

Exhibition guide

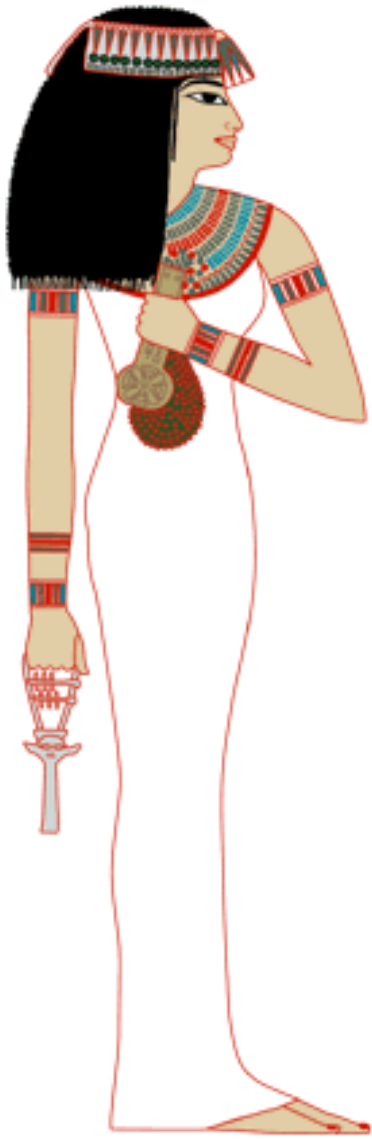
We recommend that you break your class into groups to view the exhibition, with each group headed by an adult leader. Provide each leader with a copy of this exhibition guide.

Introduction

'My name is Namenekhamun. I live in Thebes under the divine protection of our King Psam-tek. It is the morning of my precious daughter Keku's funeral. Today will be a day of sorrow and celebration.'

Follow the story of a wealthy father as he relates the final journey of his young daughter. Namenekhamun and Keku were real people who lived and died nearly 2700 years ago, in the Late Period of ancient Egypt's history.

Experience how researchers have been able to piece together their story through the artefacts, writings, and bodies this civilisation left behind. Step into this ancient society, where death is a doorway and life exists beyond the tomb.



Preparation for death

Find the first section in the exhibition, called 'Preparation for death'. Read the introduction to your students.

'I am not afraid for Keku's spirit. My daughter has prepared well for her death. She will continue in the afterlife in much the same way as she lived with her mother and me.

This is a sad occasion, yet I am also joyful because today Keku is going to paradise – provided she can find her way through the dangerous underworld journey and pass the final judgment.

Keku prepared by collecting special objects for her tomb, many of which we bought together at the marketplace. Some objects, such as amulets and spells, will protect and guide her on the underworld journey. Others, such as food, shabtis (funerary statuettes) and clothing, will provide essential nourishment, leisure, and comfort for her eternal spirit.'

Emphasise that this is a story of one woman's journey to the afterlife. You could briefly revisit your preparatory discussion about the afterlife.

Discussion topics

Ask the students to explore this section. Then discuss the following questions.

The information on tombs

- What is a tomb?
- Why do you think tombs were important to the ancient Egyptians?

Explain to your students that tombs were important in housing the dead, protecting and nourishing them in the afterlife, and providing a link with the living world. Check that they understand that tombs usually consisted of two parts:

- the burial chamber under the ground, which housed the body
- the mortuary chapel above the ground, which visitors could enter to make offerings and perform rituals.

The shabtis

- What was the purpose of shabtis? What sort of work would you want a shabti to do?
- Which shabti do you like the most and why? What is it made of?

The images describing the cost of a coffin

- How much did a coffin cost?
- How did the ancient Egyptians pay for goods like coffins? How is this different from the way we pay for things today?

The shabti forgeries

- 'Forgery' means 'fake'. Can you name a way that you can tell a fake shabti from a real shabti?

- Do you think you would be fooled by a fake?

In the tent of the embalmers

Find the section in the exhibition called 'In the tent of the embalmers'. This section contains material that will fascinate many students but that may disturb some. The way you approach the section will depend on your individual students.

Read the introduction to your students. You may need to clarify some of the concepts as you go.

'When Keku died, her body was taken to the tent of the embalmers to be washed and mummified. The embalmers preserved her body, ensuring that her ba (soul) would always have the physical base it needs in the afterlife. The embalmers also carried out many religious rituals as part of this process.

The embalmers' tent is a busy and noisy place. There are bodies lying around in various stages of preservation, and there is the constant noise of ritual chanting. Different embalming techniques are always being practised, depending on what each person has been able to afford.

Thankfully, the wealth bestowed on me by the god Amun means that Keku was embalmed in a fashion that befits her status.'

Explain that an embalmer is someone who preserves a body. Check that your students understand why Egyptian embalmers preserved Keku's body – so that she could continue to live in the afterlife.

Discussion topics

Ask the students to explore this section. Then discuss the following questions.

The images showing the embalming process

Go over the embalming process with your students. To preserve a body, the embalmers:

- removed and preserved most internal organs
- treated the body with salt to dry it out
- filled the hollow spaces in the body with sawdust, straw, or other materials
- wrapped the body, covering the first layers in resin (a sticky substance that many plants produce).

Then discuss:

- Why did the Egyptians leave the heart in the body and throw the brain out? What do you think about this?
- What part of the body do you think is the place of knowledge and emotion? Is this different to or the same as the Egyptian belief?

The embalming tools

- Can you see a knife, a hook, and a coffin label? What was the purpose of each object?
- Which tool do you like the most and why?

The bandages for wrapping the body

- What were the bandages made from?
- How many metres do you think it would take to wrap your body?

