



Egyptian Tomb Art: Expressions of Religious Beliefs

Curriculum Unit 85.06.07
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Teaching world civilization to ninth graders is an experience akin to running a marathon, especially if the curriculum begins with the paleolithic and neolithic periods and concludes with the Renaissance. As with any survey course, the temptation is to walk through the Old and New Stone Ages; skip through the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, Greece and Rome; jog through the Middle Ages; and “pour on the steam” to get through the Renaissance. The result is an exhausted teacher and a somewhat overwhelmed and confused class. As my students and I recently reviewed the year’s notes, we looked back through a mountain range of material to discover that in our efforts to reach the finish line, we had only scratched the surface or hit the peaks and that there were wide, appealing valleys between those peaks that we never noticed in our race to reach modernity.

To remedy this problem of superficial coverage of early world cultures, I am planning to identify a natural area of emphasis within each unit. One way to draw students into these cultures is to make them active participants in, rather than passive recipients of, their own learning. To illustrate this approach, I have chosen Egypt as my case study because it has become clear to me over the past five years that any attempt to present the history of Egypt must place its emphasis on art. ¹ Through analysis of Egyptian tomb art, students will find a different and, I believe, more effective way into Egyptian culture. While Egypt lends itself to an interdisciplinary blending of history, practices, and expressions, the real change in this unit is the methodology and study techniques. Once used for the study of Egypt, this approach can be applied to other cultures as well.

Because the ancient Egyptian nobility buried so many of their everyday belongings with them in their tombs, teachers and students are afforded the opportunity to analyze a vast array of material objects in our efforts to piece together not only the history but also the beliefs, the “values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions” ² of this ancient society. New Haven teachers and students are fortunate to have the Peabody Museum’s Egyptian Collection and the Yale Art Gallery’s Egyptian exhibit at our disposal. For several years, visits to these displays have been high points in our study of Egypt, as well-informed docents pointed out curious facts about the objects behind glass.

From now on, viewing Egyptian tomb art will take on new dimensions. Rather than being led around the outside of Egyptian culture, students will learn how to experience the culture on an artifact level. Though they may not be able to handle most museum objects, students will be able to view objects and learn from them in a way they never can from simply reading about art or reading about culture. In his article entitled “Mind in

Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” Jules Prown, Professor of The History of Art at Yale University, proposed a method of object analysis which helps students experience the art rather than just look at it. I intend to engage my students actively in the process of “encounter(ing) the past at first hand” by giving them “direct sensory experience of surviving historical events.”³ As Prown points out, “artifacts are historical events. They are like things that happened in the past, but unlike other historical events, they continue to exist in the present.”⁴ They can be reexperienced. Through them, history can be relived.” Undoubtedly, any student who can handle an artifact made three to four thousand years ago will have a personal experience that cannot be recreated with words, numbers, or pictures. As teachers, we all know the joy of working with students whose interest has been aroused.

STRATEGIES AND LESSONS

Once students’ interest is heightened, there are almost no limits to the depth of their involvement in trying to ascertain information about the objects. When students are stimulated to ask probing and insightful questions, then the obvious role of the teacher is that of the Socratic questioner. The teacher does not just field questions but responds with information that enables students to probe deeper and ask even more questions. To provide information to students and to stimulate student interest in the study, teachers must have an in-depth knowledge of the cultures behind the objects. This section of the unit provides a sketch of that background information on Egyptian religious beliefs, references for where to find additional information, and a description of the Prown technique.

It is important to note, however, that the historical sketch which follows was derived from almost two centuries worth of object analysis and manuscript study. We did not inherit this knowledge, but rather pieced it together slowly and carefully through intensive long-term study of object analysis. On a small scale, this is exactly what I want my students to do, and thus by using Prown’s method, to teach them that real learning comes from their own desire to find out information. The method of object analysis begins with the object, the thing which stimulates interest and provides the desire to learn.

Although fairly well-trained to learn by traditional methods such as reading books and working with numbers, most of us are “functionally”⁵ illiterate when it comes to interpreting information encoded in objects.”⁵ Simply, we lack training in how we look at objects. Jules Prown’s system of object analysis teaches us to follow a series of stages and substages as we focus our attention on one facet of an artifact at a time. By following his recommended procedure of description, induction and speculation about objects, we learn to extract values, attitudes and beliefs expressed by each object and we discover things about the object that invite further research.

