptian military use horse drawn chariots.

1550 BC

Last stage of Stonehenge completed.

1550 - 1070 BC

New Kingdom

Dynasties XVIII-XX

Dynasty XVIII

Thutmose the Hyksos are expelled, Nubia reconquered. Egypt is unified once again, and then expands to control Syria and Palestine. Kings begin hiding their tombs - separate from their mortuary temples in the Valley of the Kings.

1500 BC

The Ebers Papyrus is written recording methods of diagnosis, treatment, spells and recipes for medicines. Earliest metalwork in South America.

1485 BC

After ruling as regent for her stepson Thutmose III, Hatshepsut declares herself Pharaoh of Egypt.

1384 BC

In China, writing is well established by this time.

1380 BC (circa)

Amarna period - Akhenaten and Nefertiti establish and enforce a monotheistic religion based upon the solar disk, the Aten. Visual arts and literature become much more naturalistic. Tutankhamun restores traditional religion.

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1325 BC

Tutankhamun entombed.

Dynasty XIX

First Ramesside Egyptians fight with the Hittites and then make peace, then conquer Israel.

1295 BC

The Fall of Jericho.

1290 BC

Ramesses II succeeds to the throne. He was one of the most powerful pharaohs in Egyptian history. He lived to be at least 90 years old, commissioned many building projects, include Abu Simbel and fathered an estimated 400 children.

Dynasty XX

Second Ramesside Ramesses III repels dislocated tribes from Asia Minor (aka Sea Peoples). Moses and the Israelites exodus from Egypt. Time of political and economic decline. Priests gain power.

1200 BC

The Middle East enters the Iron Age.

1070 - 712 BC

3rd Intermediate Period

Dynasty XXI

Tanite Egypt is divided - partly ruled by a Dynasty in the Nile delta which shares power with the high priests of Amun at Thebes. Egyptians trade for iron and iron tools. Secret reburial of royal mummies from plundered tombs.

Dynasty XXII-XXIII

Lybian Egypt is further fragmented - many dynasties, including those with rulers of Lybian descent coexist. Art declines.

Dynasty XXIV Saite

776 BC

First Olympic Games in Greece.

712- 332 BC

Late Period (?)

Dynasty XXV Kushite

Napatan Egypt is reunited under Kushite (Nubian) invaders, art and architecture once again thrive, until Assyrians invade.

Dynasty XXVI Saite

The Assyrians withdraw and kings from Sais (the western delta) rule. Greeks begin to settle in Egypt.

650 BC

First papyrus arrives in Greece from Egypt.

625 BC

First coins struck at Lydia (present day Turkey).

563 BC

Birth of Buddha.

551 BC

Confucius is born in China.

525-330 BC

Late Dynastic Period

Dynasty XXVII

First Persian Domination Acheamenid Persians invade and rule Egypt.

Dynasty XXVIII

Rebellion Persians are repelled.

Dynasty XXIX Mendesian.

Dynasty XXX

Last of the Native Egyptian Dynasties.

Dynasty XXXI

Second Persian Domination.

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447 BC

The Parthenon built in Athens.

332 BC - 395 AD

Greco-Roman Period

332-305 BC

Macedonian Rule- Alexander the Great frees Egypt from Persian rule. They declare him Pharaoh. He founds Alexandria which becomes one of the centers of learning and trade in the ancient world.

304-30 BC

Ptolemaic Dynasty - Descendants of the Greek general Ptolomy (including Cleopatra) rule, after Alexander's death, but Egyptian Style is preserved. Ptolomaic Egypt had a large empire, at times including parts of Syria, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Luby, Phonecia, and parts of other lands.

229 BC

The library at Alexandria is founded with the mission to collect all the books in the inhabited world.

146 BC

The Rosetta stone is cut. It contains writing in ancient Greek, Demotic, and hieroglyphics.

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140 BC

The Dead Sea scrolls are written.

36 BC

Earliest Mayan monuments.

30 BC

Roman Conquest - Cleopatra VII and Antony are defeated by Augustus Caesar. Major buildings are built in Egyptian style, but Greco-Roman features mix with Egyptian elements. Egypt becomes a source of wealth and grain. Occasional attacks by Ethiopians.

00

Jesus Christ, founder of Christianity born.

42

The library at Alexandria burns. 40,000 of its 70,000 volumes burn.

82

The Colosseum completed in Rome.

120

Romans build Hadrian's Wall between what is approximately present day England and Scotland.

