

Background reading for Art Presenters

Papyrus of Pediu-Imenet (Vignette)

XXI-XXII Dynasty - showing the deceased burning incense before Osiris

Egyptian painting – flat effect

The flat effect was used throughout Egyptian tomb paintings, papyrus and low-relief sculpture. This is one characteristic which helps identify the time period and the place where the events took place. Note these things: triangular upper body, small waist, side positioning of figure, shape of eyes, colors used most often.

Osiris

Osiris is an Egyptian god, usually identified as the god of the afterlife, the underworld and the dead. He was classically depicted as a green-skinned man with a pharaoh's beard, partially mummy-wrapped at the legs, wearing a distinctive crown with two large ostrich feathers at either side, and holding a symbolic crook and flail.

Osiris was considered not only a merciful judge of the dead in the afterlife, but also the underworld agency that granted all life, including sprouting vegetation and the fertile flooding of the Nile River. Through the hope of new life after death, Osiris began to be associated with the cycles observed in nature, in particular vegetation and the annual flooding of the Nile, through his links with the heliacal rising of Orion and Sirius at the start of the new year.

Papyrus

Papyrus /pə'paɪrəs/ is a thin paper-like material made from the pith of the papyrus plant, a wetland sedge that was once abundant in the Sudd of Southern Sudan along with the Nile Delta of Egypt. Papyrus is first known to have been used in ancient Egypt, but it was also used throughout the Mediterranean region and in Kingdom of Kush. Ancient Egyptians are thought to have used papyrus as a writing material, as well as employing it commonly in the construction of other artifacts such as reed boats, mats, rope, sandals, and baskets.

Hieroglyphs

Egyptian hieroglyphs or *mdw·w·nṯr* (god's words) were a formal writing system used by the ancient Egyptians that combined logographic and alphabetic elements. Egyptians used cursive hieroglyphs for religious literature on papyrus and wood. Less formal variations of the script, called hieratic and demotic, are technically not hieroglyphs.

Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone is a granodiorite stele inscribed with a decree issued at Memphis in 196 BC on behalf of King Ptolemy V. The decree appears in three scripts: the upper text is Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, the middle portion Demotic script, and the lowest Ancient Greek. Although it is believed to have originally been displayed within a temple, possibly at nearby Sais, the stone was probably moved during the early Christian or medieval period and was eventually used as building material in the construction of Fort Julien near the town of Rashid (Rosetta) in the Nile Delta. It was rediscovered there in

1799. Because it presents essentially the same text in all three scripts, it provided the key to the modern understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Cartouche

In Egyptian hieroglyphs, a **cartouche** is an oval with a horizontal line at one end, indicating that the text enclosed is a royal name, coming into use during the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty under Pharaoh Sneferu. While the cartouche is usually vertical with a horizontal line, it is sometimes horizontal if it makes the name fit better, with a vertical line on the left. The Ancient Egyptian word for it was *shenu*, and it was essentially an expanded shen ring. In Demotic, the cartouche was reduced to a pair of brackets and a vertical line.

At times amulets were given the form of a cartouche displaying the name of a king and placed in tombs. Such items are often important to archaeologists for dating the tomb and its contents. Cartouches were formerly only worn by Pharaohs. The oval surrounding their name was meant to protect them from evil spirits in life and after death. The cartouche has become a symbol representing good luck and protection from evil. Egyptians believed that one who had their name recorded somewhere would not disappear after death. A cartouche attached to a coffin satisfied this requirement. There were periods in Egyptian history when people refrained from inscribing these amulets with a name, for fear they might fall into somebody's hands conferring power over the bearer of the name.

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Possible Discussion Questions

1. Describe all of the things you see in the painting.
Do they look real? Are they supposed to look real?
2. What do you think is going on in this painting?
Who do you think the characters are? Why?
Is one supposed to be more important than the other?
3. What colors predominate in this painting?
Are those colors used to help show importance? How?
4. Do the colors balance the painting? How?
Do these colors have weight?
How are contrasting colors used?
5. Is there anything in the picture which tells you that the figures are 3-dimensional?
How do you know whether a thing or figure is facing you or turned to the side?
Do any of the shapes or figures do both?
6. How does the artist use lines in this picture?
Would you say he uses the outline technique?
Could he merely have used color and no outlining to show shape?
Some lines cross over or cut through others. Why do you think this is?
Do other painting use this technique? Is outlining a common technique
7. Is the artist concerned with distance?
Is everything the same distance from the viewer?
8. Is this picture pleasing to the eye?
Do you like it? Why or why not?

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Extended Activities

1. Cartouche

Materials: pre-printed cartouche shapes, copies of hieroglyph alphabet and symbols, pencils, colored pencils.

Discuss with students what a cartouche is. Show examples on the artwork. Have students write their name inside their cartouche shape. Color with colored pencils using the symbol charts as a guide as what colors to use.

2. Secret message

Materials: copies of hieroglyph alphabet and symbols, paper, pencils

Have students write a secret message using hieroglyphs. Exchange papers and let students de-code the messages.

3. Draw like an Egyptian

Materials: paper, pencils, crayons or colored pencils

Have students draw a picture using Egyptian techniques.