Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume II: Cultures and Their Myths

From Atum-Ra to Horus -- Using Egyptian Myths of Gods and Goddesses as Springboards to Increased Literacy

Curriculum Unit 98.02.01
by Christine Elmore

In this curriculum unit I will set forth a literature-based program which focuses on Egyptian mythology. To better appreciate the background of Egyptian myths, we will explore some aspects of the ancient Egyptian civilization and the role that the Nile River played in the people's view of life, death, and the afterlife. We will examine adapted versions of three types of myths: cosmological, order, and life-crisis, and we will look at particular mythological symbols in the case of each myth. The introduction of such symbols will help my young students make initial associations and distinctions between stories, and from such a concrete study we can more easily move into exploration and experimentation with hieroglyphic writing to develop a greater appreciation of ancient Egyptian art (in preparation for a trip to the Yale Art Gallery). Throughout our study of myths, my students will be asked to keep a literature-response log in which they can think more about the myths they have read or heard, document their feelings, digest new thoughts and draw new connections. Penny Strube in Getting the Most from Literature Groups suggests giving students a list of possible prompts from which I have borrowed the following:

> Tell about the story.
> Describe the characters.
> Give your opinion of a character.
> Compare a character in this story to another you remember in another story.
> How has the main character changed as the story progresses?
> How has the author drawn you into the story?

To bring further clarity and meaning to the myths examined, I have chosen relevant interdisciplinary extension activities to accompany each component.

The objectives for this curriculum unit include:

to introduce students to adapted versions of some ancient Egyptian myths.
to spark enthusiasm in students to read, write, and retell.

to facilitate the study of myths through storytelling, read-aloud, shared reading, role-playing, keeping a literature-response log, and creative writing activities.
to introduce symbols and pictorial drawings while presenting each myth to facilitate retelling and in preparation for practice in using hieroglyphic writing.
––to develop an appreciation of the ancient Egyptian culture as a kind of heritage to which students can relate.

I teach second-grade in a self-contained classroom at Lincoln-Bassett Community School in New Haven. My students are primarily of African-American descent, a homogeneous group with varying abilities in the seven-to-nine age range. Although I have designed this unit with them in mind, I am confident that it could easily be adapted by teachers of K-5, if not older.

The lessons in this unit will be introduced two to three times a week for a period of 45-60 minutes over a four month period. My curriculum unit is divided into four sections:

I. Introduction to the principal gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt
II. Cosmological myths
III. Order myths
IV. Life-Crisis myths

SECTION I -- SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL GODS AND GODDESSES OF ANCIENT EGYPT

Egyptian mythology holds great appeal to both young and old, not only because of the fantastic imagery and colorful adventures of many of its main characters –– the gods and pharaohs –– and the supernatural, mysterious qualities that they possess, but also because embedded in these myths are profound religious

insights into such universal themes as creation, death, and the after-life. By means of these fascinating stories, we can learn a great deal about the ancient Egyptian culture, in which religion and creative art played a crucial role. Versions of Egyptian myths available to us now were often pieced together from such varied and scattered references as pyramid texts (i. e., The Book of the Dead), temple inscriptions, tales and poems, hymns and prayers, and magic spells. We also have versions recorded by Greek writers such as Plutarch, but it is unclear how faithfully these relatively late (but often very charming) compositions represent the original Egyptian narratives.

Religion played a dominant role in every aspect of the lives of the ancient Egyptians and so their myths were primarily about the gods and other religious elements. According to T. G. H. James in his Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt, “practically all daily activities were permeated by men’s desire to remain on the good side of gods” (p. 6).

The ancient Egyptians knew over two-thousand gods and goddesses, some worshipped by the whole country and others honored locally at shrines or temples. Some deities symbolized forces of nature (i.e., water, air, the sun) while others represented aspects of daily life (i.e., farming, weaving). In fact, there were designated gods and goddesses for almost every branch of human activity and knowledge. Interestingly, the great majority of these supernatural beings were shown, in both pictures and statues, with the heads of animals. In the myths told about them, these deities often switched between having human and animal heads or actually ‘shape-shifted’ themselves completely into animals.

Below are listed some of the principal deities of ancient Egypt introduced in my unit along with the animal name or symbol often associated with them.

Ra (Atum-Ra - a name given him as the great national god): god of the sun, father of all other gods - sun disk, falcon
Osiris : god of the afterlife - mummified pharaoh with crook, whip, scepter
Isis: goddess of the home, motherhood, crafts, mourners - cow-throne, wings
Horus: god of light and life, first king of Egypt - ankh, falcon
Thoth: god of wisdom, inventor of hieroglyphics - ibis
Seth: god incarnate of evil, drought, darkness and destruction - pig, wild boar, serpent, hippo and crocodile
Nephthys: goddess of mourning - wings
Anubis: god of death and embalming - jackal
Khonsu: moon-god and healer - moon
Maat: goddess of truth and justice - feather

In order for my students to better keep track of and distinguish between these many deities, I plan to use Leonard Everett Fisher's beautifully illustrated book designed especially for children, entitled The Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt. Before each myth is introduced to the class, I will read the simplified description of the particular deity offered in this book. In addition, for easy reference, I will display pictures of each god and goddess in the classroom.

