Coffin and Mummy Case of Paankhenamun

Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 22 (c. 945–715 B.C.)
Ancient Egyptians believed upon their death they would be reborn into an eternal existence similar to the one they left behind. In this afterlife, the resurrected dead would continue to wear clothes, eat food, and carry on a full physical life. Of course, the spirit or soul of the deceased would need a body to inhabit in the afterlife. For this reason, Egyptians preserved the corpse through a process called mummification. Decay was avoided at all costs, as it would signify a separation between the body and the soul. Completed mummies were then placed within a tomb structure that housed most of the material goods needed for the afterlife and also prevented any further deterioration.

Mortuary architecture in Egypt was highly developed and often very grand. The tomb was not simply a place where the corpse could be protected from destruction, but also a home, providing the deceased with material objects to ensure a continued existence after death. Part of the tomb might symbolically reproduce the dead person’s earthly dwelling; wall paintings of scenes from a worldly existence could enable the individual to pursue a similar afterlife. For a pharaoh (king), the expectations were quite different. His tomb became the intended vehicle for achieving his privileged destiny with the gods in a celestial hereafter.

Most tombs comprised two principal parts—a burial chamber (the tomb itself) and a chapel—in which offerings for the deceased could be made. In royal burials, the chapel rapidly developed into a temple, which was built separately in later times and at some distance from the tomb. These great superstructures contained many storage chambers stocked with food and provisions for the deceased, who lay in a rectangular burial chamber below ground. Some of these provisions included human slaves sacrificed in order to serve their master in the afterlife. It became more common, however, to substitute statues or painted images for actual human beings. Existing Egyptian sculpture from this time period were mostly funerary—statues used in tombs of the deceased. By itself, a statue represented no one unless it carried identification in the hieroglyphs.

Preparation of a body for mummification and creation of the actual mummy case were meticulous processes. After being packed in salt for seventy days, the corpse would then be wrapped in linen; amulets were included for good luck. The heart was left in the body, while the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines were stored in canopic jars and left in the tomb with the body. If the family of the deceased could afford it, a graduated series of cases was constructed to surround the mummy. The innermost case, like that of Paankhenamun, for example, was created with a material called cartonnage, in which linen or papyrus strips were joined together using a gummy substance. The cartonnage mummy case itself was formed around a temporary core. A lengthwise seam along the back allowed for the insertion of the wrapped mummy. The seam would then be laced closed and a separate footboard would be inserted at the base. Since the cases were normally coated with a layer of inflexible gesso or a plaster-type
material, scholars assume that the painted decoration was added after the body was in place. The result was a mummy case strong enough to withstand wear for almost 3000 years. This mummy case still houses the preserved body of Paankhenamun, who is thought to have lived in the city of Thebes along the Nile River in Central Egypt. X-rays of the mummy show that Paankhenamun was a middle-aged man approximately 5'5" tall when he died.

The rules for successful rebirth required that a representation of the person's face be rendered on the surface of the case. The face of Paankhenamun is not a portrait of the deceased, but an idealized human face. Because ancient Egyptians believed that the occupation and status achieved in life would persist in the afterlife, a representation of name and title were also required. Hieroglyphs on the mummy case indicate Paankhenamun was "the doorkeeper of the temple of Amun" and that his father held that position before him.

Egyptians believed that scenes depicted on the mummy case would later take place in the afterlife of the deceased. The symbolic images on this case depict Paankhenamun's eventual rebirth and eternal life. The central image on the torso of the mummy case is the introduction of Paankhenamun to Osiris, ruling god of the afterlife, by the god's hawk-headed son Horus, who leads Paankhenamun by the hand. The green face of Osiris symbolizes rebirth, as does the lotus blossom (at Osiris' feet), which holds the four sons of Horus, deities that exist to protect the canopic organs. The lotus blossom is a symbol of rebirth because it grows pure white out of mud. A scarab beetle, believed to push the sun into the sky to start each new day, is painted over Paankhenamun's heart and also represents his rebirth. Re-Atum, the sun god, was believed to proceed into the underworld each night after setting in the west to be reborn again each morning. The gold face molded at the head of the case represents the illumination of the faces of the dead as Re-Atum's light shines upon them. The phoenix seen at the throat of the mummy case is a fabulous bird symbolizing rebirth. It is believed to rise reborn from the ashes every 500 years.

