

THE
BRITISH
MUSEUM

Nubia



Sphinx of Taharqa
Kawa, Sudan
680 BC

Visit resource for teachers
Key Stage 2

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Before your visit

Background information

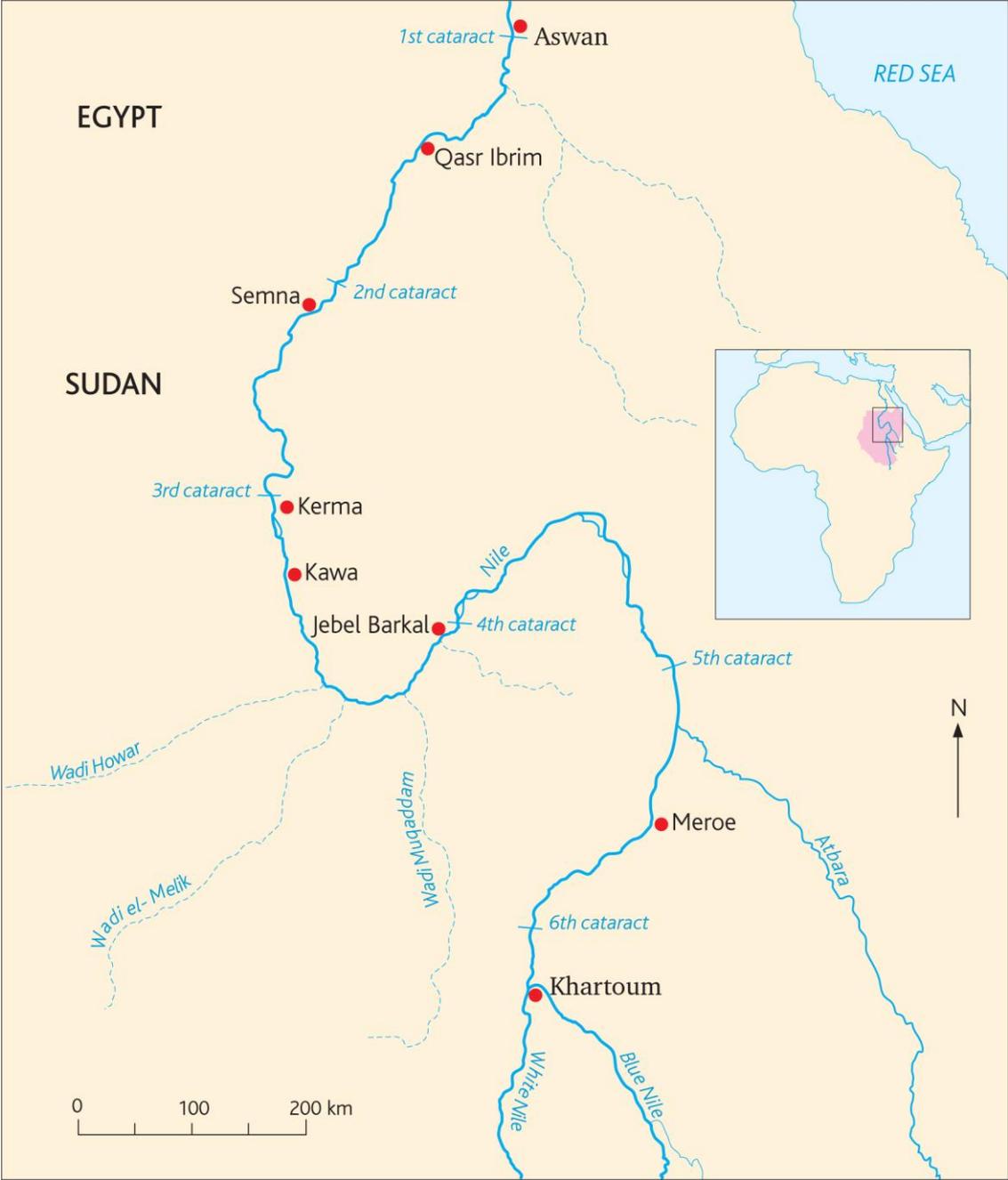
The African land of ancient Nubia was located in the Nile Valley immediately to the south of ancient Egypt. Over time, people in this region developed a number of cultures which drew on both African and Egyptian traditions. The Nubians traded extensively with Egypt and on occasions Nubian kings dominated Egypt.