SECTION II -- COSMOLOGICAL MYTHS

Like many ancient peoples, the Egyptians told stories about how all things first began in order to help explain the world about them. In the following, very-simplified creation myth, we first meet the god, Ra and his children.

In the beginning the earth was completely covered by water. Then a mound or hill appeared out of the water. This was called the First Place. From it grew a lovely blue lotus flower. From its golden center sprang the god Ra, the First Light, and so came the dawn of the first day. Night fell when the lotus closed and sank back under the water.

Ra felt alone and wanted to create a world, so he gave birth to Shu (god of the air) and Tefnut (goddess of moisture). Their offspring were Geb (the earth-god) and Nut (the sky-goddess). Geb lay down on the water's surface and later in the spring seeds were planted in his body. Geb and Nut fell in love with each other and clung tightly together. Ra needed room for things to be created like trees and mountains and demanded that Shu separate his children by crawling between them and standing up, thus pushing the sky up away from the earth. Later Ra felt sorry for the two separated lovers, Geb and Nut, and so he scattered numerous stars in the sky to ensure Geb that he would always be able to see his beloved Nut.

This creation myth lends itself well to a visual and oral presentation. As I tell this story of creation I plan to use large paper cut-outs of the characters, fixing each one on a large felt-board so that by the end of the story a re-creation of an original tomb painting of Geb, Shu and Nut will have been made. Robert Hull, in his book, Egyptian Stories, provides a suitable facsimile of such a painting on p. 9, which I plan to use.

To provide the opportunity to revisit this wonderful creation myth I plan to have the class create a Big Book for which only the text will be provided. Pairs of students will be given a single page of the book and will be asked to create an illustration to match the text. Once the Big Book is bound I will use it for a shared reading experience in which students will be invited to read along with the teacher.

The second creation myth that I will use is one adapted and illustrated by C. Shana Greger in her very imaginative Cry of the Benu Bird. In this book the author combines mythical stories of the benu bird (or phoenix) and of Atum, the creator-god, to tell a creation-story with great appeal to children. In it we meet some of the same characters from our first creation-story but here the plot becomes more complex. Unlike the previous myth, the benu bird, a symbol of eternity and a protector against darkness, first arises from the waters of Nun, bringing light and life. Later, out of a lotus flower arises Atum who goes on to create the world day by day, adding the sun, moon, stars and planets, and creating the city of Heliopolis on a mountain-top. From his drops of sweat hundreds of gods are created and from his tears, human beings. Finally, each creature and plant of the earth is created simply by Atum calling out its name. The benu bird's offspring returns to remind Atum of their shared relationship with the sun and with light.

After reading this story aloud to my class, I will ask students to choose one aspect of Atum's creation to illustrate in a mural on large paper. Groups of two or three will choose from the following :

the benu bird arising from Nun's waters, lighting the darkness
Atum rising from the lotus flower
the birth of the sun
the creation of Heliopolis
creation of gods
creation of mankind
creation of animals and plants

Students will be asked to describe their paintings by retelling their illustrated portion of this creation myth.

In contrast to the first creation myth in which I used human figures to retell the story, beginning with this case I plan to use a combination of symbols and pictorial drawings borrowed from hieroglyphics as each myth is presented. I have provided an appendix of such representations at the end of this unit for easy reference. These symbols will help the students to recall and distinguish between the nine myths presented in the unit. They will also form a useful vehicle by which they can retell each story orally or in written form. In addition, they are an ideal way to prepare the students for the study of hieroglyphics and how the ancient Egyptians told stories using pictures.

R. T. Rundle Clark in his book, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt, lists and describes some of the basic symbols used in ancient Egypt. He writes that, in fact, the number of symbols favored by the Egyptians was surprisingly small, with some (i.e., the lotus) common to other cultures, and others (i.e., the ankh) peculiar to Egypt. He reminds us that the significance of symbols resides in their ability to act "as focal points for emotions or imaginative speculations. They belong to the world of myth, even if they have mundane origins" (p. 218). From this valuable resource book I have been able to gather symbols for each of the myths presented in my unit.

The symbols presented in the preceding myth are the lotus (symbol of rebirth), the benu bird, the primeval mound, the ankh (symbol of life), and the waters of chaos.

