

Mystic Lands: Egypt: Cycle of Life: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: World History

Lesson Duration: Three to five class periods

Program Description

Rising from the windswept desert sands along the banks of the Nile, the great pyramids of Egypt are stone monuments to the pharaohs' quest for immortality. Delve into the complex culture of ancient Egypt and its rich spiritual traditions.

Discussion Questions

Before watching the video

- Where is Egypt?
- What are some features of the country and its history?
- How is the Nile River important to Egypt?
- What are hieroglyphics, and what can they tell us about ancient Egypt?
- What was the pharaoh's connection to the Egyptian gods and people?
- What was the purpose of the pyramids?

After watching the video

- In what ways is the Nile the "soul of Egypt"? (The river created fertile farmland when it flooded, provided water to the people, and was an artery for commerce and transportation.)
- Explain the relationship of the pharaoh to the gods and the Egyptian people. (Egyptologist Kent Weeks describes it as an hourglass with the gods in the top of the glass, the people in the bottom, and the pharaoh connecting the two in the narrow middle. The pharaoh was considered a god on Earth, and he held the key to the people's survival.)
- What's so mysterious about the Sphinx? (No one knows who built it or whom it is meant to depict.)
- Why did Egyptians build elaborate pyramids and temples, mummify bodies, and bury them amid riches and protective tomb writings called pyramid texts? (All these efforts were designed to help the deceased on the journey in the afterlife. The body had to be preserved or the soul could not survive. The material goods were left to provide for the spirit on its journey. The texts

were magical formulas to protect and guide the spirit to the afterlife. The pyramid housed all the things needed to usher the dead to the afterlife and protected the eternal soul.)

- How did the view of the afterlife differ between the Old and New Kingdoms? (In the Old Kingdom, only the pharaoh could reach the afterlife. In the New Kingdom, all Egyptians could attain it.)
 - How did the Egyptians' religion drive progress and technology? (Egyptians excelled in art, architecture, and science as a result of their efforts to help the dead reach the afterlife.)
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Identify the major periods of Egypt's history.
- Research their civilizations (religion, architecture, art, society).
- Create newspapers covering the major periods.

Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Library materials and other print resources

Procedures

1. Egypt's 6,500-year history is an amazing look at the changes a civilization undergoes over time. It's also an amazing look at how many aspects of life stay the same, as pointed out in the video. Undertaking a survey of ancient Egypt might seem overwhelming, but it's doable if you break the study down into the periods of Egyptian history and assign groups of two or more students to each. Note: Exact years for each period vary depending on the source. These come from the National Geographic Society and Virtual Egypt, and they have been rounded for simplicity.
 - Predynastic (prior to 3000 B.C.)
 - Early Dynastic (3000-2500 B.C.)
 - Old Kingdom (2500-2200 B.C.)
 - First Intermediate (2200-2000 B.C.)
 - Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 B.C.)
 - Second Intermediate (1800-1500 B.C.)
 - New Kingdom (1500-1000 B.C.)
 - Third Intermediate (1000-500 B.C.)
 - Late Period (500-300 B.C.)



- Greek (300-30 B.C.)
 - Roman/Byzantium (30 B.C.- A.D. 642)
 - Islamic (642-1800)
 - Modern (1800-the present)
2. For each period, the student group is to publish an edition of *The Daily Papyrus*, a newspaper featuring “the big stories of the time.” Articles should cover important rulers, architectural feats, artistic styles, cultural advances, religious beliefs, daily Egyptian life (including for women and children), and important events, such as wars or droughts. Each edition should have feature articles on news, politics, business, fashion, entertainment, and food; editorials addressing an important issue of the time; weather; cartoons; photographs; and classified ads (Help Wanted: Embalmer!). Students can use computers to write the stories and create a layout for the paper, which should have at least four pages (matching the page size of an actual newspaper). Encourage creativity. Students can design the paper masthead and use photos and illustrations liberally. After each edition is completed, the groups should give a brief presentation to the class outlining the highlights and how they reflect the historical period.
3. Encourage students to use books, periodicals, and Web-based resources in their research. Some useful online sources include:
- **Virtual Egypt** (<http://www.virtual-egypt.com>) has a plethora of content, including photo tours; maps; flash movies; 3-D models of pyramids, temples, and cities; games; and a hieroglyphic translator.
 - **Mysteries of Egypt** (<http://www.civilization.ca/civil/egypt/menu>) is a Canadian Museum of Civilization site containing exhibits, articles on many aspects of Egyptian civilization, a virtual tour of Tutankhamun’s tomb, and information about the female New Kingdom pharaoh Hatshepsut.
 - **Egyptians** (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/>) is a BBC site with lots of multimedia content and interesting articles. Students can learn the story of the Nile, hear the voices of ancient Egyptians as told in their letters, explore a pyramid complex, and help make a mummy.
 - **Mysteries of the Nile** (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/egypt/>) is the companion Web site to the PBS NOVA program. It features a look inside a pyramid, information on Old and New Kingdom periods, and the efforts of scholars to raise a replica obelisk as ancient Egyptians did.
 - **Egyptology Resources** (<http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/egypt/index.html>) is a University of Cambridge site that can serve as a gateway to all topics Egyptian.
 - Another good gateway site is **Ancient Egypt** (<http://www.teacheroz.com/egypt.htm>), a Teacher Oz page with a comprehensive list of links to great resources, including daily life in ancient Egypt, ancient Egyptian women, modern Egypt, and much more.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions; conducted thorough research, helped produce an informative, creative newspaper.
- **2 points:** Students participated in class discussions; conducted adequate research; helped produce a good newspaper.
- **1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions; conducted minimal research; contributed little to the production of the newspaper.