Out of the vast number of objects displayed at Peabody, Yale Art Gallery, or any of the other galleries or museums students might visit, I have chosen to concentrate on four categories of objects which reflect beliefs essential to Egyptian culture, especially to its ideas about religion and the afterlife. Foremost in any consideration of Egypt are tombs and mummies. No serious discussion of the meaning of Egyptian life can occur without focusing on these phenomena. Since students are familiar with tombs, especially pyramids, and mummies, starting with these objects will create a context in which students can share their knowledge. Less familiar to students are shawabtis, small carved servant figures commonly found in exhibits of Egyptian tomb art. They are significant because they tie into beliefs about the Egyptian social structure., ideas about work

both on earth and in the afterlife, and religious beliefs. Finally, all Egyptian collections contain samples of canopic jars, used to preserve four major organs of the mummified body. These jars have special meaning for the study of Egyptian beliefs about resurrection and immortality. The next step in the process of object analysis is to make the connection between these objects and the beliefs they represent.

Belief in Immortality

From the earliest times and continuing throughout the entire period of dynastic history (3100 B.C.—31 B.C.), Egyptians believed that people existed after the death of their bodies. The Egyptians believed that a human consisted of at least three parts: the body (or “ba”), the soul, and the ghost (the image, double, genius, or the “ka”). It was very important to ensure that the “ka” be reunited with the body after death. To this end, Egyptians mummified their bodies in order to preserve the body so that the “ka” would recognize it when it was ready to rejoin the body. Egyptians also built indestructible tombs to preserve the body and all its belongings and to prevent robbers from gaining access to the riches of the tombs. Included in the deceased’s possessions were servant figures and household goods.

Not only did the Egyptians believe in an afterlife, but they thought they would continue to live as they had been accustomed to on earth. Numerous items attest to preparation for this continuation of earthly life, from grave pots containing food, tools, war flints, and other objects found in neolithic graves ⁶ to the wealth of material objects found in later tombs. It is interesting to note that while they were sure of their life after death, it was not clear to Egyptians where and how they existed. At different times, Egyptians believed that the deceased lived in the stars, in the trees, in other life forms, in a kingdom of light called “duat,” or in a place with great fields of barley. ⁷

The early Egyptian tomb and its art served religious ends only. In fact, in his study of Egyptian religion, Ziegfried Morenz states that Egyptian religion “was the womb of (its) culture.” ⁸ The idea that these cultural practices derived entirely from religious beliefs (at least at an early stage) is important.

One way to tie into the students’ understanding of these ancient practices is to discuss burial customs today. To help students understand these ancient cultural practices, discuss the meaning of death with students. Ask students to talk about practices associated with death in our culture. List the commonalities on the board and compare them to Egyptian preparations for the dead. Some of these practices may include preparing the body, holding a wake, sending flowers, having a religious service, internment of the body, serving food after the service, and placing a tombstone on the grave. The following passages will help the teacher prepare to answer questions about the objects and the practices connected with them.

The objects which most convincingly represent Egyptians’ beliefs in immortality are the tomb (especially the pyramid) and the mummy. Although they cannot be handled in the way other objects can, their very nature invites description, intellectual and emotional interaction, and speculation: pyramids for their sheer size alone, and mummies for their preservation of the earthly body.

Tombs

Most students think that Egyptians buried all their nobility in pyramids throughout the entire ancient period of their history, and, in fact, seem disappointed when they learn that King Tutankhamen was not buried in a pyramid. Scholars have pointed out that the number of Egyptians buried between the Old Empire and the Christian Epoch was between 150,000,000 and 800,000,000. It is not difficult to appreciate the reasons why Egyptians did not build tombs for the majority of their countrymen. The high cost of building and furnishing

these tombs, the toll in human lives in building them, and the scarcity of available land on which to construct large tombs are a few of the reasons only the elite built these tombs. But, from the tombs that were built, we have learned much. Although tomb building changed significantly in style and technique throughout Egyptian history, there are several characteristics of tombs which have remained the same.

The earliest tombs for the higher classes were called mastabahs (the Arabic word for “bench”). These houses of the dead were built of oblong heaps of stones over the top of room like graves which had been dug under the earth. A shaft led from the roof of the mastabah into the grave. Mastabahs ranged in size from an area of twentyfour square yards to one quarter of an acre and contained up to thirty rooms. ⁹Almost all mastabahs were originally built near Memphis on the Nile because the aristocracy wanted to be buried near their capital and their king. Since the Egyptians saw the sun disappear in the west, they believed the west contained the entrance to the hidden land or Other World. Therefore, they always buried their dead on the 450-mile stretch of land bordering the western desert. Even those people who were simply buried in the sand were buried facing the west.

