

Key Stage 2: Egyptian mummies

The final page of these notes can be copied and given to students who you think may need additional support during the spotlight or to adult helpers.

Before your visit: preparing for your spotlight

- This session uses lively question and answer, and sometimes other techniques, to involve students in looking closely at images of ancient objects projected in one of our lecture theatres
- Key themes of the session are mummification in ancient Egypt, natural body preservation, the artificial mummification process and the role of modern technology when investigating Museum mummies.
- Key vocabulary includes mummy, mummification, natural, artificial, dehydration, x-ray, CAT-scan.
- Look for objects from ancient Egypt under the Explore section of the British Museum website at www.britishmuseum.org

During your visit

- The session begins by considering the process of dehydration and the key role it can play in the preservation of organic material.
- It then goes on to look at the processes of natural and artificial mummification using pictures of objects on display in the galleries.
- It concludes by considering the role of modern technology in helping the Museum to investigate its mummies using a short video of the results of a mummy CAT scan.
- Galleries with objects relating to the session:
 - Room 4: Egyptian sculpture including sarcophagus
 - Room 61: Egyptian tomb paintings
 - Rooms 62 and 63: Egyptian funerary practises including mummification
 - Room 64: objects from the pre-dynastic period and an early sand-dried mummy

Egyptian mummies continued...

After your visit: follow-up activities

- You may like to continue looking at objects from ancient Egypt in the British Museum's collection via the Explore section of the Museum's website at www.britishmuseum.org
- Find out how archaeologists use modern technology to help them learn more about objects from the past such as microscopes to help them look at fine detail, x-rays to look inside an object and computers to help them record and display their work.
- Investigate what sort of objects would be placed in a tomb with a mummy ready for the journey to the afterlife and why these objects were considered important.
- Visit the British Museum ancient Egypt website and have a go at the mummification challenge at www.ancientegypt.co.uk/mummies/activity/main.html

Curriculum links

History

This session supports work on the World History Study: A study of the key features of ancient Egypt together with how to find out about events, people and changes from an appropriate range of sources.

In this session you will learn about:

- why some things rot away and why some things are preserved
- natural and artificial mummification
- how modern technology can be used to find out more about mummies in the Museum

Key words

mummy

mummification

natural

artificial

dehydration - taking the water out of something

x-ray

CAT scan

Dehydration

- You will think about what happens when something is dehydrated and how this process can help preserve something.

Natural and artificial mummification

- You will find out about the natural process of mummification which happened in the ancient Egyptian desert 5000 years ago.
- You will then find out about the development and process of artificial mummification in ancient Egypt.

Investigating mummies with modern technology

- Modern museums do not usually unwrap mummies to study them.
- You will find out how x-rays help the Museum to find out more about the mummies in its collection.
- You will watch a short video about what happens when the Museum uses a modern CAT scan machine to investigate a mummy.