

DISCOVERING
**ANCIENT
EGYPT**

HASS | Years 3–4

Teacher resource



Acknowledgement of Country

Queensland Museum acknowledges the First Peoples — the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and sky where we live and work. We honour their unbroken connection to Country, culture, and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We recognise our shared history and commit to embedding First Nations voices in Queensland's continuing story.

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Discovering Ancient Egypt

What is Ancient Egypt? Ancient Egypt doesn't just refer to the way the land mass or borders of a geographical location in Africa looked long ago. It was what we call a civilisation — a society of people with a culture and way of life — that existed for over three thousand years. Ancient Egyptian civilisation is very old. It predates the first Chinese dynasty, as well as Mayan, Aztec, Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman civilisations.

Even though this impressive civilisation ended more than two thousand years ago, we can still learn so much about how people lived.

But how?

Ancient Egyptians were prolific and skilled artisans and engineers who made many magnificent monuments (like the pyramids), iconic works of art (seen the Mask of Tutankhamun?) as well as ornate objects like scrolls, jewellery, musical instruments and coffins. Remarkably, many of these artefacts have survived and thanks to careful excavation, collection, 3D-scanning technology and a lot of research, we can continue to put together a history that fascinates modern society.

For thousands of years, Ancient Egyptian pharaohs, dynasties and empires rose to power and fell in defeat. Ancient Egypt pioneered agriculture, architecture, engineering, fermentation, medicine and perhaps most famously, mummification. Civilians lived full lives — creating, worshipping, celebrating, playing and contributing to their communities. How much has life changed for us today?

What else will you discover as you visit and interact with [Discovering Ancient Egypt?](#)

School programs

A Deep Dive into Egyptology: With Dr Jasmine Day

Ancient Egyptian mummification

Years 4–7 students and their teachers have a special opportunity to spend a day at Queensland Museum. Join a fascinating talk by anthropologist and Egyptologist Dr Jasmine Day — author, presenter of Egypt's *Unexplained Files* and expert on Egyptian mummies followed by admission to [Discovering Ancient Egypt](#). How, when and why was mummification invented? The answers may surprise you. Uncover the lost history of this legendary but much-misunderstood practice. (**Note:** Contains images of human remains).

Date: 13 February 2025

Time: 10:30 am

Cost: \$24 per student, which includes entry to *Discovering Ancient Egypt*.

To book, please use this [QTIX school bookings form](#).

Visiting Queensland Museum Kurilpa

Important information

[Discovering Ancient Egypt](#) opens Friday 25 October 2024 and runs until Sunday 17 August 2025. The exhibition is located at Queensland Museum Kurilpa (QMK) on Level 3. You can download a [site map here](#).

For information about school visits, including getting here, timing your visit, supervision and group size, cost and invoicing and facilities and services, [visit our website](#). For convenience, this page also includes links to download a risk assessment and certificate of currency, as well as order lunch packs.

For groups of 10+ students or children, please use this [school booking form](#).

Learning resources

To enrich this experience, Queensland Museum [learning resources](#) may be accessed. Creating a free account means you can save, sort, manage and share your favourite resources (including audio and video, objects, events, fact sheets, images, learning resources and loan kits).

[QM Loans](#) is Queensland Museum's object library that suits Queensland schools and early years. The QM Loans collection features kits and sets of museum objects to support the Australian curriculum, early learning and community engagement. We have 24 locations across Queensland to collect and return your education loans kits, including Queensland Museum Rail Workshops (Ipswich), Queensland Museum Cobb+Co (Toowoomba) and Queensland Museum Tropics (Townsville).

Other learning opportunities

SparkLab

Include a visit to QMK's *SparkLab* while you're here! *SparkLab* is an interactive science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) space, ideal for 6 to 13 year olds. Exhibits and programs link to Australian Curriculum in the learning areas of Science, Technologies and Mathematics. [Click here](#) for further information and to book your visit.

Future Makers

Future Makers is an innovative partnership between Queensland Museum and Shell's QGC business aiming to increase students' uptake of and performance in STEM-related subjects and careers. It also provides curriculum-aligned learning resources and strategies to inspire teachers and increase confidence delivering STEM activities in the classroom. Find out about workshops, online courses, events and resources [here](#).

