

Horus Egyptian Glass Teachers' Resource

Ancient Civilisations

Ancient History

Cross Curricular



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GLASS MUSEUM

Figure, Egyptian God, Horus, Egypt, 1450 BCE

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Introduction

Long ago in ancient Egypt, people used to wrap small glass amulets of Horus with mummies as special charms to keep them safe. When someone passed away, the Egyptians had certain rituals to help them in the afterlife, and one of these rituals involved placing different amulets on or inside the mummified bodies. These amulets were like magical guardians that would protect the deceased on their journey.



Figure 1, Egyptian God, Horus, Egypt, 1400 BC

Horus was a very important god in ancient Egypt. He was known for being powerful, kind, and connected to things like protection, ruling as a king, and the sky. People believed that Horus could give divine help and keep the deceased person out of harm's way. The amulets were often designed to look like small glass eyes, representing the Eye of Horus. This symbol was thought to have special powers that could keep evil away and bring healing and renewal.

By carefully putting these amulets inside the wrappings of the mummy, the ancient Egyptians hoped that Horus' protective magic would stay with the deceased on their journey to the afterlife. The amulets were meant to defend against bad forces, help with the person's rebirth, and make



Figure 2, Egyptian Mummy

sure they could successfully reach the world of the gods. Choosing glass for the amulets might have been because glass was seen as pure, clear, and connected to

the sky. In ancient Egypt, glass was precious, and its transparent nature might have been seen as a perfect way to represent the celestial qualities of Horus.

Definitions

Mummy

The word **mummy** comes from an Arabic or Persian word called **moumia**. It means a sticky black substance known as bitumen, pitch, or tar. Long ago, people thought that the ancient Egyptians used this substance to preserve their bodies.

When a mummy successfully went through a special process called mummification, the ancient Egyptians had a special word for it: **sah**. This word meant that the mummy was in a holy and important state.

Amulet

An amulet is a special charm or ornament that people wear to keep themselves safe. It is decorated with special words or symbols that are believed to have magical powers. Amulets can help protect against bad things happening, such as getting sick or being affected by magic spells. They are like little guardians that bring luck and keep away harm.

Egyptian Glass

In ancient Egypt, talented artisans crafted special sculptural amulets out of glass. Glass was a precious material highly treasured for its beauty and symbolism. Skilled craftsmen used well-developed techniques to create detailed and colourful amulets.

The process of making glass in ancient Egypt started with quartz, a type of mineral. They also used desert sand in their creations. The quartz was carefully crushed into small pieces and mixed with plant ash, which was made by burning specific plants. This ash helped to lower the temperature needed to melt the quartz.

To shape the glass, the mixture of quartz and ash was heated in clay containers at temperatures around 750°C. At this relatively low temperature, the mixture would melt and transform into molten glass and take the shape of the mould.

To add vibrant colours to the glass, artisans mixed in different mineral salts. For a deep blue colour, they used cobalt, while turquoise hues were achieved by adding copper. These mineral salts created a beautiful palette of colours that adorned the glass amulets. The ancient Egyptians' expertise in glassmaking allowed them to produce stunning amulets that were not only visually appealing but also carried symbolic significance in their funerary practices.



Figure 3, Egyptian God, Horus, Egypt, 1400 BC

Horus

Horus, an ancient Egyptian god, was highly revered and featured in many stories and beliefs. Depicted as a falcon or a human with a falcon's head, he held significant importance in Egyptian culture. Horus was known as the god of the sky and protection.

According to Egyptian legends, Horus was the son of the goddess Isis and the god Osiris. His father, who was the king of Egypt, was tragically killed by his envious brother Seth. Horus was born after his



Figure 4, Cult Statue of Horus as Falcon Wearing Double Crown of Egypt, 525 - 400 BC

father's death and grew up with a strong desire to avenge his father's murder. A great battle unfolded between Horus and Seth, who represented chaos and evil. The battle raged on for a long time, but ultimately, Horus emerged victorious and became the ruler of Egypt. People saw him as a symbol of justice, order, and the rightful king of the land. Horus was also associated with the sun and believed to protect the pharaoh, the earthly king of Egypt. The pharaohs were considered to be like Horus on Earth.



Figure 5 Horus wearing double crown, Tomb of Horemheb, valley of Kings, Luxor, Ancient Thebes, Egypt

In paintings and sculptures, Horus is often depicted wearing a crown that symbolizes both Upper and Lower Egypt, signifying his reign over the entire land. Sometimes, he is shown with a sun on his head or holding a sceptre, representing his power.

Horus held immense significance in the ancient Egyptian religion, and people across Egypt worshipped him. They believed that Horus would keep them safe, guide them towards the right path, and bring them blessings. The story of Horus teaches us about bravery, fairness, and the triumph of good over evil.

