



Name:..... Form:.....

Based on **pages 14 to 17** of *The ancient Egyptians*

The beginning of Egyptology

Egyptology is the study of the ancient Egyptian civilisation. Today, people around the world know a great deal about the ancient Egyptians but for many centuries very little was known about them. Few people from Europe travelled to Egypt and when they did, they came back with stories of great buildings and strange picture writing we call hieroglyphs. This made everyone think that the ancient Egyptians were very mysterious and even frightening.

In 1798 Napoleon took an army to Egypt. He was planning to make the French empire larger. There were artists who travelled with the army and they made pictures of the buildings of ancient Egypt. When the pictures were published in books, more people became interested in the ancient Egyptians.

Some soldiers in the French army discovered a stone with carvings on it. Some of the carvings were hieroglyphs and some were Greek words. Jean Champollion (1790–1832) discovered that he could use the Greek words to translate the hieroglyphs. This made people even more interested in the ancient Egyptians.

People began to come to Egypt to make discoveries and carry away statues and treasure to sell. One of the first to do so was an Italian called Giovanni Belzoni (1778–1823). He had been a strong man in a circus before he used his strength to break into the buried Egyptian ruins. Early visitors to Egypt, like Belzoni did a great deal of damage as they hauled away their treasures and no record was kept of how the treasures had been discovered.

Later visitors to Egypt spent time recording the discoveries before they moved them, as archaeologists do today. These people became known as Egyptologists and one of the most important was Sir Flinders Petrie (1853–1942). He made careful excavations all over Egypt. One of his assistants was Howard Carter (1874–1939) who discovered Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.

The beginning of Egyptology

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

This worksheet supports the information about grave robbers and Howard Carter. The students may have the impression that because we know so much about the Egyptians today that this has always been the case. For many centuries after the end of the Egyptian civilisation, almost all knowledge was lost. Only a few travellers through Egypt on their way to and from the Holy Lands brought back a little information. The text on the worksheet gives a very brief and simple account of how Egyptology grew up to become a human activity concerned with the study of the ancient Egyptians.

Younger students

Read through the sheet with the students then let them answer the following questions from the board.

1. What is Egyptology? (The study of the ancient Egyptian Civilisation).
2. What are hieroglyphs? (Strange picture writing).
3. What did people at first think about the ancient Egyptians? (They were mysterious and frightening).
4. What did Jean Champollion discover? (The hieroglyphs could be translated).
5. What do Egyptologists do after they have made a discovery? (Spend time recording them).

Outcomes

The students:

- Know what Egyptology is and what Egyptologists do.
- Can answer questions related to a text.

Older students

The students can read through the text and then answer the questions for younger students followed by these questions.

6. Why did the French army go to Egypt? (Napoleon, their leader, wanted to make the French empire larger).
7. How old was Jean Champollion when he died? (42).
8. What do you think was the main interest of people like Belzoni? (To make money by selling statues and treasure).
9. What do you think was the main interest of people like Petrie and Carter? (To find out more about the Egyptian civilisation).
10. How old was Carter when he discovered Tutankhamun's tomb? (48).

Outcomes

The students:

- Know what Egyptology is and what Egyptologists do.
- Can answer questions related to a text.
- Can make calculations from information in the text.