Gradually, by the end of the Old Empire when the pharaoh’s power declined (2200 B.C.), Egyptians began to build their tombs nearer their homes. As they did so, the form of the tomb changed to rocktombs, which were more suitable to the higher and steeper rocky sides of the valleys located in Upper Egypt. ¹⁰The elaborate rocktombs contained impressive entrances where worship was conducted. These tombs consisted of one or more rooms and their walls were covered with reliefs or paintings with subjects related to the life of the deceased. Usually, in one corner of one room, a hidden shaft (hidden so robbers would not discover it) led to the mummy chamber. Sometimes, since several people shared the tomb, there were multiple shafts.

Beginning in the Old Empire (2686 B.C.—2181 B.C.) and continuing for about one thousand years, Egyptian middle and upper classes built pyramids. Most were constructed near Abydos, the home of Osiris, Egyptian god of the dead. Of the eighty pyramids which remain standing the most famous are located near Gizeh. Whether they were large or small, these “houses of eternity” were built to last a very long time. They manifest some important beliefs held by Egyptians. Their very construction attests to the Egyptians’ indestructible belief in the ability and supremacy of man. Furthermore, pyramids represent the Egyptians’ attempt to conquer both death and their earthly environment. ¹¹ Like other Egyptian tombs, pyramids kept their endless vigil of the deceased and all their worldly possessions.

Pyramids are not objects that students can analyze at a museum, but there are very good photographs in most textbooks and in books such as *Ancient Egypt*, published by the National Geographic Society. In addition, there are slides, excellent filmstrips and, possibly, models of pyramids available within most schools or in the audiovisual department at Winchester School. Using any of these resources I plan to ask students to describe the pyramids using the worksheet at the end of this unit. I plan to be ready to provide some details on the sizes, numbers of acres covered, blocks of stone, for these types of questions most certainly will arise. But I anticipate that the real discussion will develop around the connection between the pyramids and the beliefs held about them by the Egyptians. It is in their own search for the meaning of the pyramids that students can truly engage their minds. While a filmstrip might mention the connection, it can be no substitute for the process of thinking these ideas through on one’s own, or as a class.

Some of the first questions students can discuss, research, and/or write about are, “Why did pyramids take the shape they did?”; “What does the shape remind you of?”; “What does the shape tell you about Egyptian beliefs about the afterlife?” The shape of the pyramids symbolizes the shape of the sun’s rays. The Egyptian sun god, Re, gave life to the deceased through the rays of sunlight extending down to the earth. The point of

many pyramids was covered with gold or some glittery material. This made it seem as though the pyramid reached the sun because the brilliance of the reflection could be seen for long distances. Egyptians believed that the pyramids attracted Re's blessing, acting like a magnet to collect and concentrate the sun's rays.

A second set of questions to investigate concerns the size of pyramids and the building materials used. These questions connect with the Egyptians' belief that the tombs protect forever the life created on earth, the belief in immortality. For example, "Although Egyptians constructed most of their everydaylife buildings out of mudbrick, they chose granite for their pyramids. Why?"; "Why were pyramids so large?" Many scholars agree that the Egyptians had an awareness of death which did not defeat them. Instead, it created a desire to achieve everlasting life. The pyramid, towering monument of stone, testifies to the Egyptians' love of stone for its durable qualities. There is much we do not know about the nature of the afterlife, since the Egyptians themselves had confused ideas about it. It might be interesting to ask students to write or draw their interpretation of the Egyptian Other World or our own afterlife.

Lesson One: The Pyramids: Sunbursts in Stone

Objectives To learn how to physically describe an object using Prown's technique.

To realize that the size and shape of pyramids reflect the Egyptians' hope for eternal life.

Most World Civilization textbooks have some pictures of and information about the pyramids. Ask the students to look at these pictures and any others you can bring into class. National Geographic's *Ancient Egypt* contains a photographic essay on the pyramids. Ask the students

1. to think about the size and shape of the pyramids. Remind them that although the pyramids have lasted over four thousand years, they have not been duplicated. Nor have architects copied even the style of the pyramid for contemporary building as they have done with the architectural models of other cultures.

At Winchester School, the citywide audiovisual department owns a set of six filmstrips entitled "Egypt: Gift of the Nile." One of the best of these filmstrips with cassette tape on the

2. pyramids is called "Temples and Tombs Along The Nile: Giza to Luxor." To become acquainted with just the descriptive stage of Prown's method of object analysis, ask students to jot down notes on the measurements, materials, articulation, iconography, twodimensional and three-dimensional aspects of the largest pyramid described and shown in the filmstrips.

