

The
**HISTORIAN'S
APPRENTICE**

What We Can Learn from Egypt's Tombs

**Sourcing
Contextualizing
Finding Bias
Corroborating
Interpreting**

*Students learn the historian's craft by
analyzing primary and secondary sources*

MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

D. MARTIN LUTHER

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The Historian's Apprentice

Learning the Historian's Craft
by Practicing the Historian's Craft.

What We Can Learn From Egypt's Tombs

by Jonathan Burack

Each unit in *The Historian's Apprentice* series deals with an important historical topic. It introduces students to a five-step set of practices designed to simulate the experience of a historian and make explicit all key phases of the historian's craft.

The Historian's Apprentice: A Five-Step Process

1. Reflect on Your Prior Knowledge of the Topic

Students discuss what they already know and how their prior knowledge may shape or distort the way they view the topic.

2. Apply Habits of Historical Thinking to the Topic

Students build background knowledge on the basis of five habits of thinking that historians use in constructing accounts of the past.

3. Interpret the Relevant Primary Sources

Students apply a set of rules for interpreting sources and assessing their relevance and usefulness.

4. Assess the Interpretations of Other Historians

Students learn to read secondary sources actively, with the goal of deciding among competing interpretations based on evidence in the sources.

5. Interpret, Debate, and Write About the Topic Yourself

Students apply what they have learned by constructing evidence-based interpretations of their own in a variety of ways.

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Teacher Introduction

★ *Teaching the Historian's Craft*

The goal of *The Historian's Apprentice* units is to expose students in a manageable way to the complex processes by which historians practice their craft. By modeling what historians do, students will practice the full range of skills that make history the unique and uniquely valuable challenge that it is.

Modeling the historian's craft is not the same as being a historian—something few students will become. Therefore a scaffolding is provided here to help students master historical content in a way that will be manageable and useful to them.

Historical thinking is not a simple matter of reciting one fact after another, or even of mastering a single, authoritative account. It is disciplined by evidence, and it is a quest for truth. Yet historians usually try to

clarify complex realities and make tentative judgments, not to draw final conclusions. In doing so, they wrestle with imperfect sets of evidence (the primary sources), detect multiple meanings embedded in those sources, and take into account varying interpretations by other historians. They also recognize how huge a divide separates our present from earlier times. Hence, they work hard to avoid present-mindedness and achieve empathy with people who were vastly different from us.

In their actual practice, historians are masters of the cautious, qualified conclusion. Yet they engage, use their imaginations, and debate with vigor. It is this spirit and these habits of craft that *The Historian's Apprentice* seeks to instill in students.

★ *The Historian's Apprentice: Five Steps in Four Parts*

The Historian's Apprentice is a five-step process. However, the materials presented here are organized into four parts. Part I deals with the first two of the five steps of the process. Each of the other three parts then deals with one step in the process. Here is a summary of the four parts into which the materials are organized:

Teacher introduction. Includes suggested day-by-day sequences for using these materials, including options for using the PowerPoint presentations. One sequence is designed for younger students and includes a page of vocabulary definitions.

Part 1. A student warm-up activity, an introductory essay, a handout detailing a set of habits of historical thinking, and two PowerPoint presentations (*Five Habits of Historical Thinking* and *What We Can Learn From Egypt's Tombs*). Part 1 (including the PowerPoints) deals with *Historian's Apprentice* Steps 1 and 2.

Part 2. A checklist for analyzing primary sources, several primary sources and worksheets for analyzing them. Part 2 deals with *Historian's Apprentice* Step 3.

Part 3. Two secondary source passages and two student activities analyzing those passages. Part 3 deals with *Historian's Apprentice* Step 4.

Part 4. Two optional follow-up activities enabling students to write about and/or debate their own interpretations of the topic. Part 4 deals with *Historian's Apprentice* Step 5.

All pages in this booklet may be photocopied for classroom use.

INTRODUCTION

★ *Suggested Five-Day Sequence*

Below is one possible way to use this *Historian's Apprentice* unit. Tasks are listed day by day in a sequence taking five class periods, with some homework and some optional follow-up activities.

PowerPoint Presentation: *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation comes with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have used it before with other units, you need not do so again. If you decide to use it, incorporate it into the DAY 1 activities. In either case, give students the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout for future reference. Those Five Habits are as follows:

- History Is Not the Past Itself
- The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation
- Time, Change, and Continuity
- Cause and Effect
- As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

Warm-Up Activity: Homework assignment: Students do the “Warm-Up Activity.” This activity explores student memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

DAY 1: Discuss the “Warm-Up Activity.” Then either have students read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout, or use the *Five Habits* PowerPoint presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read the background essay “Ancient Egypt and Its Tombs.”

DAY 2: Use the second PowerPoint presentation, *What We Can Learn From Egypt's Tombs*, to overview the topic for this lesson. The presentation applies the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to this topic. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources:

- Sourcing
- Contextualizing
- Interpreting meanings
- Point of view
- Corroborating sources

DAY 3: In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They use their notes to discuss these sources. (Worksheet questions are all based on the concepts on the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.”)

DAY 4: In class, students complete the remaining “Source Analysis” worksheets and use their notes to discuss these sources. Take some time to discuss briefly the two secondary source passages students will analyze next.

Homework assignment: Students read these two secondary source passages.

DAY 5: In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria:

- Clear focus on a problem or question
- Position or point of view
- Use of evidence or sources
- Awareness of alternative explanations

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

Suggested Three-Day Sequence

If you have less time to devote to this lesson, here is a suggested shorter sequence. The sequence does not include the PowerPoint presentation *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation is included with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have never used it with your class, you may want to do so before following this three-day sequence.

The three-day sequence leaves out a few activities from the five-day sequence. It also suggests that you use only six key primary sources. Yet it still walks students through the steps in the *Historian's Apprentice* approach: Clarifying background knowledge, analyzing primary sources, comparing secondary sources, and debating or writing about the topic.

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Ask students to read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout and read the background essay “Ancient Egypt and Its Tombs.”

Day 1: Use the PowerPoint presentation *What We Can Learn From Egypt's Tombs*. It overviews the topic for this lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read or review the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources.

Day 2: In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They use their notes to discuss these sources. We suggest using Documents 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10.