Our next cosmological myth is based on the movement of the sun each day from dawn to dusk. Abigail Frost in her Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt presents a simplified version of this myth, entitled "The Barge of the Sun." In this myth, dawn breaks as Ra awakens in the east and, after being dressed, is led to his golden barge which slowly crosses the sky all day, giving off light and warmth. Dusk arrives and the skies darken as Ra's barge sails out of our world and into a perilous region between the kingdoms of the living and the dead. It is at this point that he replaces his human, daytime face with that of a great-horned ram. Gradually he passes

through the twelve gates of night, arriving at last in the underworld where the dead tow his boat. Ra then has to pass through the dark, snake-infested waters of the caverns of the west where he uses magic in order to safely pass. His journey continues with two fish, one pink and one blue, who give escort, swimming ahead of him. Their job is to warn him of the approach of his greatest enemy, the gigantic serpent, Apopis, who tries to attack and destroy him every morning and evening. If Apopis were ever victorious, the sun would disappear, plunging the universe into total darkness and chaos. Again, Ra must rely on his magic to see him through. A new dawn breaks as Ra on his barge completes the night journey and passes back through the monumental gate into the world of the living.

Following the read-aloud presentation of this myth, discussion will focus on Ra's heavy responsibility to pass safely through the night in order for a new day to begin. To better appreciate the force of good (Ra) and of evil (Apopis), students will be asked to create a retelling of this myth through the eyes of each of these two characters. This retelling can act as a good springboard to writing. Pairs of students will be asked to write a dialogue that might occur between Ra and Apopis as they confront each other in the caverns of the west. Another effective way to bring out points of view might be to have individual students volunteer to be one of these characters and to answer questions posed by the rest of the class, interview-style.

The symbols to be introduced with this myth are: the solar boat and scarab beetle (symbol of Ra the sun god and of renewed life), the cosmic serpent, and the fish.

A final cosmological myth serves to explain why the moon waxes and wanes and involves, along with Ra and Nut, two new gods, Thoth and Khonsu. Robert Nicholson and Claire Watts in their book, Ancient Egypt, offer an enchanting version of this myth, entitled "Nut's Children."

In this myth, Ra, now reigning as a human pharaoh, tries to prevent a succession to his throne. Thoth, god of wisdom and magic, has predicted that Nut's son would one day reign, and so Ra has laid a curse on her, specifying that she cannot give birth on any day or night of any year. Thoth, who sympathizes with heartbroken Nut, devises a plan to trick the moon-god, Khonsu, by challenging him to a game of senet. Thoth wins every time they play, which frustrates Khonsu to no end. So the moon-god wagers an hour of his light that he will win the next game. But he continues to lose and wager again, so that Thoth cunningly gathers up enough light for five days. Then Thoth affixes the five extra days to the end of the year, during which Nut is able to give birth to Osiris, the future pharaoh after Ra, as well as Seth, Harmachis, Nephthys and Isis. Khonsu is sufficiently weakened after the game and is only able to shine brightly a few days of each month, using the rest of the month simply to gather his wasted strength together.

The symbols to be used with this myth are the moon (symbol of Khonsu), the ibis (symbol of Thoth) and the crook and flail (symbols of authority).

The last two myths lend themselves nicely to an exploration of the scientific explanations for the sun's rising and setting and the moon's waxing and waning. At second-grade level, such research takes a very basic form as students in pairs pore over simplified encyclopedias and science picture-books to find answers to simple questions about the function of the sun and moon. The research-project could take the form of a poster showing both pictures and small fact-cards to explain what they have learned. A second extension activity relevant to this stage of learning about myths would be to have students write their own mythological versions of such topics as:

why it snows

why it rains
why it thunders
why there is lightning
why there are deserts
how volcanoes were created

Story mapping as is introduced in Lesson Plan One of this unit could be used to help students plan out their stories.

SECTION III –– ORDER MYTHS

With this section we begin our exploration of one of the principal Egyptian myths, over five-thousand years old, the story of Isis and Osiris, grandchildren of Ra. It is an "order myth," a type of myth that purports to tell us how order was first established in a culture and typically involves the juxtaposition of peace and war.

In the first myth, "The Secret Name," Isis –– seeking greater wisdom for herself and hoping to ensure that her husband, Osiris (and her son Horus), will succeed Ra –– devises a clever plan to trick the latter into telling her his secret name, thus giving her the power to make life, a power she will pass on to her children. In her book, Isis and Osiris, Geraldine Harris provides a suitable version of this myth which I plan to use.

In this myth Isis uses some of Ra's spit to magically form a snake which later bites Ra on the foot. None of the magic from the other wise gods and goddesses can give Ra relief, but Isis offers to use her sorcery to fight the poison, telling him that it will only be effective if he tells her his secret name. He adamantly refuses until the pain becomes unbearable and he is forced to comply. She then heals him and passes the power of the secret name to her future son, Horus.

The following symbols will be used in conjunction with this myth: the falcon and sun disc (symbols of Ra),the cow-horn throne and wings (symbols of Isis), the throne, the horned snake and the crook and flail.

