Program Description

Travel back to the world of pharaohs, sphinxes, pyramids, and hieroglyphics in this three-segment video. Ancient Egypt — Cruise the Nile to learn about a culture that endured more than 2,000 years. Hieroglyphics — Ancient Egyptians invented picture writing and papyrus to write it upon. Pyramids of Egypt — Enter the mystery of these giant tombs that have lasted 4,500 years.

Video Comprehension Questions

Segment 1, Ancient Egypt

- The Nile River provides many benefits to the people who live in East Africa and Egypt. Can you name at least two benefits? (The Nile River provides many benefits to people like water for crops and plants, water for animals and people to drink and bathe in, and a means for transportation and trade.)

- What did the Egyptians believe happened to the pharaohs after they were buried in the pyramids? (The Egyptians believed their spirit lived on and they could use the pyramids to help them journey to the afterlife.)

- For what did the Egyptians use the Nylometer? (The Egyptians used the Nylometer to gauge the flood levels and predict planting and harvesting dates.)

- Who were the pharaohs? (The pharaohs were kings who ruled Egypt.)

Segment 2, Hieroglyphics

- What are the two root words in hieroglyphic and what do they mean? (The two root words in hieroglyphic are “hiero,” meaning “sacred,” and “glyph,” meaning “carving.”)

- Animal symbols were very important in hieroglyphics. How were they used? (Each animal had an unusual quality and the picture of the animal became the symbol for this quality. For example, the buffalo became the symbol for power.)

- How did the Egyptians find a more efficient way to communicate their language? (The Egyptians found a more efficient way to communicate by using papyrus plants to make paper, and soot and water to make ink, which made it easier for them to write.)

Segment 3, Pyramids of Egypt
Ancient Egypt: Teacher’s Guide  

- What do archaeologists believe was the main purpose of the pyramids of Giza? *(Today, most archaeologists agree that the Pyramids of Giza were built as tombs for three different kings.)*
- A sphinx is made up of what two parts? *(A sphinx has the body of a lion and the face of a pharaoh.)*
- How did the pyramids get their name? *(When the Greeks first saw the pyramids, they called them “pyramis,” after a triangle-shaped wheat cake.)*
- How did the Egyptians build the pyramids without any modern tools? *(Egyptians used tools such as giant ramps to raise the stone blocks. They also used the sun and stars as a compass to orient the sides of the pyramid.)*

Lesson Plan

**Student Objectives**

- Understand that ancient Egyptians left illustrations and an ancient form of writing that teach us about their culture.
- Create their own wall mural about their own lives, imagining that it will be discovered by future archaeologists.

**Materials**

- *Ancient Egypt* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Computer with Internet access
- Paints and brushes, crayons, or markers in various colors
- Long roll of brown paper or newsprint
- Tape or other means of attaching paper to wall

**Procedures**

1. After watching the video, ask students to talk about the pictures and writings left by ancient Egyptians. Where were these images found? *(on stone walls of ancient ruins or papyrus paper)* How were they created? *(painted or carved)* What was the name of ancient Egyptian writing? *(hieroglyphics)* What were some examples of ancient Egyptian pictures or symbols seen in the video? Ideas might include:
   - The heads of two monsters crossing each other (symbol of this first national Egyptian government, uniting the two kingdoms of Egypt under one pharaoh)
   - Images of people harvesting wheat
   - Pictures of men and women with dark makeup around their eyes; images of women in gold jewelry
   - Religious symbols, such as the ankh (a cross with a loop on the top)
• Pictures of animals and people bowing down in honor of the sun
• Animals as symbols (the crocodile, the iris, the vulture, and the buffalo)

2. You may want to show students other images of ancient Egyptian carvings and paintings and hieroglyphics from books and Web sites. As you do, add to the list above.