You may wish to make your own choices of primary sources. Use your judgment in deciding how many of them your students can effectively analyze in a single class period.

Homework assignment: Students read the two secondary source passages.

Day 3: In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria.

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

Suggestions for Use With Younger Students

For younger students, parts of this lesson may prove challenging. If you feel your students need a somewhat more manageable path through the material, see the suggested sequence below.

If you want to use the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation, this sequence takes four class periods. If you do not use this PowerPoint, you can combine DAY 1 and DAY 2 and keep the sequence to just three days. We suggest using six primary sources only. The ones listed for DAY 3 are less demanding in terms of vocabulary and conceptual complexity. For DAY 4, we provide some simpler DBQs for the follow-up activities.

Vocabulary: A list of vocabulary terms in the sources and the introductory essay is provided on page 7 of this booklet. You may wish to hand this sheet out as a reading reference, you could make flashcards out of some of the terms, or you might ask each of several small groups to use the vocabulary sheet to explain terms in one source to the rest of the class.

SUGGESTED FOUR-DAY SEQUENCE

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Students do the “Warm-Up Activity.” This activity explores student memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

Day 1: Discuss the “Warm-Up Activity.” Show the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation (unless you have used it before and/or you do not think it is needed now). If you do not use this PowerPoint presentation, give students the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout and discuss it with them.

Homework assignment: Ask students to read the background essay “Ancient Egypt and Its Tombs.”

Day 2: Use the PowerPoint presentation *What We Can Learn From Egypt’s Tombs*. This introduces the topic for the lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read or review the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources.

Day 3: Discuss the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist” and talk through one primary source document in order to illustrate the meaning of the concepts on the checklist. Then have students complete “Source Analysis” worksheets after studying primary source documents 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8.

Homework assignment: Students read the two secondary source passages.

Day 4: Students do only “Secondary Sources: Activity 2” and discuss it. This activity asks them to choose from among the sources the two that best back up each secondary source passage.

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

Here are some alternate DBQs tailored to the six primary sources recommended here:

Using the sources for this lesson only, describe as fully as you can what ancient Egyptian science was like.

“Egyptian society was organized mainly around religious beliefs and ideas about the afterlife.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Vocabulary: The Introductory Essay

farm surplus: The extra amounts of farm produce over what the farmers themselves need

funerary: Having to do with funerals or burial customs

hieroglyphics: Egypt's writing system using a combination of picture symbols and symbols for sounds

irrigation: A means of supplying water to the land artificially, by canals, pipes, dams, etc.

mortuary temple: In Egypt, temples built near royal tombs to commemorate a pharaoh

mummy: A corpse embalmed in special way so as to be preserved for a very long time

papyrus: A plant, thin strips of which were used in Egypt to produce a writing material

rituals: A set of prescribed actions for public religious ceremonies or worship rites

scribes: Public officials whose job it is to write or copy documents

Vocabulary: The Primary Sources

abomination: Something truly horrible or disgusting

abrogate: To put aside or cancel, as with an agreement

mastaba: A rectangular mud-brick tomb with sloping sides

manifestation: An outward or visible sign of something

monotheism: A belief in one god to the exclusion of all others

necropolis: A large ancient cemetery or burial ground

repulsed: Horrified (by)

Vocabulary: The Secondary Sources

archaeology: The study of human societies through their material remains

delta: A flat plain where the branches of the mouth of a river spread out

elite: A ruling class or other high-status group

excavated: Dug up for purposes of study

fortuitous: In this case, without clear cause, by chance, etc.

organic: Describes material from living matter, such as wood, seeds, leaves, etc.

solemnity: Condition of being solemn, formal, earnest, or grave

water-table: The underground level up to which the earth is saturated with water

Part 1: Ancient Egypt—Providing the Context

Note to the teacher: The next pages provide materials meant to help students better understand and evaluate this topic. The materials also seek to teach students the Five Habits of Historical Thinking.

This section includes the following:

- **PowerPoint presentation: *The Five Habits of Historical Thinking***
This presentation illustrates five habits of thought or modes of analysis that guide historians as they construct their secondary accounts of a topic. These five habits are not about skills used in analyzing primary sources (those are dealt with more explicitly in another handout in the next section). The Five Habits are meant to help students see history as a way of thinking, not as the memorizing of disparate facts and predigested conclusions. The PowerPoint uses several historical episodes as examples to illustrate the Five Habits. In two places, it pauses to ask students to do a simple activity applying one of the habits to some of their own life experiences.

If you have used this PowerPoint with other *Historian’s Apprentice* units, you may not need to use it again here.
- **Handout: “The Five Habits of Historical Thinking”**
This handout supplements the PowerPoint presentation. It is meant as a reference for students to use as needed. If you have used other *Historian’s Apprentice* units, your students may only need to review this handout quickly.
- **Warm-Up Activity**
A simple exercise designed to help you see what students know about the topic, what confuses them, or what ideas they may have absorbed about it from popular culture, friends and family, etc. The goal is to alert them to their need to gain a clearer idea of the past and be critical of what they think they already know.
- **Introductory essay: “Ancient Egypt and Its Tombs”**
The essay provides enough basic background information on the topic to enable students to assess primary sources and conflicting secondary source interpretations. At the end of the essay, students get some points to keep in mind about the nature of the sources they will examine and the conflicting secondary source interpretations they will debate.
- **PowerPoint presentation: *What We Can Learn From Egypt’s Tombs***
This PowerPoint presentation reviews the topic for the lesson and shows how the Five Habits of Historical Thinking can be applied to a clearer understanding of it. At two points, the presentation calls for a pause and students are prompted to discuss some aspects of their prior knowledge of the topic. Our proposed sequences suggest using this PowerPoint presentation after assigning the introductory essay, but you may prefer to reverse this order.

Warm-Up Activity

What Do You Know About Ancient Egypt?

This lesson deals with ancient Egypt and what its tombs and temples can tell us about it. Whenever you start to learn something about a time in history, it helps to think first of what you already know about it, or think you know. You probably have impressions. Or you may have read or heard things about it already. Some of what you know may be accurate. You need to be ready to alter your fixed ideas about this time as you learn more about it. This is what any historian would do. To do this, study this illustration and take a few notes in response to the questions below it.