In cooperative groups of three or four, students will be asked to re-enact the story using stick puppets that they make of the characters, Ra, Isis, the horned snake, Osiris and a group of miscellaneous gods and goddesses. In order to make these characters appear authentic, my students will be encouraged to use suitable reference sources (i.e., art books, encyclopedias, etc.) that show how these deities were represented in tomb paintings and on papyrus scrolls. Part A of the Appendix offers such representations of the deities introduced in this unit.

Our next myth describes the reign of Osiris and his murder by his evil brother, Seth. This myth, along with the one presented in the next section on Osiris's resurrection, exemplifies the yearly cycle of the rising and falling

of the River Nile, a cycle the ancient Egyptians were utterly dependent upon. Central to their lives, of course, was the Nile with its regular yearly inundation, providing fertile soil from which crops could grow. Abigail Frost in her above-mentioned book highlights the ancient Egyptians' complete identification with the Nile. "Without the floods," she writes, "there would have been no food, and no stories, because there would have been no people" (p. 4). Hence, important questions about life, death, suffering, morality, and the origins of the world were examined in the larger context of this absolute dependence on the annual rising and falling of the great river.

The story of Isis and Osiris is itself closely associated with the life of the Nile. Jules Cashford explains this connection in the introduction to his book, The Myth of Isis and Osiris. He explains how the ancient Egyptians saw the annual falling of the Nile as the death of the great river and its rising as its being reborn once again. When the Nile fell they said that the god Seth was killing his brother, Osiris. When it rose they described it as being swelled by the tears of the mourning Isis in search of her husband. When the Nile overflowed its banks they said it was because Isis had found Osiris. When the seedlings began to appear above ground, it was a sign that Osiris lived again and that all life was in the process of being reborn anew (p. vi).

The portion of the Isis-Osiris cycle to be presented next is in the following form, adapted from Abigail Frost's version.

Isis and Osiris proved to be good rulers of Egypt. They taught the people new and better ways to live. Isis brought them medicine when they were sick and, with the help of her sister, Nephthys, showed them how to weave cloth and make bread from corn (which was one of Osiris's gifts).

Osiris gave his people plants that they could eat, like corn, grapes and barley. He built the first plow with his own hands and taught the Egyptians how to use it. He showed them how to plant corn, harvest it, and grind it into flour. Through his help they also learned to press grapes to make wine, and to make beer from barley. Under his guidance not only did they become good farmers but also clever miners of gold, copper and iron. They used these metals to make farming tools and weapons to defend themselves.

Osiris also believed that religion was very important and taught his people how to worship the gods and build many temples for them. With Thoth and Anubis by his side, he traveled to other lands and conquered them peacefully, always sharing with them the gifts he had taught the Egyptians. They called Osiris the Good One and all Egyptians were very content under the kind and just rule of Isis and Osiris.

One way that this myth could be retold is in the form of a play where the narrator tells the story and the props are the various gifts of Isis and Osiris to their people. A second extension-activity might involve using a web-diagram to list the various qualities of a good leader as demonstrated in the myth. From this could follow a discussion of leaders students know or have read about who have some of these same good qualities. Students could then be asked to imagine how they would have ruled ancient Egypt and write about it in their Literature-Response Log. (The topic could be: If I were ruler of ancient Egypt).

The symbols to be used in the presentation of this myth are the stick of the desert sheikh (symbol of prosperity), the crook and flail (symbols of Osiris, the living pharaoh), and the sun disc with cow-horn headdress (another symbol of Isis).

The final portion of the Isis-Osiris myth to be presented will be the murder of Osiris. In this myth we are confronted with the force of evil, Seth, who was Osiris's brother. In it we see how Seth, who dislikes peace and order and who embraces destruction, war and trouble, is the direct opposite of his brother. For my class I plan

to use the simplified version of this myth as retold by Robert Hull in his previously mentioned book.

Seth, wanting to rule Egypt and destroy everything that Osiris had established, plans to murder his brother in a terrible way. He invites Osiris to a feast after which the god is asked to participate in a game of sorts. A large, beautiful chest is brought out and each guest is asked to lie down in it to see who will fit inside. Whoever fits will be given the magnificent chest. All the other guests know of Seth's malicious plan before-hand, however, and the minute Osiris lies in it, fitting perfectly, they rush to nail the lid shut, even pouring molten lead in the cracks to ensure that Osiris will suffocate. The chest is then hauled into the Nile River, and after a while it comes to rest on the banks under the shade of a sycamore tree. This tree grows around the casket-chest of Osiris, eventually covering it. With Osiris out the way, Seth takes over his rule and the world becomes lifeless and chaotic.

Symbols relevant to this myth are the mummified pharaoh (symbol of Osiris), the hippo (symbol of Seth), and the crook and flail.

Before the story is read, I will ask the class to make predictions about how they think Seth will take over the rule of Egypt. They will write their predictions on a prediction chart having two columns, one entitled Prediction Before Reading and the other (to be filled out after listening to the story read to them) entitled Actual Happening.