After the filmstrip, write board and begin to fill in the information, calling on students to provide various details. When all the aspects of description are complete, divide the students into three groups. Ask one group to write a paragraph speculating about why pyramids were

3. so large. The second group can write about why the Egyptians chose the shape of the pyramid for their tombs. And maybe scienceminded students can make up a third group on technical difficulty of building a pyramid, the geometric perfection necessary, and the implications of this geometric perfection.

Using the information provided in this unit and the paragraphs of the students, discuss the

4. size and shape of these ancient Egyptian tombs in reference to the Egyptian belief in immortality.
5. Finally, students may want to try to build a pyramid. It might give them some idea about the scope of this feat.

Mummies

Another object which expresses the early Egyptian belief in immortality is the natural mummy, that is, the preserved body that is not wrapped. A good natural mummy exists in the Peabody Egyptian Collection. Students are always fascinated by it and eager to discuss it. Although it is estimated to be about seven thousand years old, the body is in fairly good condition due to the dryness of the soil and the absence of wind in Egypt. The mummy lies in a bent or prenatal position, knees drawn up. Students can recognize skin, hair, fingernails, and other body parts. Surrounding the body are tools and pottery jars, some of which contain grain.

When I take a group to the Peabody exhibit, I plan to divide class into small groups after the students have an opportunity to view the entire exhibit. Each group can work with one object, following the procedure for object analysis I describe in the section on "Shawabtis." Back in class, students can share their preliminary findings and identify the areas connected with Egyptian beliefs in the afterlife which need additional research. Once they complete their research, students can share their findings with the rest of the class.

Some of the questions that I anticipate their asking are: "What does the bent position indicate?"; "Why wasn't the body wrapped?"; "If the person was dead, why did Egyptians bury tools and food with him or her?"; "To what class of society did this person belong?"; "Were there different versions of the afterlife for different classes?" "How did the body survive without being wrapped?"; and "Has the body been treated with anything?" Again, the overall question to be discussed is, "What Egyptian beliefs are transmitted by this mummy?"

Naturally, the same kind of analysis can be done on the wrapped and entombed mummy. The emphasis in that case would be on what the changes in preserving the dead body reflected about Egyptian beliefs in the afterlife.

Belief In Resurrection

The early Egyptians believed that there would be a Judgment Day when they would be rewarded or punished for deeds done on earth. While Re, the sun god, was regarded as provider for their life on earth, Osiris became the greatest of all gods in Egypt. The story of how Osiris became the god of the dead, the god of everlasting life, formed the basis of Egyptian funeral customs for several thousand years.

Egyptians believed that Osiris was originally a king of upper Egypt. Under his reign, Egypt prospered. Wanting to share Egypt's developments with other nations, Osiris visited other countries. In his absence his wife and sister, Isis, ruled the kingdom and his brother, Set, plotted his murder. When Osiris returned, Set tricked him into lying in a box which Set nailed shut, thus suffocating Osiris. Even though Set threw this box into the Nile, Isis found the box containing the body of Osiris and hid it. When Set discovered this, he cut the body into fourteen pieces and scattered the pieces. Isis collected the pieces, reassembled the body and buried Osiris. Returning from the Other World, Osiris asked his son Horus to avenge his death. This done, Osiris rose from the dead. But his troubles were far from over, as Set accused Osiris of a group of serious crimes. The gods brought Osiris to trial, investigated Set's charges and decided that Osiris was innocent. Impressed by his innocence, the gods made Osiris Judge of the Dead.¹³

Egyptians believed that the deceased, like Osiris, could rise to new life. Their faith in Osiris as the Resurrection Judge, a belief established in the Old Empire (2686 B.C.—2181 B.C.), influenced their daily living, funeral customs, and worship. While they made offerings to their local gods or to other country gods, wise Egyptians

lived their lives in such a way that they, too, could be acquitted at their trials and become part of Osiris' kingdom. 14

The Egyptians believed that when their body died, their "ka" stood trial for all their earthly actions. The trial took place in the hall of judgment, sometimes called the Hall of Two Truths. Next to Osiris and fortytwo strange demonic forms and other creatures who were chiefs or assessors helping Osiris, the deceased appeared, confessed his or her sins, and had his heart weighed. In one pan of scales was a feather symbolizing Law and Truth and in the other was the heart. While this was going on, the deceased repeated a prayer which Osiris had spoken when he was being judged. Meanwhile, the dead person's soul stood by to testify if necessary. If judged innocent, Thoth, the scribe of the gods, led the deceased to meet Osiris. 15

Once accepted into the realm of Osiris, the dead were believed to live a superior life to the one they had lived on earth. Thus, tombs had to be well furnished with food, clothing, ornaments, (combs, hairpins, cosmetic palettes, jewelry), and, in the tombs of kings or wealthy private individuals, small statues of servants called shawabtis.

