

Mummification class activities

In ancient Egypt people believed that death was not the end. The Egyptians believed that your body provided a home for different parts of your spirit including the *ba*. This was your personality, or what makes you special.



This is a *ba*-bird, which looks like a hawk with a human head. It is able to fly out of the tomb but needs to return regularly to rejoin with the body. To do this successfully it has to recognise its owner's body. That's why people were mummified, to preserve their bodies and keep them looking as lifelike as possible.

Mummification usually lasted 70 days. During that time a body would have its internal organs removed, after which it would be dried out with natron salt before being wrapped in bandages. Only then was it ready to be placed in its coffin. Very rich people might have had several coffins, one inside the other, which were finally placed in a great, stone sarcophagus.

As time went on, temples started to keep lots of the particular animals that were associated with the gods and people could pay for the animals to be mummified as gifts to the gods. Cats were associated with the goddess Bastet.

Below are two activities you can use with your class to explore more about mummification.

Mummified Cat Bookmark

Egyptologists have discovered lots of mummified animals including crocodiles, ibises and cats. Here's how to make a "purrrfect" mummified cat bookmark:

You will need

- A strip of card about 17 X 6 cm (1 per pupil)
- Scissors
- Colouring pens or pencils
- Masking tape (optional)



Instructions:

1. Look at the image above for inspiration.
2. Draw a mummified cat shape on your piece of card.
3. Cut out the cat shape and colour it in.
4. Decorate! You could stick thin strips of masking tape round the body to look like bandages. Draw on features and add “amewsing” decorations!
5. Research other animals that were mummified and why ancient Egyptians chose these animals. You could then make another bookmark of a different mummified animal.

We'd love to see what your class made. Share your results via our Twitter page @NMSEngage using the #NMSSchools

Mummify an Orange

Try a STEM experiment by mummifying an orange following the instructions below. You could make predictions about what you think will happen to the orange and test out if these were correct after 40 days.



You will need

- Orange, Blood Orange or Grapefruit
- Bandages
- Salt and Bicarbonate of soda mixed 50:50 (This makes natron, a chemical salt used in mummification)
- Teaspoons

Instructions

1. Teachers can slice the orange from the top to half way. Be careful not to cut the orange in half.
2. Squeeze out the juice and remove the inside of the orange using a teaspoon.
3. Stuff the orange with paper towels to soak up any liquid and moisture. Leave this for around 5 – 10 minutes before removing the paper towel.
4. Fill the orange with the natron mixture.
5. Hold the slit in the orange closed (get a classmate or teacher to help you) and then wrap the bandage tightly around the orange. Try to have around three layers of bandage around the orange. Make sure you secure the bandage by tying a knot.
6. Store the wrapped orange in a warm, dark place for 40 days.
7. After the 40 days have passed, empty the orange of the Natron and re-wrap. Your mummified fruit is ready for its journey to the afterlife.



Did your predictions prove correct? Compare your mummified orange to a fresh orange and compare with others around the class – what are the differences? What does this tell you about mummification?

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