

UNIT 2

ANCIENT HISTORY

LESSON 1

Summary

- In this lesson, students will read "Animal Mummies" (pp. 32-37) to explore what archaeologists are learning about animal mummies and what they reveal about what the ancient Egyptians believed and how they lived.

Social Studies Background

Ancient Egyptians believed in the immortal soul. To make the journey, however, the soul needed a body. This was made possible through an embalming process called mummification.

To make a mummy, special priests removed all moisture from the body, treated it, and wrapped it in layers of linen. This left a dried-out, life-like form that resisted decay.

When they died, pharaohs and other wealthy people were mummified and buried in tombs with everything they would need to live in the afterworld. Some commoners were buried in this manner, too. However, not all mummies were people. Many were animals.

Animals were mummified for four basic reasons. Some were beloved pets meant to join their owners in the afterlife. Others were provided as food for people in the afterlife. People mummified animals to serve as offerings for different gods. They also mummified animals that they believed represented the earthly form of the gods they worshipped.

Common mummified animals include: cats, which were connected to Bastet, goddess of music and joy and also the protector of women; falcons: which represented Horus, the sky god and protector of the ruler of Egypt; and the ibis, which was associated with Thoth, god of writing and knowledge.

ENGAGE

Encourage students to flip through the article and turn and talk with a partner to discuss what they see. Invite students to ask questions or share what they already know about mummies.

EXPLORE

Instruct students to examine the image on pages 32-33 of their Readers. **Ask:** *What kind of animal is featured in this photograph?* (a ram) Brainstorm ideas about why ancient Egyptians would mummify a ram.

EXPLAIN

Point out to students that it was common for ancient Egyptians to make animal mummies. **Ask:** *What were some of the animals they mummified?* (birds, beetles, bulls, baboons, cats, falcons, ibis) Have students turn and talk as they discuss reasons why Egyptians created animal mummies. (Animals were pets, meant to be food in the afterlife, represented gods, or were offered as gifts to gods.) Then have students share their ideas about what animal mummies reveal about ancient Egyptian culture. (Possible response: Ancient Egyptians were very religious and/or superstitious people. Animals were an important part of their rituals because they represented the gods they worshipped.) Challenge students to explain why there are so many different kinds of animal mummies. (Ancient Egyptians worshipped many gods. Thus, there are many different types of animal mummies.)

ELABORATE

Invite students to watch the National Geographic video "Life After Death in Ancient Egypt" (www.nationalgeographic.org/video/life-after-death-in-ancient-egypt/), which explores a nearly 4,400-year-old tomb of a pharaoh and illuminates some of what ancient Egyptians believed about the vitality of life after death.

EVALUATE

Have students complete the **Content Assessment** for this lesson. Encourage them to share and compare their results in small groups.

CONTENT ASSESSMENT: Animal Mummies

Pick three animals from the article. Explain why ancient Egyptians might have turned them into mummies.

What has studying animal mummies revealed about the culture of ancient Egyptians?

What has it revealed about their religious beliefs?
