Ancient Egypt

Yr. 3

**Theme:** What did the Ancient Egyptians believe about death and what happens beyond?

**Overview of learning:**
- To find out what Ancient Egyptians believed about the afterlife.
- To explore the roles of some of the Ancient Egyptian gods.
- To investigate some of the rituals involved in the passage from death into the afterlife.

**Interesting aspects:**
- How the Ancient Egyptians saw death as a rebirth
- The complexity and detail of the rituals that send a person into the afterlife.
- The power that the gods held over life and death.

**Inquiry questions:**
- What happens when a prominent Ancient Egyptian dies?
- What were the Ancient Egyptian views about the afterlife?
- How does the way you have lived your life affect your journey into the afterlife?

**Narrative:**
C1270 BC. Ramesses the 2nd and his wife, Queen Neferati are present at the deathbed of their 16 year old son, Neben-kharru. He has died to the plague, a disease that has killed thousands of their people. They plan his elaborate funeral, including the procession to the pyramid where their own tombs lie in waiting. A special chamber, below theirs, will be prepared for their favourite son.

In the chamber the final ceremony takes place, with the the attendants, family and priest around. They place the objects around him that will serve him in the afterlife. The ritual words and prayers are said, before the tomb is left and sealed.

Neben-kharru begins his journey into the afterlife. He undergoes the ceremony of the weighing of the heart.

**Expert team:** Archaeologists  
**Client:** The Cairo Musuem of Egyptian Antiquities  
**Commission:** To excavate a newly found tomb in one of the pyramid of the Pharoah Ramesses.  
To find out who the tomb belonged to.  
To remove and investigate items from the tomb.  
To create an exhibition of the objects for the museum.

**Other points of view:** Ramesses 2nd, Queen Neferati, Neben-kharru, other people in attendance at the funeral - priests, servants, friends etc

**Tasks:**
- Look at images of Ancient Egyptian artefacts / sarcophagus / hieroglyphics - make a list of what might be in the tomb of Neben-kharru.
• Discuss the words of his father as he stands by his son’s death bed.

• Use the dramatic imagination to evoke the atmosphere in the tomb: darkness and light; sounds and silence; movement and stillness.

• Co-create the people who would be in the tomb.

• In role as attendees, choose a role and an object that you would be carrying to give to Neben-kharru to take into the afterlife.

• Create ritual words to say as each object is presented to the dead person.

Links to curriculum:
• RE: What beliefs the Ancient Egyptians had - what gods they worshipped.

• English: Developing writing, the six dimensions of dramatic imagination: silence/sound, stillness/movement, darkness/light.

• History: The death rituals of the Ancient Egyptians; Ancient Egyptian gods; objects that they would use in everyday life; the purpose of the pyramids; the journey to the afterlife.

STEPS

Step 1: Look at an image of a door with a sealed knot. What are we thinking?
Look at a plan showing the inside of the pyramid of Rammesses 2nd. It reveals a passage leading to a previously undiscovered chamber, beneath the chamber of the Pharoah Rammeses 2nd and his queen, Neferati. It is believed it might be the tomb of an important person from their family. Who might that be?

Step 2: ‘A team of archaeologists has been asked to excavate the tomb. They need to break the seal on the door and enter the tomb. When they get inside they must photograph the tomb and make detailed records of what they find and where each object is. Any hieroglyphics on the wall need to be photographed and deciphered and left in place. Each object found must be removed from the tomb and taken back to the museum to be analysed and researched. Any sarcophagus or mummified body must be treated with special care and must be taken intact to the museum.’

Explain that important people were given things from their life to take with them into the afterlife. These things will be important to them there, as they were in their mortal life. Show slides of a tomb with sarcophagus, tomb with objects in, details of coffins, hieroglyphics.

Students to look round tables at images of things that might be in the tomb. Pairs / small groups to make a list of the things that might be in this tomb.

They report back on their findings: share things from list with rest of group. Teacher to create a big list from all the ideas.

Step 3: We are going to go back to 1266 BC. The pharaoh of the time was the great Ramesses 2nd. His wife was Queen Nefertari. He
had many children and lived until he was 92. We are going to look at him and his queen only moments after the death of his 16 year old son, Neben-kharru. He has died of the plague, a great disease that killed thousands of people in Egypt at that time.

CIR as Neben – how would he be lying? Curled up on his side in bed, head hidden? TIR as Ramesses and Neferati (could be CIR or AIR). Negotiate with students where / how R and N will be placed.