In cooperative groups of three or four, students will be asked to make a large story star that shows the main events of the story. They will be asked to follow the procedure below:

1. As a group, members are to list in sequence the main events in the story.
2. Choosing an event or two, each member then writes a sentence about that event in a large paper circle, illustrating it.
3. A few of the members then make a large star (with one point for each event) out of tagboard.
4. Members work together to paste the event-circles on each point of the star showing proper sequence.

SECTION IV -- LIFE-CRISIS MYTHS

In this last category of myths we explore some of the crucial events in human life that are accompanied by rites of passage from one state of being to another. Our focus will be on the death and resurrection of Osiris.

The soul of Osiris had to wait in the underworld until his son Horus was old enough to become king and could successfully wrench the power from evil Seth's hands. After years of struggle, Ra finally judged that Horus was to be made king of Egypt; Osiris was to rule the land of the dead and Seth was to live in the sky with him and be the god of storms. It is at this juncture that our last myth, "The King of the Dead," begins. I will use a recounting of this part of the Osiris story adapted by Geraldine Harris in her above-mentioned book. I plan to read it aloud to the class.

This myth begins with Horus being crowned king of Egypt. He then follows Seth, forced to carry Osiris's body, to the holy city of Abydos. Horus ensures that his father is given a proper burial. While Anubis holds the coffin upright, Horus opens the lid and touches the mummy of Osiris on the nose, mouth, eyes and ears. The magic words he speaks let the spirit of Osiris breathe, speak, see and hear once again. Then the mummy is put into its tomb and Osiris is given a new life in the underworld. Horus sets up a column (djed column) to symbolize Osiris's resurrection and effectively rules the land of the living while his father reigns in the land of the dead.

The symbols to be included in the presentation of this myth are the eye of Horus (udjat), the jackal (symbol of Anubis), the cane (symbol of eternity), the encircled star (symbol of the underworld), raised arms (symbol of the soul) and the djed column (symbol of Osiris's backbone and of resurrection).

To extend this myth and learn more about the dangerous journey the ancient Egyptians believed all souls made into the Hall of Double Truth, I plan to use the wonderful book by Deborah Nourse Lattimore, The Winged Cat. In this story, Merit and the evil high priest, Waha, are sent by the pharaoh to the underworld to be judged by the gods. We travel with Merit and Waha through the twelve gates and into the Hall of Judgment where Thoth weighs their hearts against the feather of Truth (Maat). Waha, who has lied, fails the test and is eaten by the monster, Ammit, while Merit passes the test and is taken by Horus's gold boat back to the land of the living.

The symbols very prominent to this story are the jackal, the ibis, the feather of truth and the encircled star.

Because the story-line of this book is a bit complex for young readers, it may benefit them to begin with a review of the story events. This can be done through a spontaneous retelling where students, sitting in a circle, one by one retell a portion of the story in their own words before passing it on. As Bob Barton and David Booth in Stories in the Classroom tell us, "retelling a story in one's own words is one of the most effective ways to achieve a reflective response" (p. 12).

A variation of this activity would involve having the students create a new myth that is 'made up as they go' with each student adding a new part until the story ends with the last contributor. The teacher's role in the activity is to record the 'communal composition' as it is told. Lesson Plan Two in this unit offers another approach to creating a group story using the story line of an already familiar myth.

A second writing activity that would encourage creative expression would be to invite students to write a letter to one of the story characters in The Winged Cat where they ask questions, offer advice, share similar experiences or give opinions. These letters could later be exchanged by classmates, read, and responded to by them as if they were that story character.

At this point, after being immersed in the lives and symbolism of many ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses, my students will be ready to create, write and illustrate myths of their own using the deities they have learned about or creating some of their own. A simple story-map with three categories: characters, problem, solution, will serve to help them to organize a story-line. Following individual conferences, a more detailed story-map, listing events leading up to and including the solving of the problem and a conclusion, will be used. Students will proceed to write the first drafts of their stories using their story maps as a guide. They will then read this draft to a classmate, at which point they may add or delete parts of their story. A second conference with the teacher will serve the purpose of helping to refine their story. As 'sloppy copy' (first draft) is made into a 'neat sheet' (second draft), students then begin the process of making their books, copying text on pages and illustrating each page. They will be encouraged to spend time on these illustrations, perhaps incorporating some of the symbols they learned in their drawings. When their book is finished, each student will have the

opportunity to sit in the 'Author's Chair' and proudly read it to the class.

This curriculum unit would not be complete without the introduction of hieroglyphics, especially as an appreciation of picture-writing has already been cultivated through the presentation of symbols with each myth. Lorraine Conway in Ancient Egypt: Treasures, Tombs and Tutankhamen, introduces hieroglyphs very simply. She describes three stages that the early Egyptian writing system underwent. In the first stage, a simple drawing called an ideogram stood for the object. In the second stage, the writing became syllabic and pictures began to represent words or syllables that sounded like the picture but whose meanings might be completely different. In the last stage, the symbols came to represent different sounds of the Egyptian language similar to our alphabet. The Egyptian alphabet consisted of 25 sounds. There were no vowels used, only consonants and so ideograms were often added after the word to provide further clarity.

