ANCIENT EGYPT: PROPORTION, SYMMETRY, AND SIZE

Passport Distance Learning Program

Background:
Ancient Egyptians strived for perfection in all areas of their daily lives, and this is seen specifically in the art and architecture. Students travel back in time through this dynamic program to learn about the math and science behind ancient Egyptian design. They will discover how proportion, symmetry, and size were used to tell stories and use the Canon of Proportion to see how they measure up to the ancient Egyptians!

Focus Question:
• How did the Egyptians use the idea of perfection in their lives?

Student Objectives:
Students will be able to:
• Explain the Canon of Proportion and how it was used.
• Give two examples of binary symmetry and conceptual symmetry found in ancient Egyptian art and architecture.
• Explain how size was used to tell a story.
• Explain how ancient Egyptians wanted life to be.
• Explain how pharaohs viewed themselves.

Materials:
Pencils
One sheet of graph paper for each student
One worksheet for each student
One yardstick for every 3-4 students

Teacher Preparation:
Print out and photocopy enough worksheets and graph paper for each student. Each student will also need a pencil. Collect one yard stick for every 3-4 students. Have the worksheets, graph paper, and pencils ready to pass out at the beginning of the program.

Procedure:
Pass out worksheets, graph paper, and pencils to each student. Discuss with your students what they already know about ancient Egypt. Then ask them to think about not only what they know, but what they want to learn about ancient Egyptians. Have them write down any questions they may want to ask during the program. Students will be working in groups of 3-4
during the program. Students should be divided into groups prior to the start of the program and will be instructed when to separate into those groups. Connect to Milwaukee Public Museum. Should you have any difficulty connecting, call 414-412-7059.

Vocabulary Words:
- **Proportion**—Harmonious relation of the parts to each other or the whole—a balance.
- **Symmetry**—Beauty from balance, the harmonious arrangement of objects or elements.
- **Size**—Used to convey status and relative importance in ancient Egyptian art.
- **Royal Cubit**—A form of measurement in ancient Egypt, equal to approximately 20.63 inches, which represented the length of the Pharaoh’s arm from his elbow to the tip of the longest finger.
- **Abu Simbel**—Two massive rock temples in southern Egypt, originally carved out of the mountainside during the reign of Pharaoh Rameses II in the 13th century BC. It was constructed as a monument to himself and his queen Nefertari, to commemorate his alleged victory at the Battle of Kadesh, and to intimidate his Nubian neighbors.
- **Narmer Palette**—Contains some of the earliest hieroglyphic inscriptions ever found, dating from about the 31st century BC. Its imagery is thought to portray the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under the king Narmer. On one side the king is represented with the White crown of Upper (southern) Egypt. The other side depicts the king wearing the Red Crown of Lower (northern) Egypt.

Assessment and Extension:
Using the Canon of Proportions and the concepts of proportion, symmetry, and size, have your students create their own ancient Egyptian artwork.
- Create a class picture that simulates the drawings found on tomb walls.
- Have each student make their own Narmer Palette depicting an important event in their own lives.
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Passport Distance Learning Series

**Canon of Proportions:** Egyptians loved to have everything in proportion! They wanted everything to follow a standard or tradition, so much that they created something called the “Canon of Proportions.” Canon is another word for guide, and Ancient Egyptians followed this guide religiously.

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\text{Royal Cubit} = \]

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![Diagram of Egyptian proportions](image-url)