Before Paankhenamun could begin his new life after death, however, his character would have to be judged by Osiris and 42 assessors. At Paankhenamun's throat is a representation of Ma'at, the goddess of truth. If Paankhenamun's heart balanced with Ma'at's feather, he would unite with Osiris and live in the Fields of the Blessed in the peaceful, everlasting Egyptian afterlife. While the painstaking steps taken to preserve bodies of the dead were believed to ensure their everlasting presence in the afterlife, they also make it possible for modern viewers to learn about the lives and beliefs of ancient Egyptians.

Notes

1 See “Reading the Mummy Case of Paankhenamun” in this packet for a detailed look at the symbols on the case.
Reading the Mummy Case of Paankhenamun.

A. Ma’at with a phoenix bird. Ma’at, the goddess of truth, is present at the weighing of the heart when the deceased is judged before the gods. The phoenix bird represents rebirth.

B. Broad collars or layers of floral necklaces.

C. Beetle with hawk head below the sun disk. This is a representation of the combined form of Re, the hawk-headed sun god, and Khepri, the beetle who was thought to push the sun across the sky each day in a never-ending cycle of death (sunset) and rebirth (sunrise). The wings are also a reference to the winged goddess Nut, deity of the sky, who often occupies this position on mummy cases.

D. The shen hieroglyph meaning “eternity” references the eternal cycle of the sun.

E. Paankhenamun, with a cone of scented fat on his wig, is led into the presence of the gods. The hieroglyphs above his head say that he was the Doorkeeper in the Temple of Amun, son of the Doorkeeper Ainka in the Temple of Amun, and the grandson of a man named Ankhefenkhonsu. The remainder of the inscription is a plea for funerary offerings in the afterlife.

F. The hawk-headed god Horus, son of Osiris.

G. The god Osiris, the main deity of the afterlife. He holds the crook, its hieroglyph meaning “to rule,” and the flail, which symbolizes the ability of the god to provide for his subjects. His long staff is made up of hieroglyphs that promise life, dominion, and stability.

H. Isis, the sister of Osiris. Isis and Nephthys (see I) often act as mourners for the deceased.

I. Nephthys, sister of Osiris. Here she is called “The Mistress of the West.” There are many mistresses of the “West,” an allusion to the area of the setting sun which symbolizes the land of the dead (see K and L). Nephthys is also called the “Mother of the God, the Lady of Heaven, Mistress of all the Gods.”

J. The four sons of Horus: four deities who protect the organs removed during the mummification process. They stand on a lotus flower, a symbol of rebirth. The geographic symbol of the city of Abydos, the place where Osiris is supposed to be buried. Abydos was among the most sacred cities in Egypt. It is flanked by:
Reading the **Mummy Case** of Paankhenamun. Cont.

**K.** Winged deity: “Hathor, Mistress of the West.”

**L.** Winged deity: “Ma’at, Mistress of the West.” Both deities hold the hieroglyph for Ma’at (truth) in their arms.

**M.** Rams on stands: unclear symbolism. The geographic emblem of Mendes, a city associated with Osiris? Khnum, one of the creator gods?

**N.** A bundle on a stand: unclear symbolism.

**O.** Double plumed headdress with a central sun disk on a stand, another geographic emblem.

**P.** Djed pillar: a representation of the backbone of the god Osiris. He holds the crook and flail (see G), and wears a double plumed crown with sun disk. He stands on a depiction of the facade of the royal palace.

**Q.** Falcon god: “The Behdite, Lord of Heaven,” with wings outstretched to protect the djed pillar.

**R.** The eye of Horus: a symbol of well-being.

**S.** The shen hieroglyph meaning “eternity,” a reference to the eternal cycle of the sun.

**T.** Demons who live in the underworld. They hold long knives.

**U.** Another winged scarab, pushing the sun disk (see C).

**V.** Eyes of Horus (see R).

**W.** The back of the coffin is decorated with a single large djed pillar (see P). On either side, below its elbows, are hieroglyphs for “the West” (see I).

Compiled by Emily Teeter, The Oriental Institute
**Glossary and Pronunciation**

**Abydos (ah-bigh-dohs):** the cult center of the god Osiris; the most holy city in Egypt and a pilgrimage site; believed to be where the body of Osiris was buried.

**afterlife:** an existence believed to follow death.

**Ainka (ah-ink-ah):** believed to be the father of Paankhenamun, as stated on Paankhenamun’s mummy case.

**Ankhenfenkhonsu (ahnk-en-fehn-kon-soo):** believed to be the grandfather of Paankhenamun, as stated on Paankhenamun’s mummy case.