This is a photograph of one of the first, if not the first, writing systems in the world. It was a system developed in ancient Egypt. What do you know about this writing system and about how it differs from ours today?

Writing developed along with a powerful central government to unite all the villages and farms along the Nile River in northern Africa. Why might writing have been helpful to the government seeking to unite this land?

Ancient Egypt is connected in many people's minds with pyramids, tombs, temples, and mummies. What do you know about these things? Why do you think these things were so important in ancient Egyptian society? What ideas about these things have you learned from films, documentaries, books, or museums?

• *Ancient Egypt and Its Tombs* •

The civilization of ancient Egypt arose over 5000 years ago. It grew up out of small farming villages along the banks of the Nile River in northern Africa. Among large rivers, the Nile is unusual: It is about 4100 miles long, and each year rains far to the south send huge flood waters down the river all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. This happens in a very regular way that in ancient times actually made life pleasant for people living along the river. Each year, the Nile flood came right on time and left behind a new layer of rich soil. This soil meant the same lands would not wear out and could be farmed year after year for centuries.

On either side of the huge river, the fertile lands suddenly turn to desert. In some places, this change is so sudden that a person can place one foot on fertile soil and the other on the barren desert sands. As a result, the rich farmland along the river supported many villages and cities, while the deserts on either side formed a natural barrier, protecting Egypt against attacks from enemies.

For these reasons, ancient Egypt was a relatively safe, comfortable land. The Nile made it easy to travel from one village to another. A huge surplus of grain, livestock, and other basic goods could be produced. As Egyptians learned to build basins, canals, and other irrigation works, the growing farm surpluses could be used to support many non-agricultural workers: scribes, priests, architects, craftsmen, doctors, and soldiers—and government officials. Why government officials? In part, because farms and villages upstream had to work closely with those downstream if the various irrigation systems were to work properly. A strong government with thousands of officials was needed to keep Egypt's complex economy running smoothly. This made it possible for strong rulers to unite the villages into the world's first large-scale organized society.

The pharaohs were ancient Egypt's all-powerful rulers, but their power was not just of this world. They were said to be divine. They are often called "god-kings." After death, each pharaoh supposedly became one with certain gods—a supreme deity Amon-Re, for example, and/or Osiris, god of the underworld.

The pyramids were the tombs of early pharaohs. Later pharaohs had their tombs buried deep in cliffs to keep robbers out. These tombs were meant to ensure the dead pharaoh an easy passage to the next life. This was important not only to the pharaoh, but to all of Egypt: The pharaohs were links between the natural world and the spiritual realm of the gods. Without them, disorder would spread everywhere. Naturally, this view of the pharaoh greatly added to his authority and his government's right to rule all of Egypt. It also helps explain Egypt's constant interest in pleasing the gods, observing many complex rituals, and paying close attention to preparing for the pharaoh's afterlife.

However, ancient Egyptian religion did not exist simply to justify the power of the pharaohs. All of life in ancient Egypt was soaked through and through with religious meaning. The stability and satisfactions of life in this world only made Egyptians more confident that life in the next would be the same. As a result a large amount of what we know of ancient Egypt is based on "funerary" evidence—that is, from mortuary temples, pyramids, tombs large and small, coffins and thousands of other grave goods. In short, we know a good deal about ancient Egypt's way of life from studying its way of death.

The ancient Egyptians thought a great deal about death, but not entirely out of fear. Death was a passage to the next life, and they were sure they could prepare for that next life to make it a joyful one. The most famous examples of elaborate planning for the afterlife are the pyramids at Giza. At certain times of year, the government would command rural workers to help build huge projects such as pyramids or temples. Egyptians had only simple tools and depended mainly on human muscle power. To build the pyramids, thousands of workers had to pull huge blocks of stone up long ramps. Ordinary laborers, not slaves, were mainly used, and for the most part they seemed to do so willingly.

Mummies are another source of funerary evidence. Egyptians believed that a person's life force, or *ka*, left the body after death. However, since the *ka* could not survive without the body, the corpse

was embalmed and made into a mummy to keep it from decaying.

Egyptians believed in many gods and told many myths about these gods. Prayers and spells of all kinds were used to gain their help in this world and the next. Such prayers and spells were written on coffins, on the walls inside tombs, and on papyrus scrolls left to give guidance to the deceased. Tombs were filled with many other things: statues of the deceased and others, furniture, utensils, tools, and other goods for the dead person to use in the next life. In some tombs, magnificent wall paintings showed the deceased's daily activities—which were also scenes of what he or she hoped life in the next

world would be like. These were not just decorative scenes; after all, once a tomb was shut, these objects were all never supposed to be seen by living human beings again. All the grave goods and artwork were thought to have power to shape the person's life in the next world. As with many things in ancient Egypt, words and images had magical power. It was hoped this power could keep Egypt's traditional way of life alive, both in the natural world and the spiritual realm for all eternity to come.

How useful is the evidence of Egypt's tombs and temples in understanding ancient Egypt as a whole? The sources for this lesson should help you begin to decide that for yourself.

Points to Keep in Mind

Historians' Questions

The history of ancient Egypt is a very long one. Historians have debated practically every aspect of this history. Many questions about ancient Egypt remain to be answered. Much about its history is still sketchy or completely unknown: Dates when pharaohs reigned are hard to be sure of. In some cases, all we know about a pharaoh is his name, and we cannot even be sure he actually existed. As for the lives of common people, we know even less.

We do have a huge amount of evidence from ancient Egypt—papyrus scrolls with Egyptian writing, temples and pyramids with relief sculptures and complex hieroglyphics, tombs and coffins with written spells, autobiographical accounts of their occupants' lives, and statues, furniture, paintings, tools, weapons, jewelry, and other luxury goods. However, historians wonder whether this evidence gives us a clear view of the full range of Egyptian life. Are we getting a distorted picture from evidence so heavily connected with the dead, rather than the living? As the sources for this lesson will show, you can learn a great deal about Egypt from its tombs and funerary practices. How complete and typical this evidence is remains something historians cannot be as sure about.