Nubia was divided into two main regions: Lower Nubia and Upper Nubia. Lower Nubia was the northern region extending nearly 400 km from the First Nile Cataract to the area around Semna and the Second Nile Cataract. Today, it corresponds to the area of southern Egypt and northern Sudan. Upper Nubia (which was south of Lower Nubia) extended upriver along the Nile to the Sixth Nile Cataract and Khartoum. It corresponds to what is today central Sudan. The Nile River as it flows through this region is often called the Middle Nile.

A cataract on the River Nile is a section of river which flowed over rocks resulting in a section of fast flowing rapids rather than a stretch of navigable water channel.

Nubia was an important link between sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean world. The region had one of the earliest urbanized societies in north-east Africa, was crossed by important trade routes between Africa and the Mediterranean and contained rich natural resources. The ancient Egyptian pharaohs obtained large quantities of gold from Nubian mines. Control of the area passed repeatedly between the local rulers and the Egyptian pharaohs.

Map of the ancient Nubia region



Resources

British Museum websites

Explore

The British Museum website allows you to look at over 5000 objects from the Museum's collection online. To investigate objects from Nubia use the Explore option on the homepage of the British Museum website. www.britishmuseum.org

Ancient Egypt website www.ancientegypt.co.uk

This is an interactive learning and information website with text, images and maps relating to a range of key themes. It includes a wide variety of online activities for students and an area for teachers providing guidance and ideas for the classroom.

Ancient Civilizations website www.ancientcivilizations.co.uk

This is an interactive learning and information website with text, images and maps relating to a range of sub-Saharan African cultures including Meroe, Great Zimbabwe and Benin.

Books

For adults

Edwards, David N. *The Nubian Past: An Archaeology of the Sudan*, Routledge, 2004.

Taylor, John H, *Egypt and Nubia*, British Museum Press, 1991

Welsby, D, and Anderson J. (Eds.), *Sudan Ancient Treasures*, British Museum Press, 2004.

For children

Filer, Joyce, *Pocket Explorer Ancient Egypt and the Nile*, British Museum Press, 2007

Gallery information

Room 65 looks at the different peoples and cultures that developed in Nubia. It also looks at the interaction and contacts between Nubia and Egypt.

The objects illustrate the material culture of the Nubians from the fifth millennium BC to the Islamic period. They include objects from the kingdom of Kush (2500-1500 BC), the oldest sub-Saharan African kingdom, and ceramics, metalwork and sculpture from the Kushite kingdom which flourished in the region from the ninth century BC to the fourth century AD (including a wall from the pyramid chapel of a Nubian queen). Several objects are inscribed in Meroitic, the indigenous language of Kush, which remains untranslated.

Many objects show influences and similarities between Nubian and Egyptian cultural traits and there are sculptures from Egyptian settlements and fortresses in the region.

What is it like to visit this gallery?

Room 65 is medium-sized with a number of island display cases as well as material in wall cases. There are several large pieces mounted directly on to the wall at quite a high level. The gallery has a through route across one corner between the two doorways which lead in and out of the gallery although the spaces on the opposite side of the gallery are much quieter. The gallery is immediately next door to the earliest ancient Egypt gallery.

Case Numbers

Please note that case numbers are usually small, white and high up on the glass.

Preliminary activities

General introductory activities

- Locate the area covered by the land of ancient Nubia in an atlas and look at the modern countries which currently exist in this region of the world.
- Compare key dates in Nubian history with those of other ancient civilizations.
- Use the Explore function to look at objects from Nubia and Egypt on the British Museum website.