**Ankh (ank):** a symbol of life; shaped like a cross with a loop as the upper vertical arm.

**Amun (Amun-Re) (ah-moon; ah-moon ray):** state god of the Egyptian city of Thebes; cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) god of invisibility; means “the hidden one,” represented as a ram with horns curving down or as a man with a crown topped with two tall feathers; as Amun-Re, he wore the sun disk on his crown in front of the tall feathers.

**amulet:** a charm used to ward off evil or injury. Egyptian amulets took the form of ankhs, the eye of Horus (a symbol of healing), and scarab beetles.

**canopic (cah-noh-pic) jar:** a vessel constructed specifically to hold the preserved organs (stomach, liver, lungs, and intestines) of the dead. The stoppers sometimes resembled the owner’s head or the four sons of Horus with human, jackal, baboon, and falcon forms.

**corpse:** a dead body, especially of a human being.

**Djed (jed) pillar:** a symbol of stability thought to represent the backbone of Osiris.

**flail:** a long wooden staff with a free-swinging switch attached to its end; used to thresh (beat) the edible grains out of wheat and other grain crops.

**graduated:** arranged according to size, with each case fitting inside a larger case.

**Hathor (ha-thor):** goddess of fertility; frequently associated with other goddesses, like Isis.

**hieroglyphs:** characters used in the picture script of the ancient Egyptians; this language is no longer active and is not related to the modern-day Arabic language of the region.

**Horus (hor-us):** the sky (cosmic) god, son of Osiris; ruled the earthly world while his father ruled the next world; represented as a falcon or as a man with the head of a falcon.

**Isis (igh-sis):** cosmic goddess; wife of Osiris and mother of Horus; along with her sister, Nephthys, she was a protector of the dead; pictured as a woman wearing on her head either a throne or a sun disk between two horns.

**Khnum (knoom):** cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) god who created humankind and other deities on a potter’s wheel; guardian of the source of the Nile; depicted as a ram with horizontal, wavy horns or as a man with the head of a ram.

**Ma’at (or Maat) (mah-aht):** goddess of truth, justice, and order; pictured as a woman with a feather on her head; the feather was a symbol of truth against which the heart of a deceased person was weighed in the judgment before Osiris to determine whether the deceased entered “heaven” or the kingdom of Osiris in the next world.

**mortuary:** of or relating to the burial of the dead.

**mummification:** the act of embalming or preserving a body for burial with preservatives in the manner of the ancient Egyptians.

**Nephythus (nehf-this):** cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) goddess and sister of Isis; protector of the dead, along with her sister Isis.

**Osiris (oh-sigh-ris):** cosmic (relating to the cosmos, the universe, earth, nature, and human beings) god of fertility, resurrection, and the next world; usually pictured wrapped as a mummy, holding a crook and flail as scepters; his skin is sometimes green to show his connection with vegetation, growth, and rebirth.

**Paankhenamun (pah-ahnk-ehn-ah-moon):** name means “the one who lives for the god Amun;” the individual whose mummy is in the mummy case on display at the Art Institute.

**papyrus:** an ancient paper-like material used as a writing surface made by pressing together thin strips of the papyrus, a tall, aquatic plant found in the Nile valley.

**Re-Atum (ray ah-toom):** when associated with the sun god Re, Atum became a manifestation of the setting sun; as such, he is represented as an aged man wrapped as a mummy.

**Thebes (theebs):** capital city of Egypt during the New Kingdom; located in upper (southern) Egypt; modern-day name is Luxor.

**tomb:** the site in which a corpse is buried; a grave; often an excavation but sometimes an above-ground structure.
Classroom Activities and Discussion Questions

Happily Ever After
Illinois Learning Standards: 26, 27

Egyptians believed that life after death was just like life on earth. Therefore, they stocked tombs of the dead with models of items the deceased would use in the afterlife—a house, furniture, clothing, food, boats, animals, etc. Have students make a list of things an individual needs to lead a happy and full life. Each student may then select a few items to draw or sculpt in clay.

Write Like an Egyptian
Illinois Learning Standards: 17, 18

Paankhenamun's name is spelled out in hieroglyphs on the mummy case. Distribute the attached sheet “Write Like an Egyptian” and have each student spell his/her name with hieroglyphs. Collect examples and distribute to students. Can students translate the hieroglyphs to determine the name?