Mummy Unwrapping Parties

In the Victorian era, during the height of Egyptomania, it became fashionable in England and Europe to host 'mummy unwrapping' parties. Travellers to Egypt often purchased mummies and amulets from local sellers and brought them back to Europe, where private gatherings featured the



Figure 6, Examination of the mummy, by Pavel Dominic, 1890

unwrapping of mummies as a form of entertainment. These events were viewed similarly to public medical demonstrations of the time, such as surgical procedures.

One notable example was in the early 1830s when surgeon Thomas Pettigrew unwrapped a mummy at the Royal College of Surgeons in London.

Today, however, this practice is considered disrespectful to ancient Egyptian culture. Modern archaeologists now approach mummies with care, conducting research in controlled settings to gain knowledge rather than for spectacle, reflecting a commitment to preservation and respect for these ancient remains.

This fascination with Egyptian artifacts is likely how a Horus amulet found its way to England and eventually into the collection of Stourbridge Glass Museum.

Questions

What were small glass amulets used for in ancient Egypt?

Small glass amulets were used by ancient Egyptians to protect the mummies.

Why were the amulets believed to have magical powers?

The amulets were believed to have magical powers to help the person who died in their journey to the afterlife.

Who was Horus and why was he important in ancient Egyptian beliefs?

Horus was an important god in ancient Egypt who protected people and ruled over the sky.

How did the ancient Egyptians use the amulets to protect the mummies?

The amulets were placed inside the mummy's bandages to keep the person safe during their journey to the afterlife.

Why were glass amulets chosen for this purpose?

Glass was chosen for the amulets because it was seen as pure, clear, and connected to the sky.

How did the ancient Egyptians make glass for the amulets?

The ancient Egyptians made glass by heating quartz and mixing it with plant ash and minerals.

What were the colours created in the glass amulets, and what minerals were used to achieve them?

Different colours like deep blue and turquoise were created in the glass amulets by adding minerals like cobalt and copper.

Why do we no longer have mummy unwrapping parties today?

We no longer have mummy unwrapping parties today because it is now considered important to treat ancient artifacts and human remains with respect and care.

Pre – visit activities

~ **Read** the evocative and beautifully illustrated book, *Marcy and the Riddle of the Sphinx*, by Joe Todd-Stanton. A story of adventure, a call to action and overcoming fear.

~ **Write** your own adventure story relating to Egyptian Gods.

~ **Create** your own Eye of Ra/Horus paper maché lantern with coloured tissue paper, draw or paint on the eye of Ra/Horus in black to cast a shadow when lit – use a battery operated T-light.

~ **Horus and Falcon Craft:** Guide the students in creating their own falcon masks or headbands using coloured paper, feathers, and markers. Discuss the importance of Horus as a falcon-headed god and explain the significance of falcons in ancient Egyptian mythology.

At the Museum

~ **Observation and Sketching:** Provide students with sketchbooks or drawing paper and pencils. Instruct them to find a comfortable spot near the Egyptian glass exhibit and spend some time sketching the amulet and other Egyptian glass artifacts from different angles. Encourage students to pay attention to details, proportions, and the overall design of each object.

~ **Discussion and Reflection:** What do you notice about the shape, colour, and size of the artifact? What materials do you think were used to create the artifact? Why? How do you think the artifact was made? What techniques might have been used? What do you think the artifact was used for? Can you find any clues in its design or symbolism? How might the artifact have been significant in ancient Egyptian culture? What roles or meanings do you think it held? How does the artifact's craftsmanship and design make you feel? Does it inspire any thoughts or emotions? Why? What questions do you still have about the artifact? What would you like to learn more about?

~ **Write an Artifact Label:** Assign each student or pair of students an artifact from the museum, which can include the Horus amulet. Instruct students to write a brief description of the artifact as if they were writing a label for a museum exhibit. Encourage them to use descriptive language, historical context, and information learned during the visit.

Back at School

Science

~ Colour Chemistry

Activity: Investigate how different minerals create colours.

Materials: Red cabbage (natural pH indicator), vinegar, baking soda, small bowls, dropper.

Task: Explain how ancient Egyptians used minerals like cobalt for blue glass and copper for turquoise. Children can experiment by adding vinegar (acid) or baking soda (base) to red cabbage juice to see the colour changes.

Science Connection: Just as the Egyptians added minerals to create colourful glass, this experiment shows how substances react to create different colours.

Learning Outcome: Learning about chemical reactions and how substances change colour.

~ Glass Formation and Transparency

Activity: Investigating transparency and light.

Materials: Glass, plastic, and paper; torch.

Task: Discuss how ancient Egyptians chose glass for amulets because of its transparency, which they associated with purity. Test which materials let light through by shining a torch through glass, plastic, and paper, and record what happens.

Science Connection: Explore why certain materials are transparent while others are opaque. Compare this to the properties of ancient Egyptian glass.

Learning Outcome: Learning about material properties such as transparency, and understanding why glass was valuable in ancient Egypt.

Mathematics

~ Symmetry in Egyptian Designs

Activity: Identifying symmetry in ancient Egyptian amulets.

