

Lesson 5: Egyptian Religion and Myths (2 Days)

☐ Getting Started

In the previous lesson, you learned about the history of ancient Egypt. In this lesson, you'll delve more deeply into Egyptian religion and mythology.

Stuff You Need

- *Ancient Civilizations* by Joseph Fullman (DK Eyewitness)
- Ancient Civilization Timeline Cards
- colored pencils* (Activity 1 - optional)
- colored pencils* (Activity 3 - Option 2)
- construction paper
- note cards* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- scissors* (Activity 3 - Option 1)
- stapler* (Activity 3 - Option 2)
- tape, glue stick, or glue
- white paper* (Activity 3 - Option 2)
- World History Timeline

Ideas to Think About

- How did the environment (landforms, locations, natural resources, and climate) influence the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt?
- How does religion influence political and social systems in different cultures?
- How are the values and beliefs of various cultures reflected in their art and literature?

Things to Know

- Egyptian kings were thought to represent the gods and had great power.
- Egyptians worshiped a large number of different gods and told many different stories about the gods.
- Religion was an important part of daily life, not only for royalty and the priests of Egyptian temples but also for ordinary people.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read pages 14-17 of *Ancient Civilizations*.

You may find it helpful to pre-read this selection, paying attention to the headings, sub-headings, and images and writing down a few questions that you have about the topics covered in this reading selection. As you read, you may also wish to write down a short summary after each 2-page section. Once you have carefully read the selection, answer these questions.

1. What did Egyptians see as the relationship between Egyptian kings and the gods?

2. What did Egyptians believe was necessary for them to enter the afterlife?

3. What did Egyptians believe happened to people who could not enter the afterlife?

Activities

☐ Activity 1: The Gods of Ancient Egypt

The ancient Egyptians worshipped a large variety of gods and goddesses, who were often portrayed as being part human, part animal. Each town also had its own special god or goddess that was the guardian of that town. At the following web links, you can view images and descriptions of some of the most well-known Egyptian gods and goddesses. Choose the 4 that you find most interesting, and then complete the "Gods of Ancient Egypt" page. You can either draw a picture of the god or describe how the god was portrayed.



Ancient Egyptian Gods Gallery

www.beyonddthepage.com/link/8653/

This site from the BBC provides descriptions and art depicting 12 Egyptian gods.

**Egyptian Gods**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/8654/

This page provides an overview of 14 gods and goddesses. Click the View button to learn more about a specific one.

**Meet the Egyptian Gods**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/8655/

This page provides images and detailed descriptions for 17 Egyptian gods.

☐ **Activity 2: Ancient Egypt Timeline**

For this lesson, you will need to locate the following green timeline cards and add them to your timeline binder:

- Reign of Tuthmosis III (1490-1436 BC)
- Reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (1364-1347 BC)
- Reign of Tutankhamun (1347-1337 BC)
- Reign of Ramses III (1186-1155 BC)
- Reign of Ramses IX (1129-1111 BC)
- Libyan Ruler Shoshenq I Comes to Power (945 BC)
- Psamtek Becomes King (664 BC)

For each card, note the date on the card, find the page that includes that date in your binder, and then use tape, glue stick, or glue to attach the card above or below the line in the appropriate place.

Day 2☐ **Activity 3: Egyptian Myths**

All cultures tell stories to explain their origins and the world around them. In this activity, you'll read some ancient Egyptian myths. Look over the myths found at the following web links, and read at least two of them. (You can also search for other myths on the Internet, with a parent's assistance, or use library books or other resources to locate myths.) Then, choose one myth to focus on in more detail, and use the "Egyptian Myths" page to record ideas for the activity. Ask a parent which option you should complete.

**Egyptian Creation Myth**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/11649/

**Ancient Egyptian Mythology**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/8657/

Scroll down the page to read another account of the creation myth, and then scroll down further to read the myth of Osiris and Set.

Option 1: Egyptian Storyteller

Most people in ancient Egypt could not read and write, so stories would have been handed down from generation to generation through the oral tradition. When stories are shared in this way, each storyteller has his or her own way of telling the story and may change or add details to shorten or lengthen the story or to appeal to a particular audience. While the story remains more or less the same, storytellers make it their own by the way they choose to tell it.

For this activity, you will choose one of the myths you read online. Think about how you want to present this myth. Would you like to describe any of the characters or the setting in greater detail? Do you want to involve your audience with questions like, "And what do you suppose happened next?" Will you tell your audience a moral of the story or leave them to figure out the story's meaning on their own? Find your own style as a storyteller.

Write down some of your ideas for telling the story — you may find it helpful to use the "Egyptian Myths" activity page as a space to organize your ideas. Think about the major events in the story, and use the boxes on the activity page to write out short descriptions and key words or to sketch images that will help you organize your own version of the myth.

Once you have the myth organized as you want to tell it, you should practice telling it several times so that you will feel comfortable doing so. As you practice telling your story, you may find it helpful to write out the key points of the story on individual note cards that you can use while practicing your storytelling (or to cut apart the boxes on the "Egyptian Myths" activity page and use those as note cards) so that you don't forget any important parts of the story. Practice the story until you feel comfortable telling it out loud, using your note cards as little as possible. Remember to use your voice to convey the emotions in the story and to use hand

gestures or your body language to add emphasis. You may want to practice in front of a mirror.