I plan to use the chart on page 29 of this book, which assigns a hieroglyphic to each of the 25 sounds. Using this chart, students will be asked to write their name in hieroglyphics (perhaps later even carving it in playdough). Lesson Plan Three shows in detail how this lesson could be structured. Further experimentation will ensue as they are encouraged to write brief messages to each other to decode.

It is through this highly appealing medium, mythology, that my African-American students can be encouraged to read and to write and, at the same time, learn about a very interesting and highly refined ancient African culture.

Lesson Plan One

Objective: To develop comprehension by directing the reader's attention to the story structure. To introduce story mapping.

Materials: The myth, "The Secret Name," found on pages 13-16 of Isis and Osiris by Geraldine Harris, large chart paper and story map outlines for each student.

Procedure:

1. Reproduce the story map outline with the following components on a large piece of chart paper displayed for all to see:

Title of the Story

Setting Where When

Characters Who

Problem

Action 1.

2.

3. (or as many as are needed)

Resolution

2. Distribute a story map outline (8 1/2 x ll paper size) for each student to fill in while the teacher is writing on the chart paper.

3. Read the myth, “The Secret Name,” aloud to the class and discuss it.

4. With the class, the teacher fills in the story map on the chart paper as he reviews the story. To elicit the information, the teacher needs to generate questions following the sequence of the story such as:

Where does this story take place? Where does Ra live and where does he like to take walks?

Who are the main characters in this myth?

Did this story happen before or after Ra had created the world?

What is the problem that Isis has? or What is the problem that Ra has? (Guide the students to arriving at a simple, concise statement of the problem).

What actions does Isis/ Ra take to try to solve the problem? (As actions are suggested, the teacher should ask how this action works toward solving the problem. The skill being developed here is on choosing main actions that advance the story line and contribute to the resolution of the problem).

How is the problem finally solved? (Try to arrive at a simple and concise statement).

5. As the teacher records the ideas for the story map on the chart paper, the students are copying them on their outlines.

6. Display this story map in the room. After several such modeling lessons, students will be more ready and able to use story mapping after reading other stories and also in the planning of stories that they want to write.

Lesson Plan Two

Objective: To create a group story using the form of a previously-read myth.

Materials: The myth, “Nut’s Children,” found on pages 25-29 of Nicholson’s and Watt’s Ancient Egypt, and large chart paper.

Procedure:

1. Review and discuss the parts of this previously-read myth, “Nut’s Children.” (It is important that you select a story that the students have already become familiar with). The following questions may help to facilitate the discussion:
   - What angers Ra?
   - What curse does he put on Nut?
   - How does Thoth plan to help her?
   - How is Khonsu tricked?
   - What finally happens so that Nut can have her children?

2. Together as a large group, plan the main components of the new story comparing it with “Nut’s Children.” Create a process chart asking for ideas about the characters, setting, problem, actions and resolution. A sample process chart is shown below:

Myth	**Our Story**		
Ra			principal
Nut		students at our school	
Thoth		gym teacher	
Khonsu	Michael Jordan		

a huge palace on the Nile	Lincoln-Bassett gymnasium				
in long ago times		this school year			
playing senet			playing basketball		
Thoth keeps winning		gym teacher successfully shoots			more baskets
Khonsu loses more light	Michael Jordan becomes tired out				
Thoth wins 5 extra days	gym teacher wins more gym time			for the students	
Nut's children are born	students have longer gym classes				

3. Together brainstorm a descriptive word chart, locating words in the myth and using similar or opposite words for the new story. A sample chart is found below:

Myth	**Our Story**
gods	people
furious	angry
huge	big
sad	unhappy
strong	energetic
greatest senet player	greatest basketball player
lucky	skillful
extra	more
overjoyed	happy
weakened	tired out

4. Display the process chart and word chart for all to see and on a fresh piece of large chart paper begin group composing of the new story. The teacher acts as the recorder as individual students

suggest sentences that tell the story in sequence. (The story may end up being quite similar to the original myth following much of the same structure. It's up to the group and how willing and able they are to go off in new directions).

@UL:5. The finished story is then displayed in the room. Students may choose to take ideas from it when creating their own versions of the story or when creating new stories.

Lesson Plan Three

Objective: To become familiar with the basic 25 sounds in the Egyptian alphabet and transcribe your name in hieroglyphics.

Materials: Individual copies of the hieroglyphic chart found on page 29 of Conway's Ancient Egypt, large index cards, pencils, colored pencils and playdough.

Procedure:

1. Begin by examining the hieroglyphic chart and reviewing the sounds represented by each of the 25 hieroglyphs. Ask the students to try to locate the sounds found in their name.