3. Next, ask students to talk about what these images can tell us about life in ancient Egypt and the world around them. For example, these images tell us about:
   • Which animals lived at that time
   • The role of religion in people’s lives
   • How people dressed or adorned themselves
   • What crops people planted
   • Important symbols; what people valued

4. Explain to students that they now will have the opportunity to create a wall mural that illustrates a day in their lives. Ask the students to pretend that future archaeologists will uncover their creation and try to figure out what life was like at this time. Ask students to brainstorm about how they will illustrate their days and the their world. If they seem stuck, suggest the following common, daily events:
   • Children and teachers traveling to and arriving at school
   • Children working together at desks or at a computer
   • Children at recess
   • Children at home with family and pets and special toys or equipment
   • Children eating at lunchtime or making a meal with their family

5. Once you have a list of scenes on the board, divide students into small groups. Explain that each group will work on different scenes, painting or drawing their scene on a separate section of the mural. Tell the class how and where the mural will be created, such as on a long piece of brown paper or newsprint attached to a wall in the classroom or elsewhere in the school building.

6. Talk about the importance of planning their sections before they start drawing or painting on the mural itself. Explain that each group needs to figure out how much will fit in their section.

7. Students in each group should proceed to work up a maquette, or small-scale version, of their segment to think about where different illustrations should be placed, how big they should be, and what colors should be used.

8. Before they begin painting on the wall mural, bring the class together to discuss how the sections will fit together. You may also want the whole class to respond to each group’s visual draft, working out disagreements as necessary.

9. When it is finally time for students to work at the wall, consider having only one group at a time up at the wall so that the groups don’t crowd one another.
10. Ask students to volunteer to describe the mural orally, moving from left to right.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Describe some of the different ways that ancient Egyptians depended on the Nile River.
2. How did the floods benefit the people along the Nile? How did they take advantage of the flood and store water for later use?
3. Hieroglyphics used both logograms (“word signs”) and phonograms (“sound signs”). Give examples of both. Which types of symbols do we use in our writing?
4. What do you think of the ancient images and carvings you’ve looked at? What do you think of the content of the paintings and of their style?
5. Based on the ancient images and carvings, tell how life back then was like life today. How was life back then different from life today?
6. What do the pyramids tell us about ancient Egyptian knowledge of astronomy, geometry, and engineering?
7. What kinds of skills do you think you need to become an archaeologist?

**Assessment**

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

- **3 points:** Student were active in class discussions, sharing several examples of ancient Egyptian pictures and symbols; worked cooperatively in their groups to create a creative, engaging mural that reflects several aspects of daily life; participation from all members of the group.
- **2 points:** Student participated in class discussions, sharing some examples of ancient Egyptian pictures and symbols; worked well in their groups to create a complete mural that reflects some aspects of daily life; participation from most of the members of the group.
- **1 point:** Student did not participate in class discussions, sharing few or no examples of ancient Egyptian pictures and symbols; did not work cooperatively in their group; mural was disorganized or messy, and includes very few aspects of daily life; participation from few members of the group.

**Vocabulary**

**ancient**

*Definition:* Of or relating to times long past, especially those before the fall of the Western Roman Empire (A.D. 476).

*Context:* The sun was one of the most important symbols in ancient Egyptian religion.

**ankh**

*Definition:* An ancient Egyptian symbol consisting of a cross with a loop on the top; symbol for eternal life
Context: The ankh was one of the few hieroglyphics recognized by all ancient Egyptians.

archaeologist
Definition: A scientist who studies the life and culture of ancient peoples.
Context: When archaeologists began to explore the ruins of temples in ancient Egypt, they discovered strange carvings on the wall.

civilization
Definition: Social organization of a high order.
Context: From the mud and stone along the Nile River, the ancient Egyptians built an advanced civilization.

hieroglyphics
Definition: The written language developed by ancient people of Egypt over 5,000 years ago.
Context: To the ancient Egyptians, the hieroglyphics were sacred carvings.

pharaoh
Definition: A ruler or king in ancient Egypt.
Context: The pharaoh was a powerful ruler, who was thought to be part god, part man.

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:

• K-4 History—The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World: Understands selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe.
• K-4 History—Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago: Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various places long ago.
• Arts—Visual Arts: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

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:

• Time, Continuity, and Change

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Support Materials

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- [http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html](http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html)