The Primary Source Evidence

For this lesson, you will study ten primary source documents on ancient Egypt. Some are about Egypt's kings, the pharaohs. Others are about more ordinary Egyptians. All of them are from tombs or other funerary structures and have to do mainly with Egypt's religion and its ideas about the afterlife. However, all of them also show many aspects of life in Egypt generally. These sources give you plenty of evidence to help you better understand ancient Egypt and issues about it that historians still debate. The sources will also help you make informed judgments of your own as to what two historians say about ancient Egypt and its tombs.

Secondary Source Interpretations

After studying and discussing the primary sources, you will read two short passages by two different historians. The historians who wrote these passages agree about most of the facts. They do not necessarily disagree with each other, but each one will give you a different sense of what historians do and do not know about ancient Egyptian civilization. You will use your own background knowledge and your ideas about the primary sources as you think about and answer some questions about the views of these two historians.

Five Habits of Historical Thinking

History is not just a chronicle of one fact after another. It is a meaningful story, or an account of what happened and why. It is written to address questions or problems historians pose. This checklist describes key habits of thinking that historians adopt as they interpret primary sources and create their own accounts of the past.

History Is Not the Past Itself

When we learn history, we learn a story about the past, not the past itself. No matter how certain an account of the past seems, it is only one account, not the entire story. The “entire story” is gone; that is, the past itself no longer exists. Only some records of events remain, and they are never complete. Therefore it is important to see all judgments and conclusions about the past as tentative or uncertain. Avoid looking for hard-and-fast “lessons” from the past. The value of history is in a way the opposite of such a search for quick answers; that is, its value is in teaching us to live with uncertainty and see even our present as complex, unfinished, open-ended.

The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation

Historians can’t observe the past directly. They must use evidence, just as a detective tries to reconstruct a crime based on clues left behind. In the historian’s case, primary sources are the evidence—letters, official documents, maps, photos, newspaper articles, artifacts, and all other traces from past times. Like a detective, a historian defines a very specific problem to solve, one for which evidence does exist. Asking clear, meaningful questions is a key to writing good history. Evidence is always incomplete. It’s not always easy to separate fact from opinion in it, or tell what is important from what is not. Historians try to do this, but they must stay cautious about their conclusions and open to other interpretations of the same evidence.

Time, Change, and Continuity

History is about the flow of events over time, yet is not just one fact after another. It seeks to understand this flow of events as a pattern. In that pattern, some things change while others hold steady over time. You need to see history as a dynamic interplay of both change and continuity together. Only by doing this can you see how the past has evolved into the present—and why the present carries with it many traces of or links to the past.

Cause and Effect

Along with seeing patterns of change and continuity over time, historians seek to explain that change. In doing this, they know that no single factor causes change. Many factors interact. Unique, remarkable, and creative individual actions and plans are one factor, but individual plans have unintended outcomes, and these shape events in unexpected ways. Moreover, individuals do not always act rationally or with full knowledge of what they are doing. Finally, geography, technology, economics, cultural traditions, and ideas all affect what groups and individuals do.

As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

Above all, thinking like a historian means trying hard to see how people in the past thought and felt. This is not easy. As one historian put it, the past is “another country,” in which people felt and thought differently, often very differently, from the way we do now. Avoiding “present-mindedness” is therefore a key task for historians. Also, since the past includes various groups in conflict, historians must learn to empathize with many diverse cultures and subgroups to see how they differ and what they share in common.

Part 2: Analyzing the Primary Sources

Note to the teacher: The next pages provide the primary sources for this lesson. We suggest you give these to students after they read the background essay, after they review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout, and after they watch and discuss the PowerPoint presentation for the lesson.

This section includes the following:

- **Handout: “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist”**

Give copies of this handout to students and ask them to refer to it when analyzing any primary source.

- **Ten Primary Source Documents**

The Documents are as follows:

- Document 1. Photo of the Step Pyramid of Djoser
- Document 2. Photo of the Great Pyramid of Giza, with Nile
- Document 3. A photo of the mummy of Ramses II
- Document 4. Pyramid Text passages from the tomb of Unas
- Document 5. Passages from Kyky’s autobiography
- Document 6. Tomb art of the “weighing of the heart” ceremony
- Document 7. Part of Chapter 125 of *The Book of the Dead*
- Document 8. The spell for Shabtis
- Document 9. Part of Akhenaten’s “Great Hymn to the Aten”
- Document 10. Part of Ramses II’s account of the Battle of Kadesh

- **Ten “Source Analysis” Worksheets for Analyzing the Primary Sources**

Each worksheet asks student to take notes on one source. The prompts along the side match the five categories in the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” Not every category is used in each worksheet, only those that seem most relevant to a full analysis of that source.

You may want students to analyze all of the sources. However, if time does not allow this, use those that seem most useful for your own instructional purposes.

Students can use the notes on the “Source Analysis” worksheets in discussions, as a help in analyzing the two secondary sources in the next part of this lesson, and in follow-up debates, DBQs, and other activities.

Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist

Primary sources are the evidence historians use to reach conclusions and write their accounts of the past. Sources rarely have one obvious, easily grasped meaning. To interpret them fully, historians use several strategies. This checklist describes some of the most important of those strategies. Read the checklist through and use it to guide you whenever you need to analyze and interpret a primary source.

Sourcing

Think about a primary source's author or creator, how and why the primary source document was created, and where it appeared. Also think about the audience it was intended for and what its purpose was. You may not always find much information about these things, but whatever you can learn will help you better understand the source. In particular, it may suggest the source's point of view or bias, since the author's background and intended audience often shape his or her ideas and way of expressing them.

Contextualizing

"Context" refers to the time and place of which the primary source is a part. In history, facts do not exist separately from one another. They get their meaning from the way they fit into a broader pattern. The more you know about that broader pattern, or context, the more you will be able to understand about the source and its significance.

Interpreting Meanings

It is rare for a source's full meaning to be completely obvious. You must read a written source closely, paying attention to its language and tone, as well as to what it implies or merely hints at. With a visual source, all kinds of meaning may be suggested by the way it is designed, by such things as shading, camera angle, use of emotional symbols or scenes, etc. The more you pay attention to all the details, the more you can learn from a source.

