Growing Up in Ancient Egypt

Teacher’s Notes
TEACHERS NOTES on ANCIENT EGYPT

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INTRODUCTION

This school case is intended to provide junior/intermediate students with an interactive learning experience. Through a variety of hands-on activities students will be encouraged to develop the following skills:

1. **Reference Skills**
   The ability to find, select and abstract information.

2. **Interpretation Skills**
   The ability to understand information.

3. **Translation Skills**
   The ability to take information received in one form and express it in another.

4. **Inference Skills**
   The ability to think in hypothetical and deductive terms.

HOW TO USE THIS CASE

This school case is divided into six centres. Although the centres are numbered from 1 to 6, they do not need to be used sequentially. Each centre is comprised of one activity booklet and a selection of objects and samples. There is also a preliminary exercise worksheet that can be used before, or in conjunction with the booklets. There are many ways in which this school case can be used in your classroom. Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Set up a full class activity.** Firstly, create six separate centres in your classroom. Each centre should have one activity booklet and the appropriate objects and samples (this is marked on the front page of each centre's booklet). After the centres have been established, hand out photocopied worksheets to each student in the class. Have each student select a centre (no more than 6 students per centre), and using the worksheet and activity booklets let them travel from centre to centre. Upon completion, direct a full class discussion about what has been learnt about Egypt!

2. **Small groups or individual students working with the case.** The case does not have to be set up all over the classroom. It can be used as effectively by individual students or small groups in one classroom location. Just have the students place all the objects on a desk with accompanying activity booklets. Have students direct themselves through the activities. You might consider a follow-up discussion with individuals or the small group.

   **It is strongly recommended that teachers monitor the unpacking, handling and repacking of the unit and its contents.**
EGYPT: THE TWO LANDS

Egypt in the Time of the Pharaohs

In pharaonic times, the Egyptians saw their land as being a series of dualities. The original “Two Lands”, before any political states arose were Kemet, the Black Land, the name given to the fertile area near the river, and Deshret, the Red Land of the desert. The ancient Egyptians believed that the earliest political organization of their country consisted of two separate states: Lower Egypt, the name given to the Delta, and Upper Egypt, which is the name given to the Nile Valley proper. The geography of the two lands was and is still quite different. The Delta is a rolling, often marshy triangle of land, split into sections by the branches of the Nile. The habitable area of the valley is a narrow strip of alluvium along both banks of the river, which gives way suddenly to desert sand, and equally suddenly to rugged cliffs. Beyond the cliffs lie the Sahara to the west, and the Eastern Desert which extends as far as the Red Sea. Although the river essentially splits the country in two, it also provided a number of invaluable services. From the most ancient times, the Nile flooded annually, depositing on fields along the river a layer of silt washed down from the highlands of Ethiopia. This annual deposition of new soil was essential to the success of the crops. It was this dependence that caused Herodotus to call Egypt, “The Gift of the Nile”. The damming of the Nile at Aswan has created an enormous permanently flooded area, called Lake Nasser, and put an end to the yearly inundation. However, the river still provides an important method of transportation for many items north of this point.

In the time of the Pharaohs, the borders of Egypt proper were set by the Mediterranean Sea in the north, the limestone cliffs along the river to the east and west, and the First Cataract in the south. From a very early period, the Egyptians controlled a number of Saharan Oases: Siwa, Bahriya, Farafra, Dakhla, el-Kharga, and the Faiyum. A map of Egypt looks something like a lotus with a trailing stem; the Faiyum is an oasis surrounding a lake, which branches off from the Nile like a leaf on the stem of the lotus. The farther oases were connections with trade routes leading further south into Africa.

Plants and Animals of the Nile

Of necessity, the ancient inhabitants of the Nile were closely aware of their physical surroundings, especially the other living things in the valley. Because of the nature of the country there were two different categories of animals and plants: those of the desert and those of the river and fertile land. Animals of the desert included jackals, vultures, antelope and lions. By the river, the wild life included birds of all varieties, fish, and domesticated animals such as cattle. Many of these animals were important not only because of the role they played in the daily lives of the people, but because of their
THE OBJECTS IN THIS CASE
(all objects in this kit are reproductions)

OBJECT #1 — Charioteer Toy
A handcrafted wooden toy, from the Fayum. It is probably from the Roman Period. All parts are ancient, except for the wheels, which are modern. The dry conditions in Egypt made it possible for the wood to survive. (ROM 910.165.6)

OBJECT #2 — Cat
From an Egyptian bronze figure of a cat, made to serve as a coffin for bones of a kitten. Earrings restored. Provenance unknown; ca. 6th century B.C. ROM 910.17.51. The object was cast hollow by the “lost wax” process around a core containing the bones of a kitten. At this time in Egyptian history all cats were regarded as holy because of the much-loved cat-goddess, Bastet. It was considered a pious act to pay for the burial even of strays.

OBJECT #3 — Scarab
A copy of the “Victory Scarab”, a glazed steatite scarab of King Shabako of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (ca. 700 B.C.). The inscription on the base recites the king’s titles and extols his victories over his enemies. (ROM 910.28.1)
Most scarabs are very small and were used as seals: but a few much larger ones exist, which commemorate particular events and were apparently meant for presentation by the king to favoured courtiers.

The inscription on the scarab reads:
“...the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neferkare, son of the Sun, Shabako, given life, whom Amun loves more than any king who has existed since the foundation of the earth. He has slain those who rebelled against him in Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt and in every foreign country, the Sand-Dwellers (Bedawin) who revolted against him falling to the sword. They come to him of their own accord as prisoners, and each one among them has seized his fellow, because he has done what is beneficial for his father through the greatness of his love for him.”

OBJECT #4 — Bead Necklace
Glass beads, inspired by Egyptian beadwork in the ROM. The original string of beads consists of 25 beads, no two of which are alike. Each bead is composed of two or more colours of glass; and shapes include square, round, cylinder and oblong. The date is not known, but the style and composition suggest Late Pharaonic, or even Roman times. (ca. 500 B.C. - 300 A.D.) (ROM 922.8.6)