2. Point out that the Egyptians mostly did without the vowels a, e, i, o, u in their writing system. Transcribe the names Peter (PTR) and Helen (HLN) into hieroglyphic writing to show as examples. Asterisks could be placed where vowels would normally go to cause less confusion (i. e., H*L*N).

3. Distribute large index cards to the students and ask them to use the chart to find the sounds in their first name. Demonstrate with your own first name on the board. Ask them to draw them on the index card from left to right using enlarged versions of each hieroglyph. Transcribe your first name on the board for all to see.

4. After checking for correctness, the teacher will ask the students to copy this transcription again on a new index card but this time they may choose one of three directions in which to write their name: left to right, right to left, or in a vertical fashion. They are then to color each hieroglyph using colored pencils and to encircle it in a cartouche (a long oval) to make it look authentic.

5. Before these name cards are displayed in the room, each child will be given one (not his own)

to try to decode back into English using his chart and to return it to its owner.

6. Finally, students will be asked to transcribe their names into hieroglyphics once again, only this time using a different medium –– playdough. Following teacher demonstration, students will practice carving their names into flattened pieces of playdough using the sharpened point of their pencil.

7. Both samples of hieroglyphic writing will them be displayed in the room for everyone to see.

Teacher Bibliography

Barton, Bob and David Booth. Stories in the Classroom: Storytelling, Read Aloud and Roleplaying with Children. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited, 1990.

This valuable resource for teachers describes how to find, choose, and use stories in the classroom and offers a wealth of possible extension activities once the story has been presented.

Bosma, Bette. Fairy Tales, Fables, Legends, and Myths: Using Folk Literature in Your Classroom. New York: Teachers College Press, 1987.

A very useful handbook filled with imaginative ideas to use in the teaching of folk literature to children. The emphasis is on the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and a wide range of disciplines such as art, music, drama, puppetry and storytelling are employed.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988.

This book contains the principal facts about the religious beliefs and thoughts of the ancient Egyptians (from the predynastic to the dynastic periods). It includes revised translations of hymns, myths and legends of the gods.

Clark, R. T. Rundle. Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt. New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1995.

This book offers an excellent introduction to the Egyptian mythological world, recounting the principal myths and describing the visual symbolism that was so closely connected with the literature.

Conway, Lorraine. Ancient Egypt: Treasures, Tombs and Tutankhamen. Carthage, Illinois: Good Apple, Inc., 1987.

This curriculum unit offers a wealth of teaching ideas and student activity pages that help introduce ancient Egypt to elementary-level learners. I have used the section on hieroglyphic writing with great success.

Hart, George. Egyptian Myths. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press & British Museum Publications, 1990.

This book begins with the presentation and analysis of creation legends of ancient Egypt. Following this are accounts and discussion of various myths about the gods, and of fables as well.

Hornung, Erik. Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt. Trans. John Baines. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982.

This book explores the nature and meaning of the gods of ancient Egypt within and beyond the confines of Egyptology.

Ions, Veronica. Egyptian Mythology. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1982.

This valuable resource book describes the many gods, their attributes and the myths told about them. It includes beautiful photographs of ancient paintings, statues and sights of antiquities in Egypt.

James, T. G. H. An Introduction to Ancient Egypt. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979.

This book offers an authoritative introduction to the civilization of ancient Egypt, its culture, history and achievements.

Maguire, Jack. Creative Storytelling: Choosing, Inventing, and Sharing Tales for Children. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985.

A useful guide to storytelling including discussion of sources and types of stories, how to gear stories to specific young audiences, how to remember and adapt stories and how to use your own experiences to create new stories.

McCarthy, Tara. Multicultural Myths and Legends: Stories and Activities to Promote Cultural Awareness. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 1994.

This book offers a rich selection of authentic myths and legends from around the world with many suggestions for interdisciplinary extension activities.

Nicholson, R. and Watts, Claire. Ancient Egypt. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1991.

This book offers simplified accounts of how ancient Egyptians lived and what they believed. It includes many detailed illustrations and photographs. A creation myth adapted for children is included at the end of this book.

Patrick, Richard. All Color Book of Egyptian Mythology. London: Octopus Books Limited, 1972.

A valuable resource book describing the religious beliefs of the ancient Egyptians as well as the different gods and animals that they worshipped. Included are beautiful color photographs of ancient statues and paintings.

Rossini, Stéphane. Egyptian Hieroglyphs: How to Read and Write Them. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1989.

A useful guide to understanding and transcribing Egyptian hieroglyphs. Each of the 134 phonetic elements are clearly described.

Schimmel, Nancy. Just Enough to Make a Story: A Sourcebook for Storytelling. Berkeley: Sisters' Choice Press, 1978.

Told by an experienced storyteller, this book guides the reader in choosing a story, learning it, telling it and choosing visual aids to use in storytelling.