Vocabulary

feluccas

Definition: Narrow, flat-bottomed boats propelled by sails or oars that have traveled the Nile for centuries

Context: Images of feluccas adorn ancient Egyptian burial chambers.

hieroglyphics

Definition: The ancient Egyptian form of writing

Context: Hieroglyphics used pictures and symbols to represent words, sounds, or objects.

ka

Definition: Spirit or "double" of a living person that accompanied that person throughout life and after death

Context: The Egyptians believed that the survival of the ka required the continued existence of the body, so they developed elaborate techniques and practices of mummification to preserve the body.

pyramid texts

Definition: Paintings and reliefs found on the walls of the internal rooms and burial chambers of the pyramids that recorded the pharaoh's burial ceremonies, temple rituals, and information vital to his passage into the afterlife

Context: Many scholars believe that pyramid texts contain special formulas designed to ensure a smooth transition from this life into the next.

sarcophagus

Definition: A huge stone or marble coffin used to encase other wooden coffins and the mummy of the pharaoh or queen

Context: When archaeologists opened King Tut's sarcophagus, they were amazed by the beautiful golden treasures inside.



Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Geography – Human Systems: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics
- Language Arts – Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing, Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions, Gathers and uses information for research purposes

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environments
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Science, Technology, and Society

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.



How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into 11 parts (see below), indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Welcome to Egypt (1 min.)

Many lands measure their history in centuries. Egypt measures its history in millennia. It's a land of modern cities and primitive villages, all fed by the life-giving Nile.

II. Ancient Spiritualism and Islam (2 min.)

Egypt has always been a spiritual land. Today most Egyptians are Muslim, but long ago another religion dominated, and its evidence – the pyramids – stands as a reminder.

III. The Nile River (2 min.)

Without the Nile, Egypt would be a vast desert. Its waters and periodic flooding bring the soil to life.

IV. Secrets of the Pyramids (2 min.)

The first of the pyramids was built nearly 5,000 years ago. Many of their ancient secrets were hidden from the rest of the world until the early 1800s.



V. The Pharaohs (3 min.)

Pyramid texts explain the relationship of the pharaoh to the Egyptian people and the gods. As the go-between for people and gods, the pharaoh was considered a god on Earth.

VI. The Sphinx and Other Ancient Egyptian Symbols (3 min.)

One of Egypt's most magnificent structures, the Sphinx, is also one of the most mysterious. No one knows for sure who built it, or when, or even whom it depicts.

VII. Papyrus (2 min.)

Papyrus reeds growing along the Nile's banks were pressed into sheets that became the canvases for hieroglyphics. The symbols have been the key to understanding ancient Egyptians.

VIII. Ka and Ra (3 min.)

The pyramid helped protect the soul on its afterlife journey. But the pharaoh needed the people's help to build the pyramid. The reward for their labor might have been the promise of eternal life.

IV. The New Kingdom (3 min.)

The New Kingdom was a time of unparalleled advances in art, architecture, and science. It also brought about changes in religious beliefs.

X. The Demise of Ancient Egypt (1 min.)

The wealth filling the tombs of the Valley of the Kings would become looted, buried, or lost during invasions over hundreds of years. By the 4th century B.C., the tombs and pyramids were abandoned.

XI. The Advent of Islam (2 min.)

A thousand years after the collapse of the New Kingdom, Islam brought renewed spirit to Egypt. But the old monuments remain, and the names of the pharaohs are still spoken aloud, which keeps them immortal.

Curriculum Units**1. The Soul of Egypt**

Pre-viewing question

Q: What is Egypt's most important natural resource?

A: The Nile River

Post-viewing question

Q: What are two ways the Nile sustains the people?

A: It provides water to an arid land and its periodic flooding enriches the soil for farming.



2. Pyramid Texts

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are hieroglyphs?

A: Egyptian pictorial writing found on tomb walls and papyrus

Post-viewing question

Q: What do hieroglyphics called pyramid texts reveal?

A: They are believed to be magic formulas designed to help the deceased navigate the afterlife successfully.

3. The Role of the Pharaoh

Pre-viewing question

Q: Who was the pharaoh?

A: The Egyptian ruler who was also believed to be a god on Earth

Post-viewing question

Q: What was the relationship between the pharaoh and the Egyptian people and their gods?

A: The pharaoh was the go-between, communicating the gods' wishes to the people and also soliciting the gods' favor on behalf of the people.

4. Riddle of the Sphinx

Pre-viewing question

Q: What is the Sphinx?

A: A huge sculpture carved out of rock with a lion's body and a human head

Post-viewing question

Q: What are two possibilities for the identity of the Sphinx's face?

A: It may be the sun god Ra, or it may be the visage of Chephren, the pharaoh who is believed to have ordered its creation.

5. A Pact with the People

Pre-viewing question

Q: How were the pyramids built?

A: Answers will vary. Some may respond that they were built with slave labor.

Post-viewing question

Q: How do some Egyptologists explain the pharaohs' ability to build the pyramids and other structures?

A: The pharaohs may have made a pact with the people, promising eternal life in return for their work on the pyramids.



6. The New Kingdom

Pre-viewing question

Q: What was the period in which Egypt became one of the greatest powers on Earth?

A: The New Kingdom

Post-viewing question

Q: What changes in Egyptian life took place during the New Kingdom?

A: In addition to the pharaoh, all Egyptians could attain eternal life under the new religious beliefs. Pyramids were abandoned in favor of elaborate tombs and monuments.

7. A Nation Reborn

Pre-viewing question

Q: What led the Egyptians to abandon their ancient beliefs?

A: Invasions by many groups of outsiders over hundreds of years led to the demise of the pharaoh and the old religious ways.

Post-viewing question

Q: What religion has replaced the old worship of pharaoh and many gods?

A: Islam is now the predominant religion.