Point of View

Every source is written or created by someone with a purpose, an intended audience, and a point of view or bias. Even a dry table of numbers was created for some reason, to stress some things and not others, to make a point of some sort. At times, you can tell a point of view simply by sourcing the document. Knowing an author was a Democrat or a Republican, for example, will alert you to a likely point of view. In the end, however, only a close reading of the text will make you aware of point of view. Keep in mind, even a heavily biased source can still give you useful evidence of what some people in a past time thought. But you need to take the bias into account in judging how reliable the source's own claims really are.

Corroborating Sources

No one source tells the whole story. Moreover, no one source is completely reliable. To make reasonable judgments about an event in the past, you must compare sources to find points of agreement and disagreement. Even when there are big differences, both sources may be useful. However, the differences will also tell you something, and they may be important in helping you understand each source.

The Primary Sources for the Lesson

Document 1

Information on the source: This is the pyramid of the Egyptian pharaoh Djoser, built in the 27th century BCE. It is also known as a “step pyramid.” It may have been built in stages as the Egyptians learned how to use stone in the construction of these huge tombs for their pharaohs. The pyramid is actually six sloped rectangular tombs known as “mastabas,” built one on top of the other. This step pyramid is in the Saqqara necropolis (a large cemetery with tombs and other structures). It is only one part of a large mortuary complex of temples and other ceremonial structures for Djoser.



Document 2

Information on the Source: The Great Pyramid of Giza, shown here, is the way most people think of ancient Egypt's pyramids. The photo shows that the pyramid is near the Nile River, along which nearly all of ancient Egypt lived. The pyramids were vast, elaborate tombs for the pharaohs, but not the only tombs. Pyramids like this one were part of the early phase of Egyptian history known as the “Old Kingdom” (2686–2160 BCE). Burial structures and customs changed in many ways during ancient Egypt's long history.



Document 3

Information on the source: Here is the mummified body of Ramses II, who ruled Egypt in the 1200s BCE. Egyptians mastered the complicated skill of preserving much of a person's body after death. They did not think this body would literally rise and come back to life. However, if its spirit or spiritual essence was to do so, the body itself had to be preserved as a suitable home for it. Mummies were one aspect of the elaborate efforts Egyptians took to prepare for a life after death that they expected to be similar in some ways to their existence in this life.



Document 4

Information on the source: The pharaohs were seen as partly human and partly divine. Their role in Egyptian society was to maintain the world's order or stability. The term for this principle of order was *Ma'at*. The deceased pharaoh was thought to merge with a supreme god Amon-Re, or with Osiris, the god of the underworld. In this form, he continued to play a role in maintaining *Ma'at*. The passage to the afterlife was not easy, however. The Pyramid Texts were a group of spells and instructions meant to help the pharaoh make this journey safely. The passages here are from the "Pyramid Texts" found on the walls of the tomb of Unas, a pharaoh who lived in the 24th century BCE. In addition to Osiris, Atum, Horus, Seth, and Shu are other Egyptian gods. The translation here is adapted from a translation by Samuel Mercer (1952).

Unitas Utterance 213

O Unas, you have not departed dead; you departed living so that you sit upon the throne of Osiris, Your sceptre is in your hand so that you can command the living; your lotus-shaped scepter in thy hand, giving order to those of secret places [those who are dead].

Your arm is that of Atum; your shoulders are those of Atum; your body is that of Atum; your back is that of Atum; your seat is that of Atum; your legs are those of Atum; your face is that of Anubis. The regions of Horus serve you; the regions of Seth serve you.

Part of Unitas Utterance 219

Atum, this is your son here, Osiris, whom you have kept alive. He lives. This Unas lives. He does not die. Unas does not die. He does not perish. This Unas does not perish. He is not judged. This Unas is not judged! He judges. This Unas judges!

Shu, this is your son here, Osiris, whom you have kept alive. He lives. This Unas lives. He does not die. Unas does not die. He does not perish. This Unas does not perish. He is not judged. This Unas is not judged! He judges. This Unas judges!

Document 5

Information on the source: At first, Egyptians may have believed that only the pharaoh passed to the afterlife—though it is hard to know what popular beliefs really were during the Old Kingdom. During the Intermediate Period (2160–2055 BCE) that followed, there is evidence of common people making preparations for life after death. Some historians call this shift the “democratization of the afterlife.” For example, many people began to have spells like the Pyramid Texts carved on their coffins and tombs. Along with these “Coffin Texts,” other writings also appeared in tombs. An official in Thebes named Kyky included his autobiography in his tomb; the passages here are from that autobiography. In it, Kyky mentions that his protector is Mut, a key Egyptian mother goddess. The passages were translated by Thierry Benderitter and are reprinted with his permission. They appear in *Monuments of Egypt*, at www.osirisnet.net.

Then, he meditated deeply within himself to find himself a protector. He found Mut ahead of the other gods; Shay and Rennehet [which could be interpreted as “fate” and “fortune”] are in her hand, as are the span of life and the breath of life, everything which occurs is under her control...

I didn't take a human protector, I did not attach myself to a man of power; not (even) if he had been my son...

I rejoice at your strength, since you are greater than all gods; my heart is filled with my mistress. I shall not fear mortals when I lie down. Since, when I have found sleep, I have a protector.

Document 6



Information on the source: Over time, the Coffin Texts were assembled into *The Book of the Dead*, which was often placed in a person's tomb. Its hymns and instructions helped the deceased to pass the many hurdles to entering the afterlife. This scene from a 14th-century BCE copy of *The Book of the Dead* shows the "weighing of the heart" ceremony. The deceased person on the left is brought in by the jackal-headed god Anubis. In the center, Anubis weighs the person's heart on a scale against the feather of *Ma'at*, the goddess of order and truth. Thoth, the ibis-headed god of scribes, records the results. If the heart weighs the same as the feather, the person will go before Osiris to enter the afterlife. If not, the sinner will be swallowed by the monster seated under the scale. Photo by Jon Bodsworth, reprinted with permission.

Document 7

Information on the source: During the "weighing of the heart" ceremony, the deceased must deny ever having committed a series of sins. The famous chapter 125 of *The Book of the Dead* lists these sins. Some, not all, are shown here. From *The Book of the Dead* as translated by E. A. Wallis Budge (1911).