R speaks his words:

‘Our dear son Neben-kharru lies here before us. He breathes no longer. He was a brave warrior, fearless in battle, even though he was so young. He was a loyal friend and companion to his brothers and sisters, always generous and protective and a loving and obedient son. The dreaded plague, that has killed so many of our people, has taken him away from us forever. May the love of his family take care of him as he journeys into the after-life. May he live happily in the afterlife for eternity. May his funeral and resting place be rich and splendid, a fitting memory to his short but brilliant life. A new chamber will be created in the pyramid that is already built for myself and my Queen when we die. We will bury our son, Neben-kharru, beyond splendour, beyond the goodliness of any man in Egypt.’

Step 4: ‘The body of Neben would then be prepared and mummified. A beautiful mask would placed onto the mummy’s head. The body would then be placed in a richly decorated coffin.’ (Show image of mask).

‘Preparations would now start for the grand funeral procession. It will go down the banks of The Nile and then across the river by boat to the pyramid.’ Show an image of a
procession. Who would these people be? (Family, friends, priests including High Priest, servants, soldiers, musicians, dancers). Make a shared list.

‘The procession has reached the tomb. In the tomb waits the stone sarcophagus into which the coffin will be placed. Sitting in a circle to represent the tomb: negotiate where the sarcophagus will be. On the floor draw the shape of the sarcophagus in chalk and place the funeral mask (photo) at the top.

Co-create the scene in the tomb (using the dramatic imagination: sound and silence; darkness and light; movement and stillness.) Ask students to think of a role as one of the people present. ‘Each of the people involved would be in their special place. Each would be carrying an object for Neben-kharru to use in the afterlife.’

Go to go and look round tables and pick an artefact (either a replica artefact or a photograph) to be carrying. Students to stand round the coffin in their allotted places – think of positioning / body language. Include the pharaoh and the queen and family. Question roles about who they are and why they have brought their object - why is it significant / of use to Neben in the afterlife? Think of any words you would like to say when we get to the tomb and place the objects around the coffin. e.g. ‘These shabtis will be your servants in the afterlife’. High priest will then read the final words and prayers (rest kneel down?).

TIR as High Priest:
YOU HAVE NOT DEPARTED DEAD, YOU HAVE DEPARTED ALIVE.”

Oho! Oho! Rise up, O Neben-kharru!
Take your head, collect your bones,
Gather your limbs, shake the earth from your flesh!

The gatekeeper comes out to you, he grasps your hand,
Takes you into heaven, to your father Geb.
He rejoices at your coming, gives you his hands.

Rise up, O Neben - Kharru, you shall not die!

Attendants join in with last sentence (3 times).

The attendants slowly leave the tomb (negotiate a last gesture towards sarcophagus?). Priests come to tie up and seal the door – CIR – enact.

Step 5: (If time) Neben - kharru faces the weighing of the heart ceremony. The scene is set up (negotiate with students), with the main characters: Osiris (chief god of the dead) (TIR), Thoth (the scribe), Amiit (the monster), Neben and the deities watching (CIR). Osiris directs the ceremony. Neben has to state his deeds before the gods. The scale will move with every statement. Students to be given deeds that he has done - take it in turns to read them out in the voice of Neben, standing behind him.

If the heart is lighter than the feather (symbol of truth and justice) we will watch Neben pass through to the afterlife: the fields of Hetep and Iaru. If not he will be taken the other way by the monster. His fate is to be eaten by the monster, and he will then cease to exist. This was the biggest fear of all Ancient Egyptians.
Talk about what has happened. Did Neben-kharru deserve his fate? Will he be happy in the afterlife if he gets there?

Resources

Slides showing various images.

Replica artefacts / photographs of artefacts.

Slips of paper stating some of Neben’s deeds during his life.

Further Possible Activities

Look at image of archaeologists working with their tools. Draw pictures of equipment that will be needed to excavate nebe’s tomb (including safety equipment, torches, cameras etc.

‘If we were the team of archaeologists, we must have done important jobs like this before. What is it about our team that makes us good archaeologists?’ Ask students to state some of our attributes e.g. ‘we always show respect for the things we find,’ ‘we work slowly and carefully when we find ancient objects’ etc

Enact approaching the door with the seal. Shine a torch through a crack in the door - students can take it in turns to hold the torch and say what they see inside.

Enact entering of tomb - the archeologists photograph what is in there - the students can draw pictures of the objects found and create labels for the museum display.
Look at the pictures and hieroglyphics on the wall of the tomb (you can either use real images or the children could create their own. ‘What are they telling us about the life / death of Neben-kharru?’