When you are ready to tell your story, gather your family together, and share the story with them. Ask them what they thought about the story and if it reminds them of any other stories they have heard.

Option 2: Egyptian Picture Book

Ancient Egyptian myths were often shared through storytelling, but some of these ancient stories were written down, allowing us to study and enjoy them today. In this activity, you'll make a picture book version of an Egyptian myth that you find interesting.

First you will choose the myth. Think about how you want to retell the story and divide the story into 5-6 different scenes that are important to the story's plot and that would be good scenes to illustrate in a children's book. Use the "Egyptian Myths" activity page to sketch out ideas for how those 5-6 pages might look and to jot down ideas for the text that you might use.

Using your sketches as a guide, create your book. It should include a cover illustration with your story's title. This cover page can be glued to a piece of construction paper to form the cover of your book. You should then create one page for each scene of your story. Write out the myth in your own words along the bottom of each page and illustrate each page to show what happens in the story. Add a back cover of construction paper and staple your book together.

Share your book with a parent later in the day.

☐ **Activity 4: Egyptian Afterlife**

The Egyptians had strongly held beliefs about the afterlife and prepared the bodies of their dead in special ways. In this activity, you'll explore the physical treatment of the deceased to prepare them for the afterlife.

Write "Preparing for the Afterlife" at the top of a piece of construction paper. Cut out the images and explanations on the "Egyptian Afterlife" activity page. Place the images in the correct order and glue them onto the page, using arrows between the boxes to create a flowchart showing how embalmers prepared the bodies of those who would be entombed for burial. The bottom two boxes are blank so you can write and/or draw additional steps of the process to add to the flowchart.

Use the information on p. 16 of *Ancient Civilizations* and at the following web link for details about embalming and mummification.

**Mummification Explained**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/8658/

Read through this guide to the mummification process.

Wrapping Up

As you learned in this lesson, the kings of ancient Egypt held a great deal of power and were thought to represent the gods on Earth. Religion infused much of Egyptian life — rulers had massive tombs and temples built, priests carefully performed religious rituals each day, embalmers prepared bodies for the afterlife, and everyday Egyptians worshiped the gods. In the next lesson, you'll learn more about ordinary Egyptians.

Gods of Ancient Egypt

Directions: Choose 4 ancient Egyptian gods or goddesses, and fill in a box for each one. Either draw or describe how each god was depicted. In the Details section, provide additional information about what the god was known for or other interesting facts about the god.

Name: _____

God of _____

Details:

Name: _____

God of _____

Details:

Name: _____

God of _____

Details:

Name: _____

God of _____

Details:

EGYPTIAN MYTHS

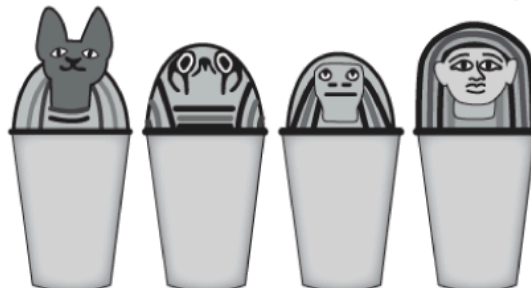
Instructions: Use the boxes below to write or sketch ideas for how you will retell an Egyptian myth. Each box should represent a significant scene, event, or detail from the myth that you might use in your storytelling or your illustrated book.

The Egyptian Afterlife

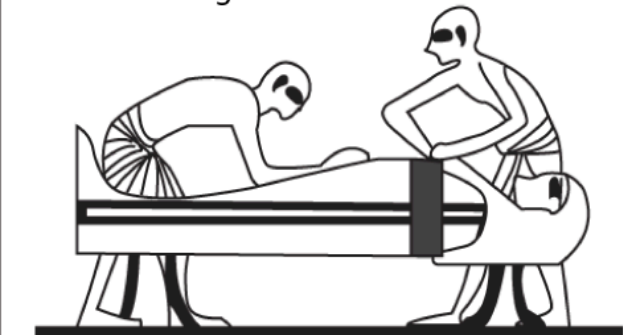
The body was covered in natron salt for about 40 days.



The intestines, lungs, liver and stomach were embalmed and placed in canopic jars.



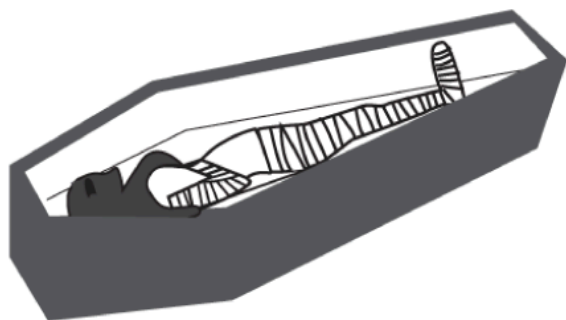
The internal organs were removed.



