



Scribe School Pre-Visit

Thank you for scheduling an educational experience at the Putnam Museum. This 35-minute program will help your students become aware of the following:

1. What it meant to be a scribe, who was able to become a scribe and why they were needed.
2. The tools that scribes used and what it was like to be in Scribe School.
3. How papyrus was made and why it was so labor intensive
4. What hieroglyphs are, how we know what they say, and how we cracked the code using the Rosetta Stone.

The Putnam Museum's Education Specialist will lead a hands-on program in which your students will learn about being a scribe in Ancient Egypt and what school was like for children who became scribes. Students will get a lesson in writing and deciphering hieroglyphs so they can better understand the difficulty of the ancient language. Students will also have a demonstration on how to make papyrus. The program will end with an introduction to the Unearthing Ancient Egypt exhibit. The pre-visit activities have been included to provide background materials and to make your field trip a more valuable experience. The content described above helps meet:

Iowa Core:

- Social Studies, History, Grade 3-5

Illinois Learning Standards

- Social Science, Goal 16-History, 16.A.2c – 16.D.2

We look forward to seeing you and thank you for your interest in the Putnam's education programs.

Sincerely,

Jen Purcell
Education Specialist
Putnam Museum

Background Information

An Ancient Egyptian scribe had the opportunity to rise to high ranks and even become a royal scribe, bringing him wealth, land and power. The roles of the Ancient Egyptian scribe revolved around work relating to the government of Egypt. Scribes could be described as the civil servants of Egypt. Scribes worked in the following roles:

- Tax Collectors
- Law
- Writing letters
- Recording harvests and food supplies
- Control the food supply
- Overseeing the construction of buildings

One of the most famous scribes was called Imhotep, who became a vizier of Egypt and was eventually deified as the Son of Ptah, the Lord of all Builders. Whenever scribes started work they would sprinkle a drop from their water bowl in honor of Imhotep.

The god Thoth was revered as the God of Wisdom and was also the scribe of the gods and the inventor of writing. Thoth had an important role in the Underworld in the judgment of the dead in the Hall of the Two Truths. Here he was the scribe who recorded the confessions of the dead and also kept a record of the souls who progressed into the afterlife.

To become a scribe, you had to attend a special school for scribes. At this school you would learn how to read and write hieroglyphic and hieratic scripts. Although experts believe that most scribes were men, there is evidence of some female doctors. These women would have been trained as scribes so that they could read medical texts.

Until the 1800s, over 200 years ago we did not know what hieroglyphs said, some thought they were just pictures. The Rosetta Stone was carved in 196 B.C. but it was not found until 1799. It was found by French soldiers who were rebuilding a fort in Egypt in a small village in the Delta called Rosetta (Rashid). Many people worked on deciphering hieroglyphs over several hundred years. Jean-Francois Champollion after many years of studying the Rosetta Stone and other examples of ancient Egyptian writing, deciphered hieroglyphs in 1822.

Christianity was partially responsible for the extinction of Egyptian scripts, outlawing their use in order to get rid of any non-Christian traditions. Eventually, the language was replaced by Arabic and the final link to Egypt's ancient kingdoms was then broken, and the knowledge needed to read the history of the pharaohs was lost.

Pre-visit Activity

Early Elementary students use decimeter squares to measure their lifespans and create a metric-based time line going back to ancient Egypt.

Materials

- construction paper cut into decimeter squares
- sheets of square centimeter paper
- 50 12" x 18" sheets of same color construction paper
- string or thread

Have on hand:

- scissors
- glue or tape

This activity is done prior to studying ancient Egypt. Once constructed, the timeline can be used during studies of ancient Egypt.

Lesson 1

Teacher prepares enough paper decimeter squares (10cm x 10 cm of various colors of construction paper) for each child to have one for each year, plus one more per child (for example, 10 7-year-olds need 77 squares). Discuss the question, "How old is old?" to elicit from children what their understanding of "old" is.

List childrens' responses on large sheets of chart paper.(Responses we received included: "grandparents", "single cell life forms", "rings on trees", something 1,000 years old", dinosaur bones", "black and white photos"). Post the charts so that they can be referred to as the concept of old begins to develop.

Ask each child how old he or she is, and have students build their age by gluing decimeter squares to strips of construction paper that have been cut into 15 cm. wide strips. The lengths will vary depending on how the children space the square decimeters, and there will be one extra square representing the year in which each child was born (Note: The extra square should result in a great discussion of how we measure ages.)

Lesson 2

Provide square decimeters and have a child lay out a line representing the most frequently occurring age in the classroom.



Next to it, lay out a line of square decimeters representing the age of the teacher or the age of the oldest living person anyone in the class knows. This is a necessary visual step so that the children can begin thinking about the need for reduction in scale.

Raise the question, "How long ago did the ancient Egyptians live?" Record the children's responses on chart paper. (Our responses varied from 500 years to 5,000,000 years.) Discuss how long the line of squares would need to be if it were 500 squares long. Could this line fit in the room? Discuss 5,000 years and the length of it. (Our responses included: "We'd use all the paper in the world," and "We'd be out on Woodward Avenue,")

The need for a smaller unit of measure should become apparent. Decide together on the use of square centimeters (which is 1/10 of a decimeter)

Copy enough centimeter sheets to represent 5,000 years. (Each sheet can be cut into decade strips that will represent about 3 centuries, so you will need 17 sheets.) Discuss the relationship between years, decades and centuries. Let one square centimeter represent one year. How long would a decade be? Have each child cut a strip of 10 square centimeters from the sheet. (one of our students noted that if we worked as a group, we could cut out enough decades to build our timeline much more quickly.) Provide a container to store the decade strips.

Lesson 3

Teacher pre-cut 50 sheets of construction paper into strips that are 10 centimeters wide, and puts out glue and tape.

Discuss that the current year is 1997 and that today we are going to build our time line back 1,997 years. These 1,997 years are called A.D., which is "anno Domini", Latin for "in the year of the Lord". Christians traditionally date the current era from the time of Christ's birth. What part of a decade strip would be needed to show 7 years? To show 90 years? Have some children build and mount this using the previously cut decades onto the strips of pre-cut construction paper.

Ask how many decades would be needed to show a century? Have groups of 3-4 children begin counting out 10 decade strips and putting them into bundles while other groups of 3-4 children are attaching the construction paper strips into a long line. Another group of 3-4 children can begin gluing on the first 97 years and then the subsequent centuries.

Lesson 4

Read a selection from the Resources that includes some of the years of ancient Egyptian culture, perhaps Pyramids by Scholastic.

Talk about pyramids being built towards the end of the time of the ancient

Egyptians. Then introduce the dating of time known as B.C. (before Christ). Discuss that these dates are counted backwards. Ask the children "How do you explain this?"

Discuss how to use the remaining decade strips to continue building the timeline back 3,000 more years, having the class decide how best to accomplish this task. (Our students actually worked at constructing the timeline over several sessions, as this was a tedious task. However, the end results were worth the effort.)

Once the timeline is constructed, lay it out with the class so that they can see how long it is. Discuss and record their observations. The dimensions should be about 50 meters long x 10 centimeters wide. Discuss where to display the timeline. (One class decided to hang the timeline from the ceiling lights. They hung markers from string to represent centuries and other dates.)