Scott, Joseph and Lenore. Egyptian Hieroglyphs for Everyone: An Introduction to the Writing of Ancient Egypt. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1968.

This book describes how hieroglyphs developed and teaches you how to read hieroglyphic writing.

Shedlock, Marie L. The Art of the Story Teller. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951.

This is a comprehensive guide to story-telling and includes discussion of how to choose material, select important points, create effect and use gestures. It includes 18 ready-for-telling stories.

Spence, Lewis. Ancient Egyptian Myths and Legends. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1990.

This book is a review of the religious history of ancient Egypt in the light of the science of modern mythology. It offers a comprehensive survey of the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses and cults and beliefs.

Strube, Penny. Getting the Most from Literature Groups. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1996.

A useful guide for setting up literature groups and an invaluable resource offering activities that encourage students to interact with the text and get the most out of their reading.

Student Bibliography

Cashford, Jules. The Myth of Isis and Osiris. Boston: Barefoot Books, 1993.

This retelling of the myth of Isis and Osiris has been constructed from a number of different sources and emphasizes the cycle of life, death and rebirth. The book uses photographs and redrawings of original ancient Egyptian art.

Fisher, Leonard Everett. The Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt. New York: Holiday House, 1997.

The book is designed for children and describes thirteen of the principal gods of ancient Egypt. The text for each beautifully illustrated figure discusses parentage, powers and images.

Frost, Abigail. Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1990.

This book of ancient Egyptian myths and legends has been designed with the young reader in mind. The stories have been retold in language that children can understand and the many colorful illustrations serve to enhance each story.

Green, Roger Lancelyn. Tales of Ancient Egypt. New York: Puffin Books, 1967.

This book offers vivid, somewhat simplified retellings of some of the great myths and legends of ancient Egypt.

Greger, C. Shana. Cry of the Benu Bird: An Egyptian Creation Story. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996.

An adapted version of an Egyptian creation story. The beautiful illustrations further enhance this highly-appealing children’s story.

Harris, Geraldine. Gods & Pharaohs from Egyptian Mythology. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1993.

Included in the presentation of each ancient Egyptian myth are illustrations of some of the objects and symbols identified with the story events. This book is designed more for the intermediate-level reader.

Harris, Geraldine. Isis and Osiris: Looking at Egyptian Myths and Legends. Lincolnwood, Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1996.

These retellings of some of the principal Egyptian myths are written in language that children can understand. This book includes

texts and photographs from the British Museum collections.

Hull, Robert. Egyptian Stories. New York: Thomson Learning, 1993.

This children's book offers a rich collection of ancient Egyptian myths and legends designed for the young reader and includes many beautiful illustrations which enhance the stories.

James, T. G. H. Myths and Legends of Ancient Egypt. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1971.

Before each myth and legend is presented, a brief informative introduction is given along with a discussion of its probable origins.

Colorful illustrations serve to capture the spirit of the ancient Egyptian world.

Lattimore, Deborah Nourse. The Winged Cat: A Tale of Ancient Egypt. New York:Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.

We travel with a young servant girl and a high priest through the twelve gates of the Netherworld to find out who is telling the truth about the death of the girl's sacred cat. The art of ancient Egypt is recreated in the author's illustrations.

Manniche, Lise. How Djadja-em-ankh Saved the Day: A Tale from Ancient Egypt. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1996.

A translation of an ancient story about Djadja-em-ankh and King Seneferu. It was translated from hieratic text and includes illustrations and commentary with drawings based on the art of the period.

Manniche, Lise. The Prince Who Knew His Fate. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Philomel Books, 1981.

An ancient fairy tale similar to Sleeping Beauty, where the parents of a prince try to protect him from a harsh fate by isolating him in a tower. He escapes, seeks his fortune, confronts and effectively challenges three-fated enemies and wins the hand of a beautiful princess.

Mike, Jan M. Gift of the Nile: An Ancient Egyptian Legend. New York: Troll Associates, 1993.

An adapted version of an ancient legend suitable for children that tells of loyalty and friendship between a pharaoh and a servant girl.

Perl, Lila. Mummies, Tombs and Treasure: Secrets of Ancient Egypt. New York: Clarion Books, 1987.

Examines the mummies and tombs of ancient Egypt. In a beginning chapter the ancient Egyptians' view of the afterlife is presented in a simplified way and some of the principal gods and goddesses are introduced.

APPENDIX

A) Gods and goddesses

Ra Horus

Osiris Thoth

Isis Maat

Set Khonsu

Anubis Nephthys

B) Symbols

sun disc falcon

crook and flail cow-horn throne

wing ibis

ankh viper

hippo jackal

moon feather

primeval mound lotus

waters of chaos benu bird

solar boat scarab beetle

cosmic serpent djed column

underworld udjat (protective eye)

throne stick of desert sheikh

cane fish

mummified pharaoh raised arms