Activities to support gallery activities

- Look at the tribute frieze in the *Pharaoh* section of the ancient Egypt learning site (www.ancientegypt.co.uk) as a direct prequel to the tribute frieze activity.
- Discuss the process of cultural influence. Think about modern examples of cultural influence, for example food such as pizza, curry, kebabs etc.
- Talk about the role of decoration on objects. What types of objects get decorated? Why? What images and patterns can be found decorating everyday classroom objects?
- Look at the *Geography* section of the ancient Egypt learning site (www.ancientegypt.co.uk) to find out about the natural resources available in ancient Nubia.

During your visit

Gallery activities: introduction for teachers

The gallery activities are a set of activity sheets which can be used by students working in Room 65. The sheets can be used as stand-alone activities or you may wish to develop work around particular sheets as suggested in the before and after sections of this resource.

- Where case numbers are indicated on a sheet, these are usually to be found marked in white numbers high up on the glass of that particular case.
- You are welcome to select the activities which are most appropriate for the focus of your visit and adapt sheets to meet the needs of your students.
- Each activity is designed to support the students in looking at, and thinking about, objects on display in the gallery.
- Individual activity sheets may be undertaken by single students, in pairs or as a small group.
- Where space is provided for recording this may be undertaken by the student or an adult helper as is most appropriate for the students involved.
- Familiarise the students and accompanying adults with the chosen activity sheets at school before the day of the visit. Make sure students and adults know what they are to do and are familiar with the vocabulary used on the sheets or which they may encounter in the gallery.

Gallery activities: briefings for adult helpers

Gallery activity: Tribute frieze

- Tribute is objects – often valuable – given to a ruler as a sign of friendship by people who are subjects of, or who wish to form an alliance with, that ruler. Offering tribute can also be an acknowledgement of submission and a way to establish peace. The tribute frieze in Room 65 shows Nubians bringing tribute gifts to the Egyptian pharaoh.
- The frieze in Room 65 is a re-construction.
- This activity aims to encourage students to study an object and use what they see to gain a sense of life in the past.

Gallery activity: Comparing Nubia and Egypt

- Objects found in Nubia show us that at certain points in their history the Nubians were influenced by Egyptian design.
- This activity enables students to compare directly the same type of objects and appreciate the similarities and differences between them.

Gallery activity: Decorative designs and patterns

- A wide range of patterns and colours were used to decorate ancient objects. Sometimes the decoration had a function, at other times it appears to be predominantly aesthetic.
- This activity encourages students to look for, and record, examples of ancient Nubian pattern work on a range of different material surfaces.

Gallery activity: Luxury goods

- The ancient Egyptians made objects from a wide range of natural materials. Some of these came from Egypt while others were imported from other countries.
- This activity encourages students to identify luxury materials exported from Nubia and connect them to the objects made from these materials in the gallery.

Tribute frieze

Look at the reproduction of a frieze showing tribute being brought from Nubia to the Egyptian pharaoh and talk about what you can see happening on it .

- Circle the animals you can see :

leopard	cow	giraffe	gazelle	lion	ostrich
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- Circle the people you can see :

the Egyptian pharaoh	Nubians	Egyptian officials
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- Circle the objects you can see :

feather fans	bags of gold	chairs	tables
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- Use the boxes to describe how you would feel if you were at the tribute procession.

What sounds would you hear? What noises would the animals and people make?

Would you feel excited, scared, impressed? What else?

- Now share your ideas with the group to build up an impression of what it would have been like to watch a procession such as this in ancient times.

Comparing Nubia and Egypt

Nubian culture was influenced by ancient Egyptian customs and practices at certain times in its history.

- Below are three objects from Ancient Egypt which were also used in Nubia. Look in Room 65 for each Egyptian object and draw a Nubian example in the box.

Ancient Egypt	Nubia
 <p data-bbox="422 723 718 985"> Shabti a small figure which was placed in tombs so that it could work for the tomb owner in the afterlife </p>	
 <p data-bbox="544 1211 718 1512"> Sphinx a mythical creature with a lion's body and a human head </p>	
 <p data-bbox="427 1680 726 1937"> Bronze statue small statues were often made as religious gifts and taken to the temples to please the gods </p>	

- Now discuss which object you think is most similar to one found in Egypt.

