

Museum Curator: Ancient Burial Rituals

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will create a replica of an Ancient Egyptian tomb that will be on display at a new museum exhibit.

Activity Teacher note: This activity requires mummifying a hot dog for 1-2 weeks before continuing to Steps 3-4

Step 1: Background Information on Egyptian Queens and Ancient Burial Rituals (5-10 minutes)

- Show [Video: Ancient Burial Rituals of Egyptian Pharaoh](#).
- Ask students if they can define a “mummy.” Explain that a mummy is a corpse whose skin and flesh have been preserved by chemicals or lack of air or humidity.
- Ask students why they think mummification was a common practice in Ancient Egypt. Discuss how Ancient Egyptians believed that the afterlife was extremely important.
- Extra Time? Show [Handout: Process of Mummification in Ancient Egypt](#).
- Discuss how Egyptians placed a corpse in a sarcophagus. A sarcophagus is a decorated coffin. It is a large rectangular container for a body that is buried above ground and is usually made of stone. In addition to the body, artifacts were sometimes placed inside too.
- Show [Handout: Example of a Sarcophagus](#).

Step 2: Mummifying a Corpse (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will first create a replica of a mummified corpse that will be on display in a new museum exhibit.
- Provide each pair with the following materials:
 - Disposable plastic container with lid
 - 1 hot dog
 - 2 cups baking soda
 - Plastic gloves (optional)
 - Permanent marker
- Have groups place their hot dog in their container and cover it with baking soda. The entire hot dog should be covered.
- Then, instruct groups to seal the containers so that no air will come out. After they seal their containers, groups should label their container with a group name.

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- Explain to students that they will need to wait 7-14 days for the hot dog to mummify. Once the hog dog is mummified, they will place their mummy in the tomb that they will be creating in the next step.

Step 3: Creating a Sarcophagus with Artifacts (30+ minutes)

- Explain to students that they will now create a replica of a tomb and artifacts that could be found inside of it. Provide students with the following materials:
 - [Handout: Steps to Create a Tomb with Artifacts](#)
 - A shoe box or similarly sized container to serve as the tomb for their mummy.
- Students will start by learning about Ancient Egyptian life. Have students complete step 1 on the handout.
- Next, students will choose the artifacts that will be included in the tomb they are creating. Explain to students that they will need to select 3 artifacts to include in their tomb and be able to justify why each artifact was chosen. Have students complete step 2 on the handout.
- Then, students will design the sarcophagus that will hold their mummy. Explain to students that they should use [Handout: Examples of a Sarcophagus](#) as inspiration for their design. Have students complete step 3 on the handout.
- After students finish planning what their sarcophagus will look like, they should cut out and assemble their sarcophagus. The completed sarcophagus should be placed in the tomb.
- Next, students should use art supplies and building materials to build the artifacts they want to include in their tombs. Remind students to be mindful of the size of their artifacts. All three artifacts should fit in the tomb along with the sarcophagus.
- Provide students with art supplies and building materials to create their artifacts (e.g., clay, recycled boxes, egg cartons, toothpicks).
- As students are creating their sarcophagus and artifacts, discuss the following:
 - What types of items would be prized possessions (favorite things) of the person your mummy represents?
 - Will the items you are choosing survive a long period of time in a sarcophagus?
 - What can the items tell someone about the identify of the person your mummy represents?

Step 4 Museum Tour (15+ minutes)

- Teacher note: This step cannot be completed until the hot dogs have mummified. It will take between 7-14 days for hot dogs to mummify.
- Have one student from each group put on a pair of plastic gloves and remove the hot dog from the plastic container.
- Have the student wrap the hot dog in strips of paper towel or tissue paper. A body was wrapped in linens in Ancient Egypt.

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- Once the mummy has been properly wrapped, it should be placed inside of the sarcophagus. The sarcophagus and mummy should be placed inside the tomb.
- Note: If the mummified hot dog is too long for the sarcophagus, students may need to cut a hole in the bottom of their sarcophagus to make it fit.
- Have each group place their tomb in a different spot in the classroom.
- Then, explain that students will walk around the classroom to look at each tomb and write down information they learned about each one. Provide students with [Handout: Analyzing a Tomb](#). Have students spend about 10 minutes walking around and recording information.
- Once students have completed their handout, have them join back together in their groups. Students should compare the notes they made about each sarcophagus.
- Have each group come up with an overall claim about what a sarcophagus can tell them about ancient Egyptian life and burial rituals.
- Have each group write their claim on a sticky note. Then, have groups bring their sticky notes to the front of the class.
- Ask the group that created a tomb if they agree with the claims made by other groups.
- Have a concluding class discussion about how ancient Egyptians honored their dead through elaborate preparation for the afterlife and what we can learn about these practices by studying tombs today.

Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Ancient Burial Rituals of Egyptian Pharaoh
- Handout: Process of Mummification in Ancient Egypt
- Handout: Example of a Sarcophagus
- Handout: Steps to Create a Tomb with Artifacts
- Handout: Analyzing a Tomb

Not provided:

- Disposable plastic container with lid
- 1 hot dog
- 2 cups baking soda
- Plastic gloves (optional)
- Permanent marker
- Shoe box (or similar sized box)
- Strips of cloth or tissue paper
- Art Supplies and Building Materials
- Scissors
- Glue
- Sticky Notes

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