

Draw Like an Egyptian



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Egyptian Art

Ancient Egyptian art was a very stylized form of communication. It was used by the priests and pharaohs to tell stories. At the same time, it was believed that creating the art and stories would cause the things shown to become true.

People were drawn using some fairly strict and consistent rules. The chest and eye of the person is drawn as if looking at the person from the front. The hips, legs, and head of the person are drawn as if looking at them from the side.

Men were drawn with one foot ahead of the other. Women were drawn with their feet together. They were usually shown in limited poses, either standing, sitting, or kneeling. The position of their arms was used to give more information about what the character was doing.

The proportion (length of legs, size of body, size of head) was always the same. Artists would draw lines before beginning their art so that all the figures would be consistent. (see illustration)



Many Egyptian gods were associated with an animal or animals. Drawings of the gods might show them in their animal form, in human form with an animal head, with specific head dresses, or holding specific items. For example, Thoth, the god of writing, is often shown holding a tablet and pen; Maat, the goddess of truth, has a feather on her head.

Details of the person's actual body build or face were rarely shown. Individuals were identified by hieroglyphics or what they wore or held. The character's status would also be shown by size. In a drawing of a king and his servants, the servants would be drawn much smaller than the king.

Activity Ideas

In preparation for any of these activities, it's suggested children should be exposed to Egyptian art from books or the Web.

Draw an Egyptian character using the templates (easiest)

- 1) Students can use the full page printable templates and either draw over the lines (using the gray templates) or cut out the black outlines templates and trace them to make their own characters. They will need to add arms, clothing and jewelry details, headgear and hair.

Draw your own Egyptian character (advanced)

- 1) Give each child a copy of either the previous page or one of the proportion guide printouts (4 included on one page below).
- 2) Have them fold a piece of paper in half, and then fold again two more times, dividing the page into eighths.
- 3) Draw the character in the lower 6 sections, leaving the top 2 for a headpiece or title.

Make modern Egyptian style characters (advanced)

- 1) Use either the templates or the drawing method above, and create modern characters. Discuss what symbols would help mark the character, for example a baseball player might have a cap, glove, and bat. Students could make characters that represent themselves which could be hung around the classroom.



Tell a story (advanced)

- 1) Individual students or small groups can create a simple story to tell in a series of pictures. See the Metropolitan Museum link below for more resources for this.

Resources

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has some excellent online resources and a 180 page booklet you can print full of information and teaching resources. The main site:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/>

The educational area is found in Explore and Learn: Publications for Educators at <http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/classroom.asp> – the online area is listed first, the 180 page booklet is further down the page in the pdf area.









