

GREAT ART IDEAS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

DRAW LIKE AN EGYPTIAN: CANOPIC JARS

YEAR 4–6

OVERVIEW

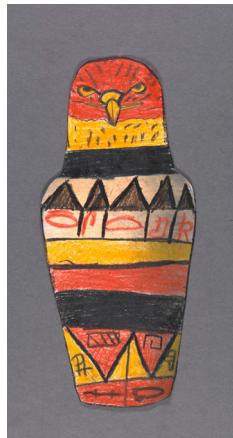
In this activity you can introduce students to canopic jars from Ancient Egypt. They will develop their knowledge of how ideas, beliefs and cultural practices are expressed through art objects, and how these objects influence other times in history. Inspired by these works, students then develop decorative motifs which communicate a message about themselves.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Describe the characteristics and purpose of canopic jars and explore how objects and symbols express Ancient Egyptian culture and beliefs.
- Research the history and culture of Ancient Egypt and compare works from a different historical and cultural context to see how ideas and techniques change over time.
- Plan and create a canopic jar design using visual conventions from Ancient Egypt as inspiration.
- Share their ideas with their classmates about the expressive choices they made in their own work.

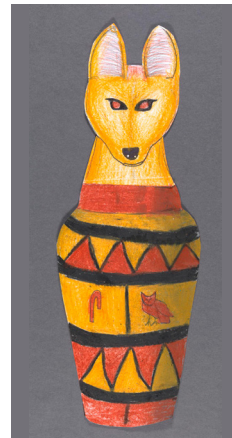
STUDENT EXAMPLES



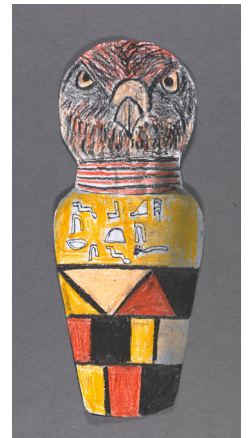
Produced by Robert
in an NGV workshop



Produced by Jordan
in an NGV workshop



Produced by Shaynae
in an NGV workshop



Produced by
Theofanidis
in an NGV workshop

RELATED ARTWORKS



Egypt, (Qurna, Thebes)
Canopic jar with lid representing Duamutef
Third Intermediate Period, Dynasties XXI–XXV
1069 BCE – 664 BCE
limestone
(a-b) 33.8 × 13.2 × 15.1 cm (overall)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented by James E. Sherrard Esq., 1881



Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
(manufacturer)
Canopic vase c. 1810
stoneware (green jasper)
(a-b) 26.1 × 13.3 cm diameter (overall)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of
Victoria by Mrs Norma Deutsher, Fellow, 1993



Egypt, (Thebes)
Lid from the inner anthropoid coffin of Iret-[en]-Hor-eru 747 BCE – 600 BCE
wood, linen, gesso, pigment
21.5 × 42.5 × 70.5 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1938

DISCUSS

Ancient Egyptians preserved the human body after death using a process called mummification. Major organs were removed and placed in special vessels called canopic jars, which were kept inside the tomb. The jars were traditionally decorated with the four sons of the god Horus: Qebehsenuf (hawk head), Hapy (baboon head), Duamutef (jackal head), and Imsety (human head). They guarded the intestines, lungs, stomach and liver respectively.

The heart was left inside the body to be weighed in the afterlife to determine if the person had led a good life. The brain was thrown away as it was not considered as important as other organs. The mummified body was then placed in a series of coffins, for example the *Lid from the inner anthropoid coffin of Iret-[en]-Hor-eru, 747–600 BCE*. This coffin lid is decorated with text asking the god Osiris for sustenance in the afterlife and figures of the gods to protect the owner in the next world.

From the late eighteenth century, Egyptian art became popular in Europe. Europeans took inspiration from Egyptian canopic jars and created works such as the Wedgwood *Canopic vase, c. 1810*, which was made in England as a decorative object.

Introduce your students to the related works of art and use the following discussion prompts to explore Egyptian ideas and beliefs:

- What do you know about Egyptian beliefs, burial practices and symbols?
Research Ancient Egypt and discuss what you learn.
- Look at the Egyptian canopic jar and find some more examples online. What might these objects be for? What do they tell us about ancient Egyptian beliefs and practices?
- Look closely at the images on the coffin lid. Which animals or figures can you identify? Why do you think Egyptians included these decorations? *Notice the bands of decoration that include hieroglyphics and images.*
- How does the Wedgwood canopic vase differ from the ancient Egyptian jars? Speculate about where it may have been made and what it would be used for
Consider materials, techniques, colours and symbols.

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

- A3 cover paper – grey or buff
- A4 cartridge paper
- Canopic jar templates (draw the outline of a canopic jar onto A3 paper)
- Crayons – earth tones
- Grey lead pencils
- Scissors
- Glue

CREATE

Students create their own canopic jar design using the following steps:

1. Draw the head you have chosen on a sheet of A4 cartridge paper. *Make sure the neck is the same width as the neck of the canopic jar in the template.*
2. Decorate the body of the canopic jar on the template with bands of decoration inspired by the related works of art. *Incorporate bold pattern, areas of colour and symbols that have personal significance.*
3. Cut around the head carefully and glue it into place on the canopic jar template.
4. Colour in your canopic jar using crayons. *Use colour, pattern and tone to make sure the head and body of the jar are unified, working together as a single piece.*
5. Cut around the entire canopic jar design and glue it onto a coloured background of cover paper.

PRESENT & REFLECT

Students share their portrait with a partner:

- Which animal or creature did you choose and why?
- What symbols did you use for decoration and why?

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