Curriculum links

This resource is aligned with [Australian Curriculum](#) HASS, Years 3–4.

Content descriptions

HASS, Years 3–4	
AC9HS3S01 / AC9HS4S01	develop questions to guide investigations about people, events, places and issues
AC9HS3S04 / AC9HS4S04	analyse information and data, and identify perspectives
AC9HS3S05 / AC9HS4S05	draw conclusions based on analysis of information
AC9HS3S07 / AC9HS4S07	present descriptions and explanations, using ideas from sources and relevant subject-specific terms

General capabilities

Knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions:

- critical and creative thinking
- intercultural understanding
- literacy
- numeracy
- personal and social capability.

Learning objectives

Students are learning to:

- pose questions to investigate writing systems of Ancient Egyptians
- explore the symbolism found in historical items
- examine information to understand and decode writing systems
- describe how historical items help us learn about the past.

Success criteria

Students will be successful when they can:

- document key information during a visit to the *Discovering Ancient Egypt* exhibition
- reflect on how Ancient Egyptians developed writing systems by identifying and describing pictographs and hieroglyphs
- develop and test a simple writing system.

Teacher notes

Using this resource

- This resource includes learning activities designed in response to a school visit to [Discovering Ancient Egypt](#).
- Enrich student experience by incorporating key resources into teaching and learning.
- Students to complete *Exhibition worksheet* ([Appendix A](#)) during their visit. The *Language key* ([Appendix B](#)) resource will be completed during [Lesson 2 and 3](#).
- Learning activities are organised into three 1-hour lessons.

Materials

Each student will need:

- a printed copy of Appendix items
- a HB pencil
- an eraser
- felt pens, brush ink pens or a paintbrush and brown paint
- their workbook
- unlined paper

Optional: If you choose to dye the paper to make it look aged, you will also need:

- four black teabags
- two cups of boiled water
- jug for brewing tea
- high-walled wide container for soaking (baking or roasting dish)
- towels.

Learning activities

Lesson 1: Understanding writing systems

Inquiry question

- Why are writing systems important?

Preparation

- Students will have completed their *Exhibition worksheet* ([Appendix A](#)) during their visit to *Discovering Ancient Egypt*. Ensure students have access to these worksheets during this lesson.
- Prepare a still image of the replica [Rosetta Stone](#) for students to view.

Introductory activity

- Invite each member of the class to share their favourite or most memorable part of the *Discovering Ancient Egypt* exhibition. What did they think was the most beautiful or impressive item?

Learning activities

- In small groups and using their worksheets, students answer the following questions about each item they recorded:
 - Do you like the item? Why or why not?
 - Is the item decorative (made to look nice) or functional (made to do something)?
 - How would you describe the item in one sentence?
 - What figures, places and events are shown on the item? Are they telling a story, part of a ritual or communicating another message?
- As a class, discuss answers to the last question.
- Share an image of the replica Rosetta Stone, and read the following:

When people today think about Ancient Egypt, they might picture incredible monuments like the pyramids and the Great Sphinx. They think of pharaohs, mummified people and an ancient writing system of hieroglyphs, which was script inscribed into bone, ivory, pottery and stone, and written with ink on wood and papyrus (a thick paper-like material, made from the pulp of a reed plant). Egyptian hieroglyphics are one of the earliest known writing systems.

Hieroglyphs developed from pictographs, which are pictures that act as symbols for a word or concept — a bit like an ancient emoji. Larger and more complicated pictures were simplified, so people could keep more comprehensive records of history. There are over 700 hieroglyph symbols in the Ancient Egyptian alphabet (compared to 26 letters in the English alphabet), which is probably why very few people could write! The sacred writing was only produced by a skilled

craftsman called a scribe, or by a priest or other official. Similarly, most civilians could not read hieroglyphics.

For many years after the fall of Ancient Egyptian civilisation, the meaning of Egyptian hieroglyphics remained a mystery, but in the late eighteenth century, an inscribed stone tablet called the Rosetta Stone was discovered. The object in this image is a replica, made in black resin so the white inscriptions stand out. The Rosetta Stone included the same decree written three times in different scripts, one of which was Greek. The Rosetta Stone was the key to finally decoding this ancient writing system.