212

All Egyptians are granted Roman Citizenship.

Post AD 300

Ascendancy of Christianity in Egypt.

570? (570-623)

Mohammed, founder of Islam born.

600 - 900

Mayan civilization reaches its height in Meso-America.

640

Arab Conquest of Egypt.

860

Vikings land in Iceland.

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950

Papermaking begins in Cairo.

1151

First use of explosives in war, in China.

1250

Block printing in Egypt.

1646

John Greaves, an Englishman publishes "A Discourse of the Pyramids in Aegypt."

1799

The Rosetta Stone is discovered by Napoleon's troops in Egypt. This becomes the key to deciphering hieroglyphics.

1870s

Reburial of royal mummies discovered.

1880

W.M.F. Petrie (1853-1920) travels to Egypt - the father of modern Egyptology develops a systematic way of excavating sites.

1895

X-Rays invented by Wilhelm Konrad Roentgen.

1909

Two mummies purchased from the Cairo Museum by Samuel Brown are taken to Albany, NY.

1922

Tutankhamen's tomb discovered and excavated by Howard Carter and Lord Carnavon.

1932

Universal Studios releases The Mummy starring Boris Karloff.

1970

Tutankhamen's artifacts tour the United States.

1988

Albany Institute of History and Art's mummies are x-rayed and CT scanned at Albany Medical Center.

1999

Discovery of a Roman cemetery at Bahariya Oasis

WEB RESOURCES

Basic Information

[Ancient Egypt](http://www.eyelid.co.uk/)

<http://www.eyelid.co.uk/>

Details about Egyptian civilization, pyramids, rulers and hieroglyphs. Contemporary etchings based on Egyptian monuments and tomb paintings are illustrated.

[Enter the Egyptian Experience](http://www.pbs.org/empires/egypt/)

<http://www.pbs.org/empires/egypt/>

Detailed information about social roles, hieroglyphs and an interactive map. Also includes a teacher resource link.

[Egyptomania](http://www.clemusart.com/archive/pharaoh/rosetta/index.html)

<http://www.clemusart.com/archive/pharaoh/rosetta/index.html>

Lots of interactive children activities including a tour, a quiz and art activities.

[Egyptian Gods and Goddesses](http://www.sk4p.net/egypt/gods.shtml)

<http://www.sk4p.net/egypt/gods.shtml>

An accurate description list of the major gods and goddesses of Ancient Egyptian culture.

[Mummy Tombs](http://www.mummytombs.com/)

<http://www.mummytombs.com/>

Facts and pictures about Egyptian mummies.

Also has interesting details worldly mummies, and contemporary news.

[Royal Mummies](http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IS/WENTE/NN_Win95/NN_Win95.html)

http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IS/WENTE/NN_Win95/NN_Win95.html

Scholarly article applying modern technology to old questions - gives a glimpse into the complicated world of Egyptology.

[Medicine in Ancient Egypt](#)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~ancmed/egypt.HTM>

An informative and sophisticated site about medicine in Ancient Egypt. You can also find out about medicine in ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

[Egyptian Sculpture](#)

http://www.widefocus.net/cairo_museum.html

Images from the collection of the Cairo Museum.

[Interactive Egypt](#)

<http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/>

Created by the British Museum, this website contains information on Egyptian life, geography, gods and goddesses, mummification, pyramids and so much more.

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Terms and Symbolism

[Animals of Ancient Egypt](#)

http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/egypt_animals.html

Learn about the sacred animals in Egyptian culture. Pictures, symbol drawings and descriptions tell of the role animals played in Egyptian society.

[Reeders Egypt Page](#)

<http://www.egyptology.com/reeder/index.html>

This page is dedicated to examining some aspects of the art, archaeology, religion and history of Egypt. Enter the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, and learn about Tekenu and Muu.

[How to Read Hieroglyphics](#)

<http://www.virtual-egypt.com/newhtml/hieroglyphics/>

A clear informative introduction on how to read hieroglyphs, from symbol meaning to direction of sentence.

Teacher Resources

[Neferchichi's Tomb](#)

<http://www.neferchichi.com/>

Find Egyptian activities and projects for students.

[Mr. Donn's Ancient History](#)

<http://members.aol.com/donnandlee/index.html#EGYPT>

A teacher created web site with lesson plans and work sheets.

[Odyssey Teacher Resource](#)

<http://carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/Teachers/index.htm>

Helps teacher incorporate museum objects into the classroom. A lesson library is also provided. [top](#)

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