The Canopic jars for storing the internal organs

- What were these jars used for?
- What animals are on the lids?
- Which jar is your favourite and why?

The amulets (charms for luck or protection)

- Can you find a frog, a beetle, a monkey, and a hare?
- Do you have a lucky charm? If so, what is it?
- Can you think of any other lucky charms?

The mummified animals

- Why do you think the ancient Egyptians mummified animals?
- What do you think of the idea of mummifying animals?

A woman called Keku

Find the section in the exhibition titled 'A woman called Keku'. Read the introduction to your students.

'My dear Keku died much too young. Before this sad day, Keku, my wife Isetemkheb, and I lived together in Thebes among many other wealthy families. As Chief Butcher in the temple complex of the god Amun, I was able to provide well for Keku both in life and in death.'

Explain to your students that this section is about the mummy and sarcophagus (stone coffin) of Keku.

Discussion topics

Ask the students to explore this section. Then discuss the following questions.

Keku's mummy and coffins

- What do we know about Keku?
- What sorts of modern technology have helped us to learn about her?
- Find Keku's name on her outer coffin. Do you think this is a well-decorated coffin? What makes you say that?

The make-up and jewellery

- What sorts of objects might Keku have taken with her to make sure she looked good for the gods?
- Which piece of jewellery do you like the most and why?

Keku's pet cat

- What other animal mummies have you seen in the exhibition?
- Would you mummify your pet? Why or why not?

Leaving the land of the living

Find the section in the exhibition called 'Leaving the land of the living'. Read the introduction to your students.

'Keku's embalming process is complete. Today, her body will be collected for burial. The funeral procession will soon take place.

Isetemkheb and I are thankful that we can purchase an elaborate procession for Keku so that our status is clear to any onlookers. Relatives will be positioned at either end of Keku's coffin, with two female relatives acting the roles of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys. People will carry Keku's Canopic jars and other goods, and the hired mourners, dancers, musicians and priests will follow.

The procession has reached the edge of the Nile. Join us as we board boats and cross the river to the western side, the land of the dead and our favoured location for burials.'

Make sure your students understand the above text. Explain that when Keku's body was fully preserved (after seventy days), she was taken from the east side of the Nile to the west side to be buried. There was an elaborate funeral procession, which involved relatives and many other people.

Discussion topics

Ask the students to explore this section. Then discuss the following questions.

The large images and video

- Why do you think the Nile was so important? (Encourage a discussion of its uses for transport, agriculture, and religious activities.)
- What activities can you see taking place?
- What happens to the countryside as you move further from the edge of the Nile? Where would be the best place to grow crops?
- Would you like to live there? Why or why not?

The funerary boat model

- Who can you see on the funerary boat?
- Do you like the look of this boat? Would you like to ride in one? Why or why not?

Opening of the Mouth ceremony

- What do you think of this ceremony? Do you think dead people would need their senses in the afterlife?

Journey though the underworld

Find the section in the exhibition called 'Journey though the underworld'. Read the introduction to your students.

'The underworld is a dangerous region that our spirits have to traverse in order to reach the paradise we long for. Keku's spirit will have to contend with gods, strange creatures and gatekeepers to reach Osiris and the Hall of Final Judgment. It is here that she will plead her case for entry into the afterlife. She was a good girl – of true voice. We are confident her heart will be found pure.'

Explain to students that the ancient Egyptians believed they had to travel through the dangerous underworld to reach the afterlife. To overcome its challenges, they protected themselves with lucky charms and spells.

The judgment at the end of the underworld journey had two parts:

- Declaration of Innocence – where the dead person promised they had done nothing wrong in their lifetime.
- Weighing of the Heart – where the dead person's heart was weighed against the feather of truth. The person could enter the afterlife only if the scales were balanced.

Discussion topics

Ask the students to explore this section. Then discuss the following questions.

Osiris

- Osiris was god of the underworld and was represented in many ways. Can you find any small statues that show Osiris?
- What does he look like? Which representation do you like the most and why?

Spell 125

- Look at this spell. What do you think of the names of the judges (for example, Nosey and Bone Breaker) and the promises that the dead person had to make (for example, 'I have not babbled.')
- What are your favourite parts and why?
- What do you think these judges looked like?

Weighing of the Heart ceremony

- Can you find a drawing of this ceremony on a wall, on a coffin, and on a papyrus (ancient Egyptian writing material)?
- Do you think your heart would pass the test?

Maintaining the connection

Find the section in the exhibition called 'Maintaining the connection'. Read the introduction to your students.

'Keku will not be forgotten. Her mortuary chapel connects her to our world of the living. Her ka (spirit) is able to enter this space through the tomb's false door and inhabit a statue of her we had made. This means her ka can accept the food, drink and other essentials that we will place on the offering table every time we visit.

Keku's tomb will be well maintained and her spirit looked after. However, if there comes a time when our family or friends can no longer make offerings, her tomb decorations, inscriptions, and objects are specially designed to ensure she will always be well supplied in the afterlife and remembered by our faithful gods.

Today, in the time of our King Psam-tek, I both sadly farewell my daughter and rejoice in the knowledge of her immortality.'

Explain that after someone had been buried in ancient Egypt, living relatives visited the tomb to make offerings to the dead person. You could compare this to how people today visit graves, churches, and other sites to pay their respects to the dead.

Discussion topics

Ask the students to explore this section. Then discuss the following questions.

Ka figure with vandalised face

- Why is this figure missing its face?
- What do you think about tomb robbers raiding tombs for treasure?

Stela (memorial stone)

- What objects that people use today are similar to this stone?

Bowls

- What do you think these bowls were used for?
- What other items for making offerings can you find?
- Do people in your culture make offerings to the dead? If so, what are those offerings?