*I have not sinned against men.
I have not oppressed (or wronged) [my] kinsfolk.
I have not committed evil in the place of truth.
I have not known worthless men.
I have not committed acts of abomination.
I have not domineered over slaves.
I have not thought scorn of the god.
I have not defrauded the poor man of his goods.
I have not done the things which the gods abominate.
I have caused no man to suffer.
I have allowed no man to go hungry.
I have slain no man.
I have not given the order for any man to be slain.
I have not caused pain to the multitude.
I have not filched the offerings in the temples.
I have not cheated in measuring of grain.
I have not encroached upon the fields of others.
I have not added to the weight of the balance.
I have not netted the geese of the preserves of the gods.
I have not obstructed water when it should run.
I have not abrogated the days of offering the chosen offerings.
I have not turned off cattle from the property of the gods.
I have not repulsed the god in his manifestations. I am pure.
I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.*

Document 8

Information on the source:

Sennedjem was a highly skilled artisan working on royal tombs in Thebes in the 1200s BCE. His own tomb contains beautiful scenes of ordinary life as he and his wife hoped to continue living it in the afterlife. Some scenes show the couple working in the Field of Reeds, yet they would not have to do the work themselves forever in the afterlife. The tomb also included small figurines called *shabtis*. They represent spirits that will do the work instead. Many *shabtis* include the following spell, from chapter 6 of *The Book of the Dead*. Adapted from a translation by E.A. Wallis Budge (1895).

Hail, Shabti! If [name of deceased] be decreed to do any of the work which is to be done in the realm of the dead, let everything which stands in the way be removed from him—whether it be to plough the fields, or to fill the channels with water, or to carry sand from East to West. The Shabti replies: "I will do it, verily I am here when you call."

Document 9

Information on the source: Below is part of “The Great Hymn to the Aten,” found in the tomb of a high official and possibly written by Pharaoh Akhenaten in the mid-1300s BCE. Akhenaten tried to make a radical break with Egyptian religious tradition by placing all creative power in the god Aten, the disk of the sun. Though the sun had always played a key role in Egyptian religion, Akhenaten made Aten the sole god. This hymn does not mention the other gods who helped the sun travel across the sky and back through the underworld to rise again in the east each morning. Akhenaten is seen by some as an early monotheist and an idealist. However, others see him as a tyrant who saw Aten as the sole god and himself as the only one through whom Aten could work to benefit all others. These parts of the hymn are adapted from a translation by E.A. Wallis Budge in *Tutankhamen: Amenism, Atenism and Egyptian Monotheism* (1923).

One God, like whom there is no other. You did create the earth by your heart (or will), you alone existing, men and women, cattle, beasts of every kind that are upon the earth, and that move upon feet (or legs), all the creatures that are in the sky and that fly with their wings, [and] the deserts of Syria and Kesh (Nubia), and the Land of Egypt. You set every person in his place. You provide their daily food, every man having the portion allotted to him... O, Lord of every land, you shine upon them. O, ATEN of the day, you great one of majesty, you make the life of all remote lands. You set a Nile in heaven, which comes down to them...

ONE you did make... You are in my heart. There is no other who knows you except your son Nefer-kheperu-Ra Ua-en-Ra [Pharaoh Akhenaten]. You have made him wise to understand your plans [and] your power... the King of the South and the North, Living in Truth, Lord of Crowns, Aakhun-Aten, great in the duration of his life [and for] the Royal Wife, great of majesty, Lady of the Two Lands, Nefer-neferu-Aten Nefertiti, living [and] young forever and ever.

Document 10

Information on the source: In their tombs, on stelae (stone pillars), and on temple walls, the pharaohs left many sorts of records. There are long lists of pharaohs, various names for each pharaoh, key events of each pharaoh’s reign, and efforts to memorialize their great triumphs. All such evidence must be interpreted carefully. Take for example the battle of Kadesh, usually dated 1274 BCE. Ramses II led this battle, which was actually more of a draw between the Egyptians and the Hittites. Compare that to the way Ramses II had the battle described in this account, found on the walls of five temples. Ammon, whom he mentions, was Egypt’s central creator deity. Adapted from Eva March Tappan, ed., *The World’s Story: A History of the World in Story, Song and Art* (1914).

*Then my voice it found an echo...
Ammon heard it, and he came at my call;
And for joy I gave a shout,
From behind, his voice cried out,
“I have hastened to you, Ramses Miamun,
Behold! I stand with you,
Behold! It is I am he,
Your own father, the great god Ra, the sun...*

*When my...charioteer beheld in his dismay,
How the horses swarmed around us, lo! his courage
fled away,
And terror and affright
Took possession of him quite;
And straightway he cried out to me, and said,
“Gracious lord and bravest king, savior-guard...
Oh! protect us, Ramses Miamun!
Oh! save us, mighty King!”*

*Then the King spoke to his squire,
“Halt! take courage, charioteer,
As a sparrow-hawk swoops down upon his prey,
So I swoop upon the foe, and I will slay,
I will hew them into pieces, I will dash them into dust;
Have no fear, Cast such evil thought away,
These godless men are wretches that in Ammon put
no trust.”
Then the king, he hurried forward, on the Hittite host
he flew...
“Like Baal in his strength, on their rearward, lo! I fell,
And I killed them, none escaped me, and I slew, and
slew, and slew.”*

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 1

The step pyramid of the Egyptian pharaoh Djoser, built in the 27th century BCE

Sourcing

This pyramid was photographed in the late 1800s, more than 4000 years after the pyramid was built. Does that make the photo less reliable as evidence of life in ancient Egypt? Why or why not?

Interpreting meanings

What does this pyramid suggest to you about the power of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs and their governments? Explain your answer.

What does it suggest about the technical and organizational skills of ancient Egypt?

Pyramids such as this usually took many years to build, using the labor of thousands. What does it suggest about Egyptian attitudes toward the pharaohs that so much effort went into building their tombs?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 2

The Great Pyramid of Giza and the Nile River

Interpreting meanings

Compare this 26th-century BCE pyramid with the one for Djoser built a century earlier. How are they alike, and how are they different?

Some historians believe the Great Pyramid and the others with these smooth triangular sides were meant to show a link between the pharaoh and the sun, which was seen as the key life-giving force in the universe. What about these pyramids might lead historians to think this?

Contextualizing

Many large pyramids were built along the Nile, the river shown here. In fact, most of ancient Egypt lay along the Nile and its delta. One Greek historian once called Egyptian civilization “a gift of the Nile.” What do you suppose he meant?