Shawabtis

While tombs and mummies are unable to be handled, shawabtis invite handling. As small as a finger or as large as a Barbie Doll, the natural reaction is to want to hold one, to feel and trace its various markings, for these figurines are often covered with hieroglyphics.

Lesson Two: Shawabtis

Objectives To follow the entire Prown technique of object analysis. To understand the Egyptian belief in immortality and its connection to the shawabti figure.

1. Stage One: Description of a shawabti from the tomb of Nubian prince HekaNefer who was a contemporary of King Tut. It is on display at the Peabody Museum.

Measurements: The object is about eight inches long; three inches wide at its widest, two inches at its narrowest; and two inches thick at its thickest and about one inch thick at its thinnest. If I could handle it, I would weigh it or give an approximation of its weight. Students will use replicas in class or at the Peabody.

Materials: It appears to be one solid piece of stone.

Articulation: Since it is all one piece, there are no nails, hinges, cement, or glue or wedges holding it together.

Iconography: On the head of the figure is a head wig and a chin wig. The figure has large ears, a prominent nose, and lips. The middle section of the figure has two crossed hands engraved into the stone, each one holding a tool (sickle). Then, from the midsection down to the bottom there are seven equal, parallel, engraved bands, each about onehalf inch in width, containing hieroglyphic symbols. Some of the symbols include people standing or sitting holding some sort of tool or implement, two different kinds of birds, wavy lines, an eye, a boat with three sails, and three dots. All of the symbols are spaced, and groups of symbols

form squares and rectangles. The bottom of the figure has a rough surface while the rest of the figure is smooth with the exception of the engraved areas.

Formal Analysis (TwoDimensional): The figure shows three strong vertical lines on the head. The ears and hair on either side of the face are perfectly symmetrical with the nose and chin wig which form the central line or axis. The middle section of the figure separates the head lines from those of the bottom by forming an Xshape with the crossed hands. Again, there is symmetry in the identical, rounded tool grasped in each hand. Just below the midsection and continuing to the very bottom of the figure, seven bands of hieroglyphics form very strong horizontal lines. Each band is bound by a line carved into the smooth stone surface. There are eight carved lines.

Looking at this shawabti from the front, I see that the head is smaller than the broad shoulder area of the figure. From the shoulders down, the figure tapers to its narrowest section at the bottom. The figure is perfectly symmetrical.

Formal Analysis (Three Dimensional): The figure is that of a mummified body. It has two sections, the rounded head and the body.

Color: The entire outside surface, except for a small circular rough area of stone on the bottom, appears to be painted black. There are several traces of white marks on the figure as well. There is a small area to the right of the mouth that is darker black. There are areas of almost greenishblack, a lighter shade on either side of the chin wig and along the forehead. The rough bottom, which appears to have been removed from or broken off another surface, is grey with black and white specks.

2. Stage Two: Deduction

Sensory Engagement: There would probably not be any smell, taste, or sound to the figure. If I were to feel it, I would immediately recognize its mummified form and I would probably feel the curves of the body as well as the carvings on the stone surface. It would probably feel cold, angular, hard, and rigid.

Intellectual Engagement: This figure strongly resembles a human body and thus it is heavily based in the real world. The fact that it is not a portrait representing a living being suggests that the figure has significance for the afterlife. The figure has some connection with work as evidenced by the fact that it is holding tools. Additionally, the hieroglyphics portray humans engaged in several different workrelated activities. The shawabti appears to be a male, based on the fact that it is wearing a chin wig.

Emotional Response: This object is intriguing and mysterious because it is familiar, and yet there is something unknown about it. It is familiar in the sense that we would expect to find mummies in Egyptian tombs and yet we do not know who they represent, what they represent, why they were there, or what the symbols on them mean. If I were the figure, I would probably feel trapped, stiff, and lonely.

3. Stage Three: Speculation

In this step, students will put together what they have learned about the object in the first two steps and then will define the remaining questions to be answered. While the rest of the analysis of the shawabti can be completed in the museum, this part of the procedure will probably see its best results after students have had time to absorb what they saw and felt in the first two steps. This aspect of the analytical process is in many ways the most exciting to watch. Students must internalize what they have learned, synthesize it with anything else they may know, and try to categorize the major areas of research into several overall themes. As students brainstorm in class, have another student record their questions on the board or on paper. After all questions have been listed, ask students to group them according to similar themes. Some examples of their questions might be: What does the figure have to do with the deceased? Is it a statue of the deceased or of someone else? Is the figure a true likeness or is it representational? Why is there writing on the figure? What does it mean? What does the chin wig or mummy style represent? What is the statue holding in its hands? Why is the figure mummiform? Was it alone in the tomb or were there many figures with it? What special beliefs did Egyptians hold about shawabtis?

