



Grade Level:
4th-8th

Subject Area:
Social Studies
Language Arts

WI Model Academic Standards:

Social Studies
A.4.4; A.8.8; B.4.1

Language Arts
C.4.2, C.4.3; C.8.2,
C.8.3

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Mummies

Lesson Guide

Overview:

Students will learn about the origins and purpose of ancient Egyptian mummification and how mummification helps us to understand an ancient culture. Students join the museum educator in a step-by-step mummification procedure using our model mummy. The program takes place adjacent to, and draws upon, the museum's real Egyptian mummy and artifacts.

Background:

The word "mummy" describes a human body that has been preserved by embalming techniques or by nature. Mummies have been found throughout the world in many regions including North America, South America, and China, but the ancient Egyptians are the most famous for their skillful embalming techniques and elaborate burial customs. They believed that, by preserving a dead body in recognizable form, the deceased would enjoy eternal life.

Aspects of mummification were introduced in ancient Egypt sometime around 3,500-3,300 BCE. Through the Old Kingdom (Pyramid Age to 2,200 BCE), only members of the royal family or highest nobility seem to have been mummified. Over time, mummification was theoretically available to everyone, but the process varied considerably based on ability to pay, just as with modern funerals. Egyptians viewed mummification as a deeply religious act. Every living being, they believed, possessed a spiritual force, a life force and a body. Death shattered the bond between these three elements.

Embalmers removed the internal organs through an incision made in the left flank of the body. The liver, lungs, intestines and stomach were commonly mummified and separately stored in four canopic jars. The remaining organs, except the heart, were discarded including the brain. The heart was dried and wrapped and replaced in the body. The emptied body was then packed and dried with natron salt. After the body was dried, it was wrapped in bandages and coated with ointments, oils and resins to keep the skin as supple as possible, help with preservation and diminish odors. The mummified body was then placed in a decorated wooden coffin. The bodies of the elite were subsequently sealed in a carved stone sarcophagus to be entombed.

Student Objectives:

1. Define "mummy" and discuss examples of mummies throughout the world.
2. Learn why ancient Egyptians thought mummification prepared them for the afterlife.
3. Participate in the step-by-step procedure of ancient Egyptian mummification.

Assessments:

1. Students will learn two ways in which a mummy is formed – natural and intentional.
2. Students will understand that ancient Egyptians mummified their dead so their bodies would be preserved to host the soul in the afterlife.
3. Students will understand that the concept of the afterlife for ancient Egyptians was similar to life in the physical world.

4. Students will list major steps in mummification – organ removal, desiccation of the body, wrapping of bandages around the body, and addition of spiritual objects for protection.

Program Vocabulary:

Ahk: Best translated as the "spirit" which had to travel through the Underworld to the Final Judgment and subsequent entrance to the Afterlife.

Ba: The personality of the deceased. It was shown as a bird with a human head, particularly the head of the deceased person.

Canopic Jars: A set of four pottery or stone jars in which some of the internal organs of the mummy would be stored. They are normally made of pottery, carved limestone or alabaster, with lids representing the four sons of Horus.

Desiccation: To preserve by removing moisture.

Embalming: A process which preserved the corpse by extracting the organs, filling the body cavities with salt and linen, and wrapping it in bandages and amulets. The aim was to create a new body that could survive forever in the afterlife.

Ka: The ka is usually translated as "soul" or "spirit." The ka came into existence when an individual was born. It was thought that when someone died they "met their *ka*." A person's ka would live on after their body had died. Some tombs included model houses, as the ka needed a place to live. Offerings of food and drink would be left at the tomb entrance so the ka could eat and drink.

Mummy: A corpse, especially of ancient Egypt, whose skin and organs have been preserved by either intentional or incidental exposure to hot dry conditions, chemicals, extreme coldness, very high humidity, or lack of air.

Natron: A type of salt occurring naturally in the Egyptian desert used to dry the body and organs before wrapping and entombment.

Sarcophagus: A stone container that usually housed the coffin and mummy. The surface was often inscribed with texts to assist the deceased in the journey through the underworld.

Enrichment Vocabulary:

Abdomen	Bacteria	Balance	Biographical
Chronic disease	Dental Disease	Demonstrate	Pectorals
Preventative Medicine		Salts	

Teacher Preparation:

Meet your Museum educator in front of the elevator on the third floor five minutes before your scheduled program start time.