Think about ancient Egypt’s pharaohs and Egypt’s unique geography. Given what you know about these things, explain why you think the pharaoh and the sun were linked in Egyptian thinking as twin forces for order and social harmony.

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 3

The mummified body of Ramses II, who ruled Egypt in the 1200s BCE

Interpreting meanings

Using this photo, sum up what you know about the Egyptian practice of mummifying bodies.

What, if anything, can you conclude about Egyptian religious beliefs and practices in general from the way the Egyptians mummified bodies?

Sourcing

Historians and archaeologists often learn more about a culture from its burial practices than from other evidence left behind. This is especially true for groups that had no written language. Why might that be so?

Corroborating sources

How does this photo seem to fit or not fit with the evidence you get from Documents 1 and 2 regarding what the pharaohs were like and their place in Egyptian life?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 4

Passages from the Pyramid Texts on the walls of the tomb of Unas, a pharaoh of the 24th century BCE

Sourcing

These passages are adapted from a translation made by an English-speaking scholar a few decades ago. How might that affect the usefulness or reliability of this as evidence to help you understand Egyptian ideas about religion and the afterlife?

Interpreting meanings

The Egyptians believed their gods could take many forms. Which passages here show this aspect of Egyptian religious beliefs?

The Egyptians also believed that their pharaohs were partly divine while alive, and that they became wholly divine after death by merging with certain deities. Which passages show this aspect of Egyptian belief?

What phrases show that Egyptians thought the pharaoh would still rule or influence Egyptian life even after he was dead?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 5

Passages from the autobiography in Kyky's tomb

Interpreting meanings

In your own words, explain why you think Kyky is proud that he did not take a human protector, but chose the goddess Mut instead.

From what Kyky says about Mut, what kind of protection do you think he hoped to get from her?

Contextualizing

Historians speak of passages like this as proof of a process they call “the democratization of the afterlife.” They say this process set in especially during the Intermediate Period, a time of chaos when the pharaohs had lost the ability to keep Egypt united. What do you think historians mean by the phrase “democratization of the afterlife”? Why do you think such a shift of awareness might have grown during a time of disorder such as the Intermediate Period?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 6

A depiction of the “weighing of the heart” ceremony from *The Book of the Dead*

Interpreting meanings

Why do you think Egyptian artists put an actual heart in the scales shown here?

That is, do you think they literally meant an actual heart, or did the heart stand for some idea about a person's life? If so, what idea do you think the heart stands for in this ceremony?

Some historians see Egyptian art and religious beliefs as more symbolic than realistic. What do you think they mean by this? Comment on this by referring to the way the gods are drawn here and the way human figures are drawn, both in the main scene and along the top of the image.

Contextualizing

When making mummies, the heart was never removed and embalmed separately as were other organs. Why do you think the Egyptians left the heart in place? Does this fact affect the way you answer the first two questions here? Why or why not?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 7

Some of the ethical claims from the list composing chapter 125 of *The Book of the Dead*

Interpreting meanings

Of these statements, which could be part of a general moral code people in any society might use? Explain your choices.

Which of the statements are ethical rules that seem linked to specific features of Egyptian society? In a paragraph, describe some key features of Egyptian society as revealed by these statements.

Corroborating sources

Compare this source with Primary Source Document 6. How does this list add to your understanding of the “weighing of the heart” ceremony?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 8

Many *shabtis* include the following spell, chapter 6 of *The Book of the Dead*.

Interpreting meanings

“The Egyptians expected the afterlife to be a lot like their life along the Nile in this life.”

Do *shabtis* as evidence in tombs back up this claim? Why or why not?

Contextualizing

Egyptian tombs contained many other grave goods, artistic images, statues, inscriptions, etc. None of these things were ever supposed to be seen again once the tomb was shut. How do *shabtis* help you understand why people wanted all these other objects with them in their tombs?

Most Egyptians had to perform a certain amount of labor for the government as a form of taxation. How might this explain their desire to purchase *shabtis* to place in their tombs?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 9

Part of “The Great Hymn to the Aten,” possibly written by Pharaoh Akhenaten in the mid-1300s BCE.

Interpreting meanings

In this hymn, Akhenaten seems to suggest that Aten is the sole god for more than just Egypt. Which passages seem to show this?

Some have called Akhenaten one of the world’s first monotheists, if not the first. What is monotheism? Using this part of the hymn, explain why you do or do not think Akhenaten was a monotheist.

Contextualizing

Akhenaten’s radical reform of Egyptian religion did not survive after his death. From what you know about Egyptian religion and history, why do you think that was so?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 10

Passages from Ramses II's description of the 1274 BCE Battle of Kadesh

Interpreting meanings

What parts of this account demonstrate the close connection Egyptians saw between their gods and the pharaohs?

What point do you think Ramses II wanted to make by describing the behavior of his charioteer as he does?

Contextualizing

Based on what you know of the actual Battle of Kadesh, how did Ramses II distort it in this account?

What can you conclude about Egypt's pharaohs and about Egypt's relationship with other societies near it in the New Kingdom when Ramses II was pharaoh?

Part 3: Analyzing the Secondary Sources

Note to the Teacher: This next section includes passages from two secondary source accounts dealing with ancient Egypt, along with two activities on these sources. We suggest you first discuss the brief comment “Analyzing Secondary Sources” just above the first of the two secondary sources. Discuss the four criteria the first activity asks students to use in analyzing each secondary source. These criteria focus students on the nature of historical accounts as 1) problem-centered, 2) based on evidence, 3) influenced by point of view and not purely neutral, and 4) tentative or aware of alternative explanations.

Specifically, this section includes the following:

- **Two secondary source passages**

Give copies of these passages to students to read, either in class or as homework. The two passages are from *The Story of Art*, by Ernst Hans Gombrich (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995), pp. 58–60, and from *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 52.

- **Two student activities**

Activity 1

Students analyze the two passage taking notes on the following questions:

- How clearly does the account focus on a problem or question?
- Does it reveal a position or express a point of view?
- How well does it base its case on primary source evidence?
- How aware is it of alternative explanations or points of view?