Result of Preliminary Investigation:

The group of students analyzing the shawabti figure can divide its research into the various questions or common groups of questions on the same topic. The topics on which their above questions centered are: purpose of the shawabti, relationship to the deceased, meaning of the hieroglyphics and other symbols such as tools drawn on the figure, size of and materials used to make the figure, number of figures placed in tombs, kinds of work performed. What is most important for students to consider is the overall question: What does the shawabti represent about Egyptian beliefs in the afterlife, about the Egyptian social order, and about work?

While students will probably rely heavily on traditional research methods of using local libraries, I plan to encourage them to visit local museums and galleries. Books that I found helpful in gathering information about shawabtis were the books listed in my bibliography by J.R. Harris, Adolf Erman, the British Museum's guide book to their Egyptian collection, Heinrich Schfer, and Wallis Budge. In my research I found that "shawabti" is spelled several ways: ushebte, shabti, ushabti, ushawabti. Sometimes information was listed under funerary objects, servant figures, servant statuettes. The following information is the result of my research and is intended as background information for the teacher.

Shawabti figures were commonly buried funerary objects in the tombs of wealthy Egyptians beginning from the end of the Old Empire (Old Kingdom) and continuing throughout Egyptian history until Egypt was conquered by the Romans in about 31 B.C. Use of the figures reached its peak in the Middle Kingdom (2000 B.C.—1750 B.C.).¹⁶

Most shawabti figures are mummiform in appearance because they represented the deceased as Osiris. Egyptians believed that the dead became a part of Osiris once they were accepted into his realm. Osiris is always represented as a mummy. The name "shawabti" means "answerers" as the Egyptians believed that everyone would be called to work in the kingdom of Osiris. These figures would "answer" for the deceased and perform any manual labor necessary. In this sense, the figure represents the Egyptian belief that the social order on earth would be recreated or continued and that the nobility would be excluded from performing manual labor.

The earliest figures were made of wood or wax. Later, Egyptians made them out of alabaster, limestone, sandstone, basalt, diorite, granite, faience (crushed quartz with blue glaze over the surface), and schist. Soft materials were usually painted; hard surfaces were not painted.¹⁷

The figures were sometimes standing in the tomb and thus were attached to a square pedestal. Many shawabtis have rough surfaces on the bottom because they were broken off these stands. Other shawabtis were laid along the floor in a reclining position. During the Middle Kingdom the statues were provided singly in burials, sometimes in small coffins, and thus were true deputies of the deceased. In later times, large numbers were buried, especially in royal tombs. In the late New Kingdom (1550 B.C.—1085 B.C.), it became customary to provide one shawabti for each day of the year. In addition, there were “overseer” figures added to control gangs of workers. Large collections of shawabtis were usually presented in special shawabti boxes. ¹⁸ The tomb of Seti I had seven hundred figures.

When shawabtis were buried in large numbers, they were usually shown performing a variety of jobs, such as rowing or sailing boats, fishing, ploughing, reaping, carrying water, herding cattle, working in brickyards, weaving, working in granaries, involved in carpentry or working as household servants. ¹⁹

Most of the servant statuettes were inscribed with hieroglyphics. In some cases the hieroglyphics stood for the person’s name. In general, the hieroglyphics instructed the shawabti about work in the “Fertile Land.” Many figures are inscribed with chapter six from *The Book Of The Dead*. The tools held by the figure, or the bag on the back of the statue, signify the particular work to be performed. ²⁰

The earliest shawabtis did not hold agricultural implements, nor were they mummiform. Hands were either down at the side or were crossed in front of the figure’s chest. Sometimes, scarabs (beetle-looking bugs), wings outspread, were placed on the breast of the shawabti over the section from which the heart had been removed.