Task: Show children pictures of Horus amulets and other ancient Egyptian symbols. Ask them to draw the other half of a symmetrical design, or create their own symmetrical amulet design inspired by what they saw in the museum.

Maths Focus: Symmetry, mirror symmetry.

Learning Outcome: Developing spatial awareness and understanding the concept of symmetry in design.

~ Area and Volume Exploration

Activity: Calculate the volume of an Egyptian amulet.

Materials: Clay models of amulets, ruler, measuring tape.

Task: Have the children measure the dimensions of a 3D clay amulet model and calculate its volume.

Maths Focus: Measuring and calculating volume for simple shapes like rectangular prisms or cylinders (representing amulet shapes).

Learning Outcome: Introducing the concept of volume and practicing measurement in real-world contexts.

Literacy

~ Creative Writing and Reflection

Creative Writing: *'Journey of the Amulet'*

Activity: Ask children to imagine they are an ancient Egyptian glass amulet. Have them write a story from the amulet's perspective, describing its creation, how it was placed with a mummy, and the magical journey it takes in the afterlife, protecting its owner.

Focus: Narrative writing, use of descriptive language, imaginative storytelling.

~ Adventure Story: *'The Search for Horus'*

Activity: Children write a story where they are an explorer in ancient Egypt searching for a lost amulet of Horus. Along the way, they encounter challenges related to Egyptian mythology and culture.

Focus: Mythology, adventure storytelling, incorporating historical facts about Egypt and Horus.

~ **Reflective Writing: 'Museum Experience'**

Activity: After visiting the museum or exploring a replica exhibit in the classroom, children write a review about their favourite artifacts. They can describe what they learned about Egyptian culture, how the artifacts made them feel, and what inspired them the most.

Focus: Personal reflection, review writing, summarising key points.

Art and Design: Creative Projects

~ **Design Your Own Amulet**

Activity: Children design their own amulet inspired by Horus and Egyptian mythology. They can choose symbols and colours that represent protection, strength, or other personal qualities. They can sketch, paint, or create a 3D version using clay or air-dry clay.

Focus: Symbolism, creative design, working with different materials.

~ **Glass-Inspired Art: Colour and Light**

Activity: Children use tissue paper, cellophane, or translucent materials to create stained-glass-like art inspired by ancient Egyptian amulets. They can layer colours to mimic the mineral-rich glass colours created by Egyptian artisans.

Focus: Exploring colours, transparency, and light effects, creating layered artwork.

~ **Falcon Mask Making**

Activity: Guide children in creating their own falcon masks or headpieces inspired by Horus. They can use feathers, coloured paper, and other craft materials to make a detailed representation of Horus in his falcon form.

Focus: Craftsmanship, 3D art, symbolism in Egyptian mythology.

History: Exploring Ancient Egypt

~ **The Role of Amulets in Ancient Egyptian Rituals**

Activity: Teach children about the importance of amulets in ancient Egyptian funerary practices. Then, ask them to create a presentation or poster about different types of amulets (e.g., Eye of Horus, scarab beetles), explaining their symbolism and purpose in protecting mummies.

Focus: Understanding ancient Egyptian beliefs, symbolism, and religious practices.

History

~ Timeline of Ancient Egyptian Glassmaking

Activity: Have children create a timeline showing the evolution of glassmaking in ancient Egypt, including the use of natural desert glass used in jewellery. They can highlight key developments, such as the introduction of different minerals for colours and the role glass played in their culture.

Focus: Chronological understanding, early technological advancements.

~ Horus and Egyptian Mythology

Activity: Children research the story of Horus and Seth's battle, then act out scenes from the myth. Alternatively, they can create comic strips or storyboards to retell the legend in a visual format.

Focus: Understanding mythology, dramatic representation, visual storytelling.

Geography: Mapping Ancient Egypt

~ Ancient Egyptian Trade Routes

Activity: Children research and map the ancient Egyptian trade routes that brought minerals like copper and cobalt to Egypt, which were used in glassmaking. They can mark where these resources came from and discuss how geography affected Egypt's economy.

Focus: Geography of trade, resource management, understanding Egypt's connections with neighbouring regions.

~ Mapping Egypt: The River Nile's Importance

Activity: Create a map of ancient Egypt with the River Nile at the centre. Children can label key geographical features (like deserts, cities, and temples) and explain the role the Nile played in transporting goods, including materials for glassmaking.

Focus: Geography of Egypt, understanding natural resources and their impact on ancient culture.

~ Environmental Impact of Egyptian Materials

Activity: Discuss how the Egyptians used natural materials like quartz and plant ash. Then, ask the children to map regions where quartz was found in Egypt and explain why these materials were valuable.

Focus: Natural resources, geography of Egypt's mineral wealth.

Image Resources



Figure 7, Figure Egyptian God Horus, Egypt 1450 BCE



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Figure 8, Earplug, Ancient Egypt, 1387 - 1073 BCE



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Figure 9, Egyptian glass vase