Do you remember seeing pictographs or hieroglyphs in the exhibition?

- Guide a discussion about items in the exhibition that included pictographs or hieroglyphs (temple inscriptions, scrolls, coffins, artwork). Have the symbols been translated? What was the scribe intending to communicate?

Optional: Paper dying activity

If you would like to create paper that looks 'aged' for the next lesson, you can follow these instructions:

- Boil two cups of water and pour into a jug for brewing tea
- Steep four teabags for 15 minutes (you can experiment with steeping duration and vary with other tea or coffee bags to achieve different colours)
- Remove teabags and pour water into high-walled wide container
- Wait for the water to cool completely
- Soak paper in the container for 10 minutes (you can experiment with soaking duration to achieve a lighter or darker stain)
- Place wet paper between a folded towel and press gently to remove excess water (be careful, the wet paper will be fragile)
- Let the paper dry flat overnight
- Once completely dry, you could gently scrunch or tear the paper to make it look weathered.

Lesson 2 and 3: Decoding and developing writing systems

Inquiry question

- How are writing systems created?

Preparation

- Print a copy of the *Language key* ([Appendix B](#)) for each student.
- If you have made your own 'aged' paper, make sure it is completely dry before these lessons.

Learning activities

- Pose the question below and ask students to *Think-Pair-Share*.

Why is language important?

- *Think* — spend three minutes considering your own response to the question and write or draw this in your workbook/on a piece of paper.
 - *Pair* — spend five minutes discussing your responses with your elbow partner and listening to their response. Copy down ideas your partner had that you did not.
 - *Share* — with your partner, decide which responses are most valid or important and raise your hand to share these with the class. As you listen to responses from the class, write down any more ideas you like.
- As a class, discuss the languages students use, including verbal, written, signalled or signed languages. Are there any special languages used when doing sports or in subjects like mathematics? What about the language of traffic control or workplace health and safety? Why might it be important that some languages are universal?
 - Read the following:

As we learned last lesson, the Ancient Egyptian writing system is very complex and has many more symbols than the English alphabet. Here are some interesting facts about decoding Egyptian hieroglyphics:

- *A symbol can stand for a whole word or one sound*
 - *Though more commonly read right to left, from the top downwards, hieroglyphics are also written left to right, from the top downwards*
 - *You can tell the intended direction of the script based on human or animal figures — they face the beginning of the line*
 - *Ancient Egyptians didn't use punctuation (notevenspacesbetweenwords).*
- Hand out the *Language key* worksheet ([Appendix B](#)) and explain that students will develop a small symbol to represent each letter of the alphabet (the red text is included as an example and could be deleted before printing). **Hint:** Students could choose a symbol that begins with the corresponding letter, e.g. the letter A = an apple, or they could make their own associations, e.g.

the letter M looks a bit like two mountains with a valley between, or the letter C phonetically sounds like the sea, so the student could draw waves.

- Give students time to complete the worksheet. As an extension activity, they could explain their choices in their workbooks.
- With unlined paper in a landscape orientation, students lightly sketch their full name with a pencil, using the writing system they have just developed. They may choose to write right to left or left to right and should adjust the direction any figures are facing appropriately. When they are happy with their name, students trace over the pencil with brown or black ink (felt pens, brush ink pens or paint) and then erase any sketch marks.
- Student names could be framed like an historical artefact, rolled and tied like a scroll, or displayed in the classroom.

Extension activity

- Students write a letter to a peer or family member in their language and see if the recipient can decode it without the language key.

Appendix A: *Exhibition worksheet*

Find at least two decorated exhibition items and complete the following.

Item 1: According to its label, what is the item **called**?

When was the item **made**?

What **figures, places, events** or **stories** are shown on the object?

Draw the item, labelling decorative or symbolic elements.

Item 2: According to its label, what is the item **called**?

When was the item **made**?

What **figures, places, events** or **stories** are shown on the object?

Draw the item, labelling decorative or symbolic elements.

Appendix B: Language key

A		G		M		S		Y	
B		H		N		T		Z	
C		I		O		U			
D		J		P		V			
E		K		Q		W			
F		L		R		X		A	

Endnotes

ⁱ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2022). *Australian Curriculum, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), Version 9.0, 2022*, https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/hass-f-6/year-3_year-4.

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