Canopic Jars

One of the essential preliminaries to successful resurrection was removal of internal organs as part of the mummification process. It was equally important to the wellbeing of the deceased in the afterlife to carefully preserve the major organ. Beginning in the Old Kingdom (about 2700 B.C.), and continuing throughout most of Egyptian history up to about 31 B.C., each of the four major embalmed organs, called the viscera, were placed in the designated jars. ²¹

Each jar was believed to be under the protection of a particular genius. Sons of Horus, these genii—‘Emset, Hape, Duamutf, and Qebhsneuf—could protect the deceased from hunger or other disagreeable sensations. The stomach and large intestines were protected by ‘Emset (sometimes spelled Mestha or Imsety); the small intestines were guarded by Hapi; Duamutf looked after the lungs and heart; and Qebhsneuf saved the liver and gall bladder. ²²

Originally, the outside of the alabaster or stone jars were inscribed with information about the organs. The painted genii decorated the jars. From the XVIIIth dynasty (1550 B.C.) on, canopic jars had four different stoppers, each one with the head of an animal representing the appropriate genius: ‘Emset had a human head; Hapy an ape’s head; Duamutf was represented by a jackal head; and Qebhsneuf had a falcon head. ²³ During the reign of Aknaton in the fifteenth century B.C., the portrait head of the deceased covered the jars. By the twentyfirst dynasty (1100 B.C.), Egyptians no longer removed the organs from the mummified body, but the practice of including sets of jars in tombs was so established that Egyptians continued to supply them simply to follow custom. By the first century B.C., solid “dummy” jars were used.

It is interesting to note, too, that the name “canopic” is considered a misnomer. Early scholars thought that

jars with humanheaded stoppers were proof of the existence of Canopus, pilot of Menelaus, buried at Canopus, Egypt. Canopus had been worshipped locally in the form of a jar with a human head and a swollen body. Years of research have proven this theory inaccurate, but the name survives.

The jars exhibited at the Peabody Museum represent the animal and humanheaded style. The variety of size, materials, and stoppers makes them excellent objects for student analysis. The combination of elements which are familiar (human and some animal heads) with those not known (jackal and the form or use of the container) summons the students' curiosity and creativity.

Lesson Three: Object Analysis

Objectives To be able to apply the Prown technique independently.

To be able to connect the object to Egyptian religious beliefs expressed by the object.

1. Students are each to choose a different object from the Peabody Collection so that each one may analyze an object on his own. At a later time, students will present the analyses and research about what religious beliefs are expressed by the object they study. Students can use the worksheet provided in this unit to do their analyses.
2. Students can visit the Peabody Museum collection with the class or on their own. Remind students that Peabody is free on Tuesdays. Or other days, it costs 50 cents to enter.
3. Students can report to the class on their findings. This can be an oral and written assignment and can have illustrations as well.

Some possible objects to analyze include: vases; amulets; wooden boats; model of a granary; painting showing the heart being weighed against a feather; tomb stelae; statues; cosmetic objects such as mirrors, tweezers, hair pins, combs, fans, kohl pots; jewelry, including necklaces, rings, bracelets; figures of animals; boxes; games; tools; pillows; furniture; baskets; tableware.

OBJECT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Stage One: Description

- A. Measurements:
- B. Materials used to make object:
- C. Articulation: how object is put together:
- D. Iconography: any words, pictures, shapes or other symbols you recognize:
- E. Two dimensional:
 1. vertical lines:

2. horizontal lines:
3. sections or areas:
4. symmetry or axis:
- F. Three dimensional:
 1. shape:
 2. color:
 3. markings :
 4. texture:

Stage Two: Deduction

- A. Physical Interaction:
 1. smell:
 2. taste:
 3. sound:
 4. feel:
 5. how does object smell, taste, hear, feel, see:
- B. Intellectual Interaction:
 1. what object does:
 2. how:
- C. Emotional Interaction:
feelings about object:

Stage Three: Speculation

- A. Sum up what has been learned:
- B. Possible Theories about object (unanswered questions):
- C. Methods of research:

Notes

1. George Steindorf and Keith C. Seele, *When Egypt Ruled The East* , Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 6.
2. Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction To Material Culture and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* , 1982 p. 1.

3. Prown, p.3.
4. Prown, description of seminar, "Time Machines: Artifacts and Culture."
5. Prown, p. 7.
6. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Dwellers On The Nile* , New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1977, p. 269.
7. Adolf Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* , New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1971, p. 306.
8. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* , Ithica, New York, Cornell University Press, 1973, p. 13.
9. Erman, p. 312.
10. Upper Egypt is actually located in southern Egypt, but is so named because it is nearer the source of the Nile, which flows from south to north.
11. A. Rosalie David, *The Egyptian Kingdoms* , New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1975, p. 136.
13. Budge, *Dwellers On The Nile* , pp. 220222.
14. Erman, p. 308.
15. Budge, *Dwellers On The Nile* , p. 231 and Erman, p. 3089.
16. Guide to British Museum Collection, p. 156.
17. Harris, p. 27 28.
18. Ibid., p. 156.
19. Shafer, p. 38 and Erman, p. 317.
20. Peabody Museum Exhibit
21. Guide to British Museum Exhibit, p. 147.
22. W.A. Budge, *The Mummy* , p. 195 and Erman, p. 317.
23. Guide to British Museum Exhibit, p. 147.

