Introduction

Images of ancient Egypt loom larger than life in the sands of northern Africa, and in the imagination: the mighty Nile, the Valley of the Kings, the Sphinx, the Great Pyramids, the powerful pharaohs. Amid the awe and wonder, it might be difficult to imagine that ordinary daily life was lived there, and yet it was. Nobles and common people have left us glimpses of their daily routines, thoughts and celebrations. They are our treasures of history, and in some cases, proof that living thousands of years ago does not make them so very different from us.

In this unit, students will have an opportunity to explore the daily lives of king and commoner using selected magazine articles from Middle Search Plus, and education websites on the Internet developed for middle school curricula, such as PBS, A&E, and The New York Times. The sands of time are shifting; a journey awaits you …

Standard

MCREL*, World History Era 2, Early Civilizations and the Rise of Pastoral Peoples, 4000-1000 BCE

Understands the major characteristics of civilization and the development of civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley

Understands the historical perspective

Objectives

To give students a sense of the daily life of a variety of people in ancient Egypt, their concept of life and death, leadership, diversions and culture

To involve students in the learning process, and give them opportunities to present new knowledge to peers, through various learning styles

To help students recognize connections and parallels between life in the 21st century and ancient Egypt

* Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL), used widely to offer national standards references
Suggested Articles

Depending on the class time available, you can base lessons on one or more of the articles listed here. Because this is a thematic unit and not a single lesson plan, activities are grouped according to the articles your students read. The suggested articles can be found on Middle Search Plus and read online or printed for class use.

“Life in Ancient Egypt” Junior Scholastic, Lexile 950
This brief article offers excellent general information about various aspects of daily life in ancient Egypt.

“A Peek Inside a Mummy” Scholastic News – Senior Edition, LX 1010
Oct 25, 2002, AN 7690707

“Egyptian Vocabulary” Events of Ancient Civilization, LX 920
2002 edition, AN 5653436
Includes the word *ostraca*, featured in Activity 2

Skills Practiced

Group work
Writing
Reading
Researching
Reasoning
Presenting autobiographical information
Oral presentation
Creative expression
Listening
Computer skills
Problem solving

Co-Curricular Applications

Art
Language Arts
Science
Information Technology
Mathematics
Social Studies

Terms to Consider

*annals*: records kept to document something
*antiquity*: ancient times
aspirations: goals, hoped for achievements

cartouche: an oval or oblong figure enclosing the hieroglyph names of royalty or gods

deity: a god

demise: downfall

embodiment: personification, bodily representation of an idea

hieroglyphs: the symbolic picture writing of ancient Egypt

homage: worship offered by a person to another

labyrinth: an intricate, maze-like structure of interconnecting passageways

obelisk: a tall, four-sided monument usually made of sandstone, tapering to a pyramid-like top

obliterate: to destroy completely, leaving behind no sign of something’s existence

ostraca: limestone tablet scrap used for writing notes, reminders, receipts, or drawings in ancient Egypt, much as we use scrap paper today.

sanctum: a sacred or holy place

pharaohs: the supreme rulers of ancient Egypt

plunder: to sack, loot, or rob

sarcophagus: an ancient Egyptian burial coffin

scarab: a type of large beetle the Egyptians considered sacred

Note: Additional words can be found in the Middle Search Plus suggested article “Egyptian Vocabulary”, referenced above. It presents a short glossary of vocabulary relating to ancient Egypt.

Activities

1. Egyptian Brainstorm – Present the information in the introduction as a lead-in to the unit. Ask the class to brainstorm words/phrases they associate with Ancient Egypt. Write these on the board. Inform students that they will be reading articles and working on activities about life in ancient Egypt, such as daily life, homes, buildings, writing, death and burial, recreation, construction, the pharaohs. In short, most of the words they have probably listed on the board. Examples are: hieroglyphs, pyramids, King Tutankhamen, the Nile River, papyrus, mummy, and desert. Review listed vocabulary words students will encounter in the lesson.

2. “Life in Ancient Egypt” Introduce the word ostraca – plural is ostracon. Explain that an ostraca is a shard of limestone or pottery ancient Egyptians used much in the way we use notepaper today. Before reading the article “Life in Ancient Egypt”,

2005 EBSCO Publishing
instruct students to think about the different things one can learn about Egyptian life through ostracon as they read the article. Students can take notes as they read. Discuss answers after reading.

Other Think About It Questions: What are our 21st century ostracon? Invite students to share their ideas. Examples of answers include emails, letters, messages on Post It Notes, scratch paper doodles, road signs, rough drafts of letters or reports, etc. What might ancient Egyptians learn about us if they saw our ostracon? This can be a class activity with answers written on a white board, or an individual student writing exercise. To make further historical connections, ask students to compare or contrast their 21st century values and attitudes with those of the ancient Egyptians, on main topics from the article, such as spirituality, the body, food, education, and government.