Decorative designs and patterns

Many Nubian objects are richly decorated with painted, carved or woven patterns.

- Look around the gallery for a decorated box, piece of fabric and pot.
- Draw the pattern that has been used to decorate the object in the correct box.

Box decoration

Fabric decoration

Pot decoration

- Decide on your favourite decorative pattern and talk to the others in your group about the colours and shapes used to create the pattern.

Luxury goods

The Nubians traded with people further south in Africa for valuable materials such as ivory and ebony (a hard, dark wood).



- Find this painting which shows Nubians carrying luxury goods to the Egyptian pharaoh.

- Look at the painting. Circle each of the following materials that can you see:

gold rings	gold nuggets	a baboon	logs of ebony wood
a monkey	leopard skins	lumps of red jasper	giraffe tails

- Now go round to the other side of the case and look at the objects on display which are made from some of these precious materials.
- Write what objects you can see that are made from these materials:

gold		ivory	
red jasper		ebony	

- What objects would you have made for yourself from these luxury materials? Perhaps you would like one object which used them all, such as a very expensive decorated chair.

After your visit

Follow-up activities introduction

These encourage students to reflect on the work undertaken in the Nubia Gallery during their Museum visit.

- Some of the activities draw directly on the information gathered at the Museum while others encourage the students to draw on personal experience or undertake additional research in the classroom.
- Each activity includes a suggestion for classroom work and also an outcome which maybe in the form of a written piece, drama presentation or artwork.
- You may also wish to look at some of the activities available on the ancient Egypt learning website (www.ancientegypt.co.uk) which relate to your visit.
- The British Museum's Ancient Civilizations website (www.ancientcivilizations.co.uk) contains further information about the Meroitic culture.

Follow-up activity: Tribute frieze

Curriculum links: history, literacy, drama

- Ask the students to think of examples of modern processions - such as the Notting Hill Carnival or a royal occasion- and what they are like. Collect some procession images.
- Ask students to refer back to the information they collected from the tribute procession in the Nubia gallery. Ask students to discuss in pairs what they could see and hear on the tribute frieze and then create a whole class response to the observation questions sheet including what observers might feel as the procession passes by.
- Students present these observations through a first-person, written account or a dramapresentation, such as a spoken commentary by a spectator.

Follow-up activity: Comparing Nubia and Egypt

Curriculum links: history, citizenship, art and design

- Think about modern examples of cultural influences in food, clothing, jewellery etc. Discuss how influences, whatever their point of origin, often essentially perform the same function e.g. to make food taste interesting, to use as personal adornment.
- *Shabtis* were expected to work for their ancient Nubian owners in the afterlife. What do we have nowadays that works for us? (E.g. vacuum cleaners to help us clean or telephones to help us talk to people who are far away.) If you had your own personal shabti in this life, what would you ask it to do? Draw your own shabti. Show it with the tools it needs to perform its task and write an inscription on the front to make it work.
- The *sphinx* was a mythical creature. It appeared as a statue, on vessels, coins and seals and there is even a carved chair leg in the shape of a sphinx in the Nubian gallery. In what ways do we display well-known images today? What sort of images might you see displayed on a stamp, a poster, a mug or a t-shirt? Design your own examples.
- *Statues* are a way of commemorating a particular person. Are there any statues near your school? Who do they commemorate? Chose a well-known national or local person and design a suitable statue.

Follow-up activity: Decorative designs and patterns

Curriculum links: maths, art and design

- What patterns and designs can you find decorating objects in the classroom, around the school or at home?
- Use the patterns you found in the Nubian gallery to help design your own decorated box or pot. As well as the pattern itself, decide which colours you would like to use as part of the pattern.

Follow-up activity: Luxury goods

Curriculum links: history, geography, citizenship

- Discuss the difference between domestic and imported goods. Why do some goods have to be imported?
- Make a collection of food labels which identify which country the food was produced in. Plot these labels against a world map and look at how far some goods used in Britain have travelled from their original country of production. Consider the environmental issues involved in world trade.

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