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

_____. *Ancient Egypt* . Washington, D. C.: The National Geographic Society, 1978. Beautiful, large photographs; excellent for classroom presentation, especially the chapters on pyramids (pp. 73101) and Pathways to the Gods (pp. 154201).

Budge, E.A. Wallis. *The Mummy* . New York: Causeway Books, 1974. A virtual encyclopedia on every aspect of Egyptian mummification, especially details on Egyptian funerals, mummies, canopic jars (pp.153201) and shawabti figures (pp. 211215). Highly recommended.

Budge, E.A. Wallis. *Dwellers On The Nile: The Life, History, Religion and Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1977. Excellent encyclopediatype detail on all aspects of Egyptian life, especially on religion (pp. 201234) and the dead and afterlife (pp. 269289). Highly recommended.

David, A. Rosalie, Ph.D. *The Making of the Past: The Egyptian Kingdoms*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1975. A complete survey of the early history. Has excellent charts, beautiful illustrations, especially on pyramids (pp.3547) and on the connection between art and religion (pp. 6591).

Erman, Adolf. *Life in Ancient Egypt*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971. Good sections on the Osiris cult

(pp. 269271), the soul of man and his “ka”, tombs, funerals (pp. 306327)

Morenz, Sigfried. *Egyptian Religion*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973. Good chapter on the religious origin of Egyptian civilization (pp. 616) and on the Egyptians’ lifelong consciousness of death and the creative consequences in the forms of pyramids and art (pp. 183212).

Prown, Jules David. “Mind in Matter : An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method.” Reprinted from *Winterthur Portfolio* . The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1982. Highly recommended for details of methodology of object analysis used in this unit. Short—only 16 pages, but extremely useful for explanation of material culture approach.

Scott, Nora. *The Daily Life of the Ancient Egyptians* . New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. A picture book with beautiful photographs of objects from the Museum’s collection. Very useful for classroom presentation.

Shšfer, Heinrich. *Principles of Egyptian Art* . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974. Presents much technical detail on art; useful especially for information on servant figures (pp. 31718).

Steindorff, George and Keith C. Seele. *When Egypt Ruled The East* . Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957. Chapters on religion (pp. 132155) and art (pp. 156200).

_____. *A General Introductory Guide to the Egyptian Collection* . The Trustees of the British Museum, 1964. Good sections on mummification (pp. 143148), shawbtis (pp. 153157), and, in general, about religion and art (pp. 112220).

Annotated Bibliography for Students

Budge, E.A. Wallis. *The Mummy* . New York: Causeway Books, 1974. See comments on teacher’s bibliography. Very easy reading. Much detail on the mummification process, funeral, and afterlife.

Budge, E.A. Wallis. *The Dwellers On The Nile: The Life, History, Religion, and Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* . New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977. Easy reading, wellorganized and full of details. See notes in teacher’s bibliography.

Casson, Lionel and the editors of TimeLife. *Ancient Egypt* . New York: TimeLife Books, 1965. Beautiful picture essays with short, easy narratives about the world of the dead (pp. 7091) and the pyramid builders (pp. 116 139).

Pace, Mildred Mastin. *Wrapped for Eternity. The Story of the Egyptian Mummy* . New York: McGraw, Hill Book Co. Written for students—topics include: how a mummy was made; the tomb robbers; mummy unwrappers, and more.

Resource’s

The Peabody Museum’s Egyptian Collection is a *MUST* for any class studying ancient Egypt. Mrs. Jean Rozette is the educational specialist in charge of the exhibit. Call her and arrange for her to help you organize a class visit to the exhibit and for individual student visits. Also, Gerry (pronounced Gary) Scott is Peabody’s resident Egyptologist and is very helpful as a resource for finding information about particular objects. As with any

museum trip, visit the collection yourself before taking the class.

The Yale Art Gallery has a very good collection of Egyptian art, particularly of statues. Arrange for a tour or take small groups yourself.

Winchester School AudioVisual Department has several filmstrip-cassettes on Egypt. I recommend “Egypt: Gift of the Nile” which has six filmstrips with cassettes. Of those, show “Temples and Tombs Along the Nile: Giza to Luxor” in connection with this unit on art and religious beliefs. The other filmstrips are quite good for general information about Egypt.

Both the *Boston Museum of Fine Arts* and the *Metropolitan Museum in New York* have excellent, but overwhelming, exhibits and resource books to buy. If you feel brave, decide (ahead of the time of your visit) on which rooms or areas you wish to concentrate. There is too much to see all at one time.

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