Miniature Mummies
Illinois Learning Standards: 26, 27

Have students each create a miniature mummy case out of newspaper and papier-mâché. Wad up sheets of newspaper tightly into the smooth form of a body. Wrap masking tape tightly around the wadded newspaper to secure. Wrap the “mummy cases” with strips of newspaper dipped in papier mâché and let harden. Using tempera paints, decorate the case with Egyptian-inspired symbols and colors. Or, “modernize” the case with decorations of modern-day symbols and themes.

Alternate: Have each student lie down on individual long sheets of butcher paper and have a classmate trace his/her outline. Each student or group of students can color and decorate the cover of a “mummy case.”

Organizing the Body
Illinois Learning Standards: 2, 5, 12, 13

When preparing a mummy, the deceased person’s liver, stomach, intestines, and lungs were saved for the afterlife. Discuss with students the important role that each of these organs plays in keeping their bodies healthy. Have students research these organs further. Then they can draw their bodies with the organs in the proper locations, insert these organs onto templates of the human body, or insert them onto the attached x-ray of Paankhenamun.

Symbolic Meanings
Illinois Learning Standards: 17, 18

Hieroglyphs are characters or symbols that represent something. What symbols are present in our own societies? Have students draw the symbols they see while crossing the street, riding in a car, going to a movie theater, etc., on poster board. After they color and cut them out, put all of the students’ symbols into a bag and have each person pick one out and guess what the meaning is. Arrange the symbols together on a display board to create a collage.

Remembering the Dead
Illinois Learning Standards: 2, 5, 12, 13, 17, 18

Have students research burial practices from different cultures and time periods. How are cultures’ practices and beliefs similar? How are they different? How have the burial practices of the United States changed throughout its history? What aspects of American burials are similar to those of ancient Egypt? What do you think burial practices in the future will be like?

Additional: Have students research cemeteries in their area, either by searching online or by visiting in person. (Note: Graceland Cemetery in Chicago is perhaps the city’s best-known cemetery where many famous Chicagoleans are buried; monuments include Egyptian obelisks, pyramids, and tomb structures that resemble Egyptian architecture.) What is the oldest grave in the cemetery? Who is the youngest/oldest person buried there? Make a rubbing of a particularly interesting tombstone—hold a piece of paper flat against an interesting part of a stone and rub or color the paper completely with a crayon. The letters or designs that are on the stone should show up on the paper as white or without color.

Law of Averages
Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 5, 6, 7, 17, 18

We know Paankhenamun was 5’5” tall. With a measuring tape, have students measure each other’s height. Convert Paankhenamun’s height into inches. What is the student’s height in inches? Using these two figures, determine the ratio of Paankhenamun’s height to that of each of the student’s.

Additional: Have students survey the heights of male adult family members and friends. After converting these heights into inches and taking the average of all of the heights, compare Paankhenamun’s height of 5’5” to the average height of today’s men. What do the results possibly tell us about life in ancient Egypt versus life in modern times? Research the region of Egypt, its geography and weather conditions, and the daily life of ancient Egyptians, specifically males. What were the roles of men in society (jobs, family capacities, social responsibilities, etc)? Compare/contrast the lifestyles of ancient Egyptian men to modern-day men in the United States. How has evolution changed according to lifestyle?

All the Afterlife’s a Stage
Illinois Learning Standards: 2, 5, 26, 27

Have students create a dramatic interpretation of the judgment of Paankhenamun before Osiris, including script, costumes, props, etc. to present before the class. Further research into ancient Egyptian myths and customs of the time may be necessary to accurately portray ancient Egypt, although improvisation is appreciated.
The ancient Egyptians wrote and spoke in a language called Egyptian. It is a dead language (no longer spoken) and it is not related to Arabic, which is now used in Egypt. The following hieroglyphs are rough equivalents of the English alphabet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Letter</th>
<th>Hieroglyph</th>
<th>English Letter</th>
<th>Hieroglyph</th>
<th>English Letter</th>
<th>Hieroglyph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>vulture</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>snake (cobra)</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>folded cloth or door bolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>foot</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>basket with loop handle</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>bread loaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>basket with loop handle</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>lion</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>quail chick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>hand</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>owl</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>snake (horned viper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>two reeds</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>quail chick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>snake (horned viper)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>quail chick</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>basket with loop handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>jar stand</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>stool</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>double reed leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>reed shelter or twisted rope</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>hill side</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>folded cloth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>single reed</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Related Resources
for Teachers


_Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Italy_. Teacher Programs, Department of Museum Education. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2001.


_Self, Family, and Community_. Teacher Programs, Department of Museum Education. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1997

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_Coffin and Mummy Case of Paankhenamun_ Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 22 (c. 945–715 BC) Egypt

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