Variation: Another creative writing activity might be to invite students to create journals in which they play the role of a person in Egyptian society, and write of life from their perspective. Ask them to use information from the articles an be as detailed as possible in their descriptions, to give readers the strongest sense of time and place, down to details like taste, smell, textures and temperature. Remind them that such details are important in describing the place in society people had. A pharaoh, queen, scribe, child, baker or musician each saw the same sunny day very differently.

Variation: To make this a class presentation project, create a list of types of people and occupations in ancient Egypt and assign individuals or group of students to each one. Student groups can collaborate on the journal, and present their information to the class. Encourage creativity, such as dressing in costume for the presentation, creating artwork, using researched props, etc.

3. **One if by Land, Two if by Nile** – This activity is about transportation in ancient Egypt, which centered on the Nile River. A reed boat called a *felucca* or *falucca*, plied the waters for trade and transport. To learn about this, invite students to “meet” a boy their age who sails a felucca. The photos and descriptions are most informative. Go to [http://www.website1.com/odyssey/week9/UpClose.html](http://www.website1.com/odyssey/week9/UpClose.html)

4. **Egyptians at Play** – Board games were very popular in ancient Egypt. Archaeologists have unearthed evidence of game boards for mancala and senet in many settings that predate 1400 BC. We play those games today. Senet, known also as Game of Thirty Squares, evolved into the more modern backgammon. Both senet and mancala are mathematical games. With the following link, students can play senet online against King Tut (the computer). Go to [http://www.humanities-interactive.org/ancient/tut/senet/](http://www.humanities-interactive.org/ancient/tut/senet/). After students have had a chance to play the game, ask them to consider this question: Based on the rules and style of this game, what skills did the ancient Egyptians think were important? Answers should be counting, math and strategy. Point out to students that games pieces evolved from items used for accounting and
inventory. This makes sense since Egypt and the Nile were important trade centers, and with all the construction taking place, planning, measure and strategy would have been important for all.

Accessed at the hyperlinked website, this lesson plan was created for the *New York Times Teacher Connections*, and features the article “Early Pharaohs’ Ghostly Fleet,”.

6. Some students with special learning needs may view the film “Prince of Egypt” as a means of exposure to a characterization of life in ancient Egypt.

**Extension Activities**

1. Death and Burial on the Nile - Are You My Mummy? “A Peek Inside a Mummy” from *Scholastic News – Senior Edition*, AN 7690707 LX 1010 is a brief introduction to views on burial and mummification practices, and to work on the activity. Accessing this sites below will allow students to learn more about how ancient Egyptians viewed death and burial, including mummification. They will also have a chance to view CT scans of mummies and play an identification game.
http://carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/EGYPT/d&b.html
Home page for this site http://carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/Teachers/index.htm
You will also find icons linking to information on daily life, mythology, writing, people, and archaeology.

2. Art Activity - Archaeologists have discovered murals in ancient Egyptian ruins that literally paint vivid pictures of daily life in the Nile River valley. Look at images of these murals. They celebrate accomplishments, personality, and activities. Invite students to create pictorial life portraits, personal murals of their own lives, of what is important to them, of what they would like to be remembered for, all in the style of the ancient murals.

3. Build Like an Egyptian Pharaoh – Obelisks were one type of monument built to honor and immortalize the pharaohs. More than that, they were feats of engineering and construction. Using the Internet, students can follow the building of one such obelisk. This science extension activity is presented as a PBS NOVA Online Adventure at the following websites:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/obelisk
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/obelisk/explore/index.html
Resources

Marco Polo Internet Content for the Classroom
http://marcopolo.worldcom.com/index.aspx
keywords: ancient Egypt.
Many excellent choices, such as “Life After Life in Egypt” and “Pyramids and Boats”

Felucca

Egyptian Games-Senet
http://www.humanities-interactive.org/ancient/tut/senet/

Egyptian Death and Burial
http://carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/EGYPT/d&b.html
http://carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/Teachers/index.htm

NYT Learning Network Teacher Connections
A Matter of Life and Death: Planning for Needs in the Afterworld

NOVA-Obelisk
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/obelisk
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/obelisk/explore/index.html

Evaluation

Students will be graded on their answers to the discussion questions, group work and their written work. They can also be graded on their participation, behavior, and cooperation.

Rubric

Resources for rubrics:
http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.shtml
http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/tips/assess-elem.html
http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html/