Activity 2

In pairs, students select two of the primary sources for the lesson that best support each author’s claims in the secondary source passages. Students discuss their choices with the class.

The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

Analyzing Secondary Sources

Historians write secondary source accounts of the past after studying primary source documents like the ones you have studied on ancient Egypt. However, they normally select documents from among a great many others, and they stress some aspects of the story but not others. In doing this, historians are guided by the questions they ask about the topic. Their selection of sources and their focus are also influenced by their own aims, bias or point of view. No account of the past is perfectly neutral. In reading a secondary source, you should pay to what it includes, what it leaves out, what conclusions it reaches, and how aware it is of alternative interpretations.

* * * *

Secondary Source 1

Information on the source: The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *The Story of Art*, by Ernst Hans Gombrich (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1995), pp. 58–60.

In these passages, Gombrich describes the art in Egypt's tombs. He sees that art as seeking mainly to achieve "not prettiness but completeness," as he puts it. His view is that Egyptian art is a collection of very clearly drawn objects. If he is right, this seems to suggest the art and artifacts of Egyptian tombs offer an accurate catalog or collection of things, activities, and beliefs important in all of Egyptian life.

At first these [funerary] rites were reserved for kings, but soon the nobles of the royal household had their minor tombs grouped in neat rows round the king's mound; and gradually every self-respecting person had to make provision for his after-life by ordering a costly grave which would house his mummy and his likeness, and where his soul could dwell and receive the offerings of food and drink which were given to the dead. Some of these early portraits from the pyramid age...are among the most beautiful works of Egyptian art. There is a solemnity and simplicity about them which one does not easily forget. One sees that the sculptor was not trying to flatter his sitter, or to preserve a fleeting expression. He was concerned only with essentials. Every lesser detail he left out...

To us these reliefs and wall-paintings [in tombs] provide in extraordinarily vivid picture of life as it was lived in Egypt thousands of years ago. And yet, looking at them for the first time, one may find them rather bewildering. The reason is that the Egyptian painters had a very different way from ours of representing real life. Perhaps this is connected with the different purpose their paintings had to serve. What mattered most was not prettiness but completeness. It was the artists' task to preserve everything as clearly and permanently as possible. So they did not set out to sketch nature as it appeared to them from any fortuitous angle. They drew from memory, according to strict rules which ensured that everything that had to go into the picture would stand out in perfect clarity.

Words in context (brief definitions of some words as used in this passage):

funerary: having to do with funerals or burial customs; **mummy:** a corpse embalmed in special way so as to be preserved for a very long time; **solemnity:** condition of being solemn, formal, earnest, or grave; **fortuitous:** in this case, without clear cause, by chance, etc.

The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

Secondary Source 2

Information on the source: The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 52 and 102.

In these two different passages, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* calls attention to difficulties in discovering certain kinds of evidence on various aspects of life in ancient Egypt. The first passage refers to “Naqada I” settlements. These are settlements from a time just before the rise of a united Egyptian society (around 4000–3500 BCE). The second passage is about efforts to explore sites from the Old Kingdom (2686–2160 BCE). In each case, graves, tombs, and other funerary structures appear to survive better than the actual settlements where people lived. This may be due to the constant flooding of the Nile over the centuries. This flooding buried settlements along the river where people lived. Tombs and pyramids were usually higher up along the edges of the desert.

Compared with the significant remains of the world of the dead, the surviving traces of Naqada I settlement are poor, not only because too few sites of this type have been preserved but also because of the nature of...land use practices. Since the buildings making up the settlements were essentially constructed from a mixture of mud and organic materials (such as wood, reed, and palm), they have not survived well... Although it is possible that such houses may have been present at all Nile Valley settlements of this date, it should be borne in mind that Hierakonpolis may well have been unusual—it had been an important site from

an early date, and from this time onwards it was the center of an elite group, judging from its large-scale graves... (p. 52)

Old Kingdom cities are, however, overlaid by later settlements and, especially in the Delta, they often lie below the present water-table. These earlier settlements are therefore archaeologically practically unknown; even the capital of Egypt has not yet been excavated, and towns such as Elephantine, or Ayn Asil in the Dakhla Oasis are exceptional. (p. 102)

Words in context (brief definitions of some words as used in this passage):

organic: describes material from living matter, such as wood, seeds, leaves, etc.;
elite: a ruling class or other high-status group; **delta:** a flat plain where the branches of the mouth of a river spread out; **water-table:** the underground level up to which the earth is saturated with water; **archaeologically:** having to do with archaeology, the study of human societies through their material remains, such as graves, tools, pottery, buildings, etc.; **excavated:** dug up for purposes of study.

The Secondary Sources: Activity 1

In this exercise, you read two short passages from much longer secondary sources dealing with ancient Egypt. For each secondary source, take notes on the following four questions (you may want to underline phrases or sentences in the passages that you think back up your notes):

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question. What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here.

The Story of Art, Gombrich

The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, Shaw, ed.

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about ancient Egypt and its tombs? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

The Story of Art, Gombrich

The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, Shaw, ed.

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

The Story of Art, Gombrich

The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, Shaw, ed.

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

The Story of Art, Gombrich

The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt, Shaw, ed.

In pairs, discuss your notes for this activity.

The Secondary Sources: Activity 2

This activity is based on the passages from *The Story of Art*, by Ernst Hans Gombrich, and from *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. From the primary sources for this lesson, choose two that you think best support each source's point of view about ancient Egypt and its tombs. With the rest of the class, discuss the two secondary source passages and defend the choice of sources you have made.

1. From this lesson, choose two primary sources that best back up *The Story of Art's* interpretation of ancient Egyptian funerary evidence. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.

2. From this lesson, choose two primary sources that best back up the *Oxford History's* interpretation of ancient Egyptian funerary evidence. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.

3. Does your textbook include a passage describing or summing up the meaning of ancient Egyptian funerary evidence? If so, with which of the two secondary source passages (*Story of Art* or *Oxford History*) does it seem to agree most? What one or two primary sources from this lesson would you add to this textbook passage to improve it?

Discuss your choices with the rest of the class.

Part 4: Follow-Up Options

Note to the teacher: At this point, students have completed the key tasks of *The Historian's Apprentice* program. They have examined their own prior understandings and acquired background knowledge on the topic. They have analyzed and debated a set