

Exhibition guide

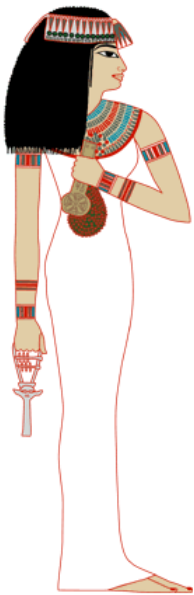
Your students could use this exhibition guide directly, or you could retain it and use it to focus their discussions. It is unlikely that your students will be able to cover all the discussion points in one visit, so you may want to focus on specific points.

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 on the wall.

'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.'

Discussion topics

Explore this section. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.

- In the Late Period (664–332 BCE), tombs generally consisted of two parts: the burial chamber and the mortuary chapel. What was the purpose of each part?
- Find two objects that provide evidence that the ancient Egyptians prepared for their own death. Discuss them with a partner.
- What sorts of inscriptions and images were painted on the coffins?
- What types of objects did the ancient Egyptians bury with them and why?
- What is a shabti, and why did the ancient Egyptians include shabtis in their tombs?
- What are two signs of a fake shabti?
- Which objects would you choose for a tomb and why?

In the tent of the embalmers

Find the section in the exhibition called 'In the tent of the embalmers'. Read the introduction on the wall.

'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.'

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).

Discussion topics

Explore this section. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.

- Why did the ancient Egyptians mummify the bodies of dead people?
- What tools and materials did mummification involve, and what were they used for? How hard do you think they would be to use?
- Why did the ancient Egyptians leave the heart in the body and throw the brain out? What do you think about this? Do you associate a particular part of the body with knowledge and emotion?
- What was the purpose of the Canopic jars?
- Which god was the god of mummification?
- Why did the ancient Egyptians include amulets with mummies? Which amulet is your favourite and why?
- What was the purpose of the funerary mask?
- What is one reason that animals were mummified?
- What technologies have helped researchers find out about mummification?
- What do you think of mummification? Would you like to be mummified? Why or why not?

A woman called Keku

Find the section in the exhibition titled 'A woman called Keku'. This section focuses on the mummy and sarcophagus (stone coffin) of Keku. Read the introduction on the wall.

'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.'

Discussion topics

Explore this section. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.

- What are some things we know about Keku?
- What symbols can you find on her sarcophagus? What are some of their meanings?
- What sorts of make-up and jewellery would Keku have taken with her to the tomb and why?
- What technologies have helped researchers find out about Keku? What other techniques could be used?
- What do you think of the idea of mummifying pets?

Leaving the land of the living

Find the section in the exhibition called 'Leaving the land of the living'. Read the introduction on the wall.

'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.'

Discussion topics

Explore this section. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.

- Why did the ancient Egyptians live on the east side of the Nile and bury their dead on the west? Does your culture set aside specific places for burials? Where?
- Why was the Nile so important? What part did it play in daily transport, agriculture, and religious activities?
- Do you have processions to mourn and/or celebrate the dead in your culture? What do you do? How does this compare with what the ancient Egyptians did?
- What do you think of the Opening of the Mouth ceremony?
- What are your impressions of the scenes in this section, including in the film (if you have seen it)?

Journey through the underworld

Find the section in the exhibition called 'Journey through the underworld'. Read the introduction on the wall.

'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.'

The ancient Egyptians protected themselves with lucky charms and spells to overcome the dangers and challenges of the underworld and reach the eternal afterlife.

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

Explore this section. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.

- Who was Orisis, and what do you think of his story? What other gods can you see depicted in this section?
- The *Book of the Dead* contained spells for protection in the afterlife. Look at Spell 125, for the Declaration of Innocence. What do you think of the names of the gods and of the statements? Could you truthfully say all those things?
- What do you think of the other spells?
- Do you think your heart would pass the Weighing of the Heart test? Why or why not?
- How does the Field of Rushes (the afterlife) seem to you? What do you think of the work that has to be done there?
- What were the ba and the ka?

Maintaining the connection

Find the section in the exhibition called 'Maintaining the connection'. Read the introduction on the wall.

'Keku will not be forgotten. Her mortuary chapel connects her to our world of the living. Her ka (life force) 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.'

Discussion topics

Explore this section. Then discuss some or all of the following questions.

- After someone had died and been buried in ancient Egypt, living relatives visited their tomb to make offerings to them. Do people in your culture do similar things? Where do they go and what do they do?
- Why is the ka figure missing its face? Why were ka figures included in tombs?
- Why was the ba (soul) depicted as a bird? Did the ba have to stay in the tomb like the ka (life force)?
- What do you think the bowls were used for?