![National Museums Scotland logo]

Count Like An Egyptian

Like us, the ancient Egyptians counted in tens and ones. They used seven hieroglyphs to represent numbers of things. Using these they were able to do lots of different kinds of calculations.

When reading and writing Egyptian numbers, the highest number always comes first, then the lower numbers in order, with the ones coming last. If there is more than one row of numbers, start reading from the top row. Hieroglyphs could be written from left to right, from right to left or even in columns; we've made it easier for you here by writing them left to right.

These are the symbols they used:

Number	Hieroglyph	What is it?
One		A single line
Ten		A loop
Hundred		A piece of rope
Thousand		A flower
Ten thousand		A human finger
Hundred thousand		A frog
Million		The god of eternity, Heh

Challenge: Have a go at a writing a number in hieroglyphs.
Ask a partner to work out what number it is.
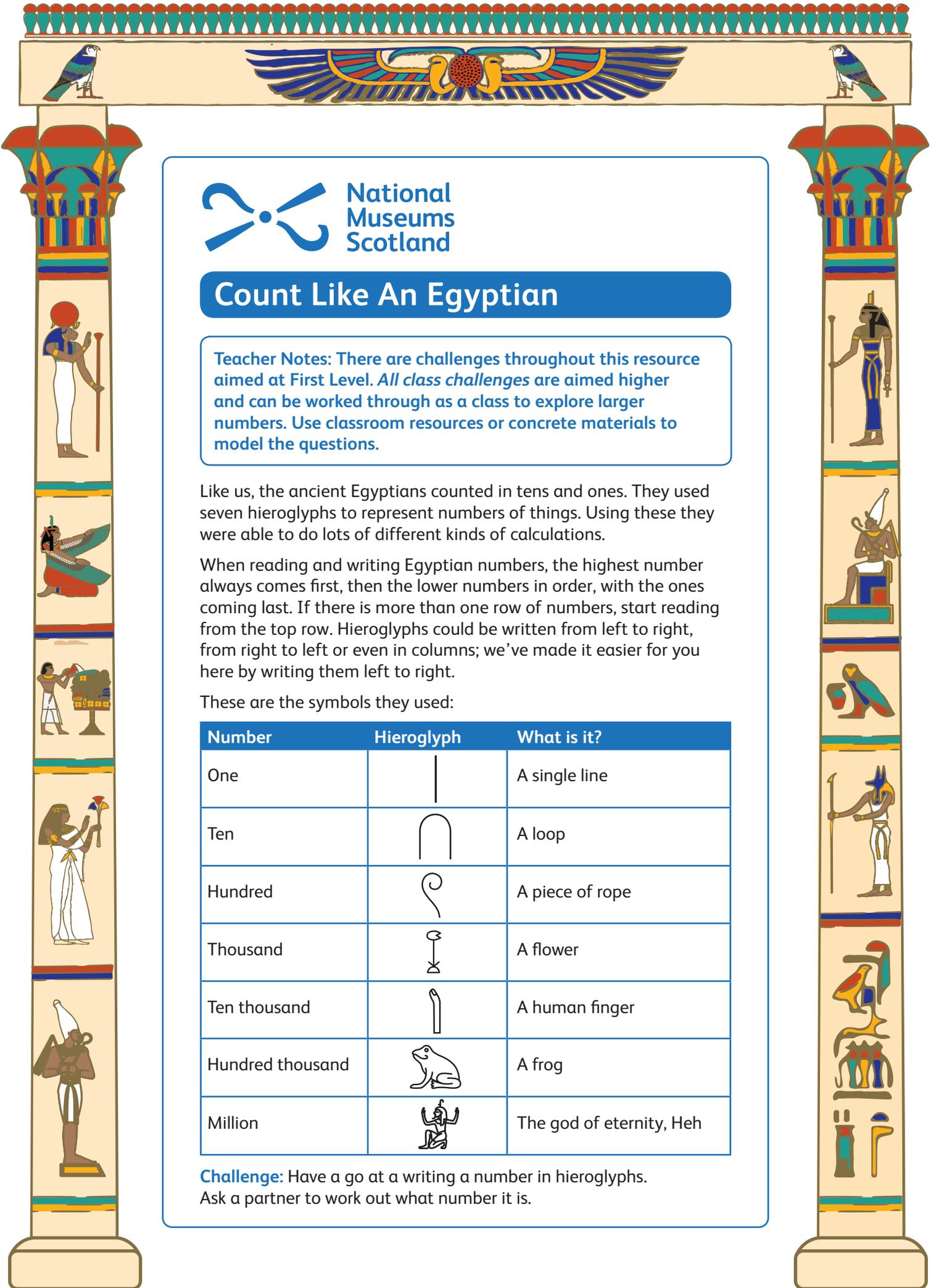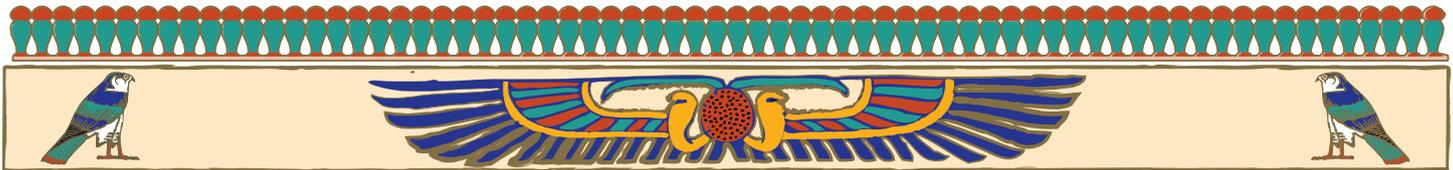
All class challenge: This big number can be seen on the wall of an Egyptian temple; can you work out what it is?
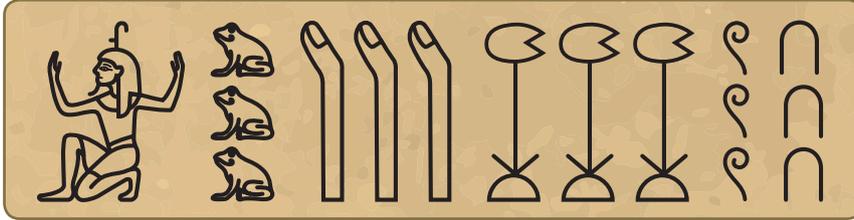
Challenge: Solve the following problems. Write your answer in hieroglyphs next to 'demedge' which means total in ancient Egyptian.

Hieroglyph 'demedge'.

1. Nofret is shopping in the market. She buys ||| dates and ∩||| figs. How many pieces of fruit does she have altogether?

   _____

2. Imhotep has ∩∩ honey cakes. He shares them with his friend Djedi. How many cakes does each boy get?

   _____

3. If one goose eats 𐦀𐦀𐦀 grains of wheat how many grains of wheat will || geese eat?

   _____

4. 𐦀 people are working hard to build the Great Pyramid. 𐦀 of them go for a break, how many are still working?

   _____

Designed and illustrated by Dawson Creative.