Cleaning / restoring / cataloguing objects.

Creating the final museum display - how will the objects be displayed? Information about Neben and the objects. Interactive displays / films / models etc.

Creating a guide book to the exhibition.

Finding out more about life in Ancient Egypt.

Locating Egypt on a modern map.

Using D&T / art to create artefacts e.g. the mummy's mask.

Maths - recording measurements of artefacts / tomb.

Neben-kharru – one of the sons of Ramesses 2nd and Nefertari. Born c 1282. Died c 1266 (age 16).

Ramesses: 1303 – 1213 BC

Invented words of Ramesses standing by his son’s death bed:

‘Our dear son Neben-kharru lies here before us. He was a brave warrior, fearless in battle, even though he was so young. He was a loyal friend and companion to his brothers and sisters, always generous and protective. The dreaded plague, that has killed so many of our people, has taken him away from us forever. May the love of his family take care of him as he journeys into the after-life. May his funeral and resting place be rich and splendid, a fitting
memory to his short but brilliant life. A new chamber will be created in the pyramid that is already built for myself and my Queen. We will bury our son, Neben-kharru, beyond splendour, beyond the goodliness of any man in Egypt.’

But in order to become immortal, the Egyptians believed, a dead person had to get to the afterlife. The body had to be carefully prepared and stored for eternal existence. Additionally, the journey itself was fraught with perils, and to reach the destination, a dead person needed ample provisions and the help of rituals and magic spells. In the end the deceased had an opportunity to become an akh, or transfigured spirit, which was blessed with magical powers and ready to live forever among the gods.

The Egyptians believed that a person’s spirit became disconnected from the body at death, but could reanimate it in the afterlife, provided that the proper rituals were performed. For that reason, they sought to preserve the body carefully. (See mummification process).

After the mummy was prepared, it would need to be re-animated, symbolically, by a priest. The opening of the mouth ceremony was conducted by a priest who would utter a spell and touch the mummy or sarcophagus with a ceremonial adze – a copper or stone blade. This ceremony ensured that the mummy could breathe and speak in the afterlife. In a similar fashion, the priest could utter spells to reanimate the mummy’s arms, legs, and other body parts.

Actual words used by priest:

"Awake!..May you be alert as a living one, rejuvenated every day, healthy in millions of occasions of god sleep, while the gods protect you, protection being around you every day.”
Having been preserved, the mummy was placed in a brightly painted wooden coffin. Next, the first coffin was placed in another wooden coffin. Like the first coffin, it was in the shape of the mummy, but was more simply ornamented. Lastly, the mummy and coffins were placed in a rectangular outermost coffin (sarcophagus) made of stone and inscribed with religious texts. On the top of the coffin would sit a jackal, most likely Anubis.

The body was then transported to the tomb in a cart pulled by oxen. It was accompanied by a procession that included relatives, priests and priestesses, along with dancers, and musicians. The participants carried the jars containing the dead person’s organs. They also carried the shabtis (figures of servants); food, drink, furniture, clothes, and jewellery which were to be used in the afterlife.

The march would proceed to the banks of the Nile, where everyone would board boats and cross to the Western side, the favoured location for burials. At the tomb, the body was raised upright and the priests performed rituals, prayers and spells to ensure that the dead would be able to use their senses in the afterlife, which included touching the body with sacred objects. The funeral goods were then placed in the tomb for the journey to the afterlife. The pyramid was sealed so that no one would ever enter it again. However the king’s soul could move through the burial chamber as it wished. After the funeral the king becomes a god and could be worshipped in the temples beside his pyramid.

Actual ritual words used by priests:
YOU HAVE NOT DEPARTED DEAD, YOU HAVE DEPARTED ALIVE."

Oho! Oho! Rise up, O Neben-kharru!
Take your head, collect your bones,
Gather your limbs, shake the earth from your flesh!

The gatekeeper comes out to you, he grasps your hand,
Takes you into heaven, to your father Geb.
He rejoices at your coming, gives you his hands.

Rise up, O Neben-Kharru, you shall not die!

Websites


http://www.historyforkids.net/egyptian-religion.html


http://www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/Egypt.html

Neben-kharru’s deeds:
I fought bravely in a battle against my father’s enemies.

I cared for my brother when he was sick.

I honoured my father and my mother.

I treated my servants and slaves fairly.

I made sacrifices to the gods and prayed every day.
I loved my wealth and would do anything to gain more gold and riches.

I stole the golden scarab from my sister and blamed my brother.

I wanted my father and mother to love me more than their other children.