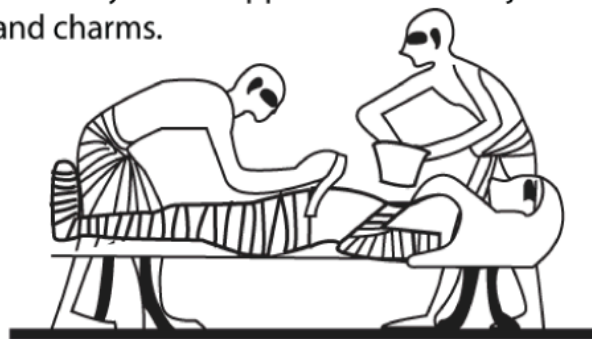
The body was washed with water from the Nile River.



The mummy was placed in its coffin.



The body was wrapped in linen with jewels and charms.



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Getting Started

✿ Ideas to Think About

- How did the environment (landforms, locations, natural resources, and climate) influence the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt?
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Things to Know

- Egyptian kings were thought to represent the gods and had great power.
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- Religion was an important part of daily life, not only for royalty and the priests of Egyptian temples but also for ordinary people.

⦿ Skills

- Analyze the development of early civilizations in Africa, c. 8000 BCE to 600 CE. (SS)
- Trace the development and assess the achievements in the arts, sciences, and technology of early river civilizations, including those around the Nile (Egypt) and Tigris-Euphrates (Mesopotamia) rivers. (SS)
- Analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. (SS)
- Understand the relationship between religion and the social and political order in Mesopotamia and Egypt. (SS)
- Discuss the main features of Egyptian art and architecture. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will explore the roles of religion and mythology in ancient Egyptian society.

Reading and Questions

1. What did Egyptians see as the relationship between Egyptian kings and the gods?

Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was half man and half god. He or she was also Egypt's highest religious leader.

2. What did Egyptians believe was necessary for them to enter the afterlife?

Their name had to be written down, their body had to be mummified, and they had to have lived a good life with hearts free from sin.

3. What did Egyptians believe happened to people who could not enter the afterlife?

They were eaten by a monster called Ammut the Devourer, and they would then cease to exist.

Activities**Activity 1: The Gods of Ancient Egypt**

Your child will explore 4 Egyptian gods or goddesses that he finds most interesting and record information about them on an activity page. He can either draw a picture of the god or describe how the god was portrayed. Web links are provided to help with this activity.

Activity 2: Ancient Egypt Timeline

For this lesson, your child will locate seven green timeline cards and add them to his binder. The dates on the cards should correspond to the dates on the timeline pages where your child has affixed each card.

Day 2**Activity 3: Egyptian Myths**

In this activity, your child will focus on one Egyptian myth after reading two or more from online sources provided or from library resources. (With parental assistance, he can also search online for other Egyptian myths to read.) Option 1 allows your child to take on the role of an Egyptian storyteller and tell his own version of one of the Egyptian myths. This option does not require writing or visual art but does require the student to memorize and customize the myth of his choice and to perform it as a storyteller for family members. Option 2 allows your child to create a picture book retelling of the myth, complete with illustrations. This option may appeal to students who enjoy writing and art or those who are not as fond of public speaking. Both options will use the same organizer to help your child pull together his ideas for the myth.

Option 1: Egyptian Storyteller

In this option, your child will retell an Egyptian myth, making the story his own while continuing to stay true to the broad outline of the myth. Your child should practice telling the story until he is comfortable doing so and then perform the story for family and, if he likes, friends. Be an enthusiastic and attentive audience for your child's storytelling.

Option 2: Egyptian Picture Book

In this option, your child will create a picture book version of an Egyptian myth. It should have a cover illustration with the story's title and then one page for each scene of the story. Each page should contain both text and illustrations. Encourage him to share this picture book with others.

Activity 4: Egyptian Afterlife

In this activity, your child will explore how Egyptians prepared bodies for the afterlife. He will then create a flowchart showing what Egyptians did to embalm a body and prepare it for the Next World. Using the 2 blank boxes, your child could add more steps to the flowchart based on the information in the book and on the website provided. This answer key provides the steps for the boxes provided; the content of your child's steps and their placement in the flowchart will vary.

Answer Key:

1. The body was washed with water from the Nile River.
2. The internal organs were removed.
3. The intestines, lungs, liver and stomach were embalmed and placed in canopic jars.
4. The body was covered in natron salt for about 40 days.
5. The body was wrapped in linen with jewels and charms.

6. The mummy was placed in its coffin.

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- After reading about some of the many gods that Egyptians worshipped, why do you think Akhenaten's attempt to have people worship only one god failed? (Answers may vary, but your child may mention that each village had its own guardian god or that people may have had a favorite god that they worshipped.)
- What did you think about the Egyptian myths? Did they remind you of any other stories you have read?
- How do ancient Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife differ from our own?

Things to Review

- Review your child's activity page about the Egyptian gods.
- Review your child's timeline.
- Enjoy your child's retelling of an Egyptian myth.
- Review your child's "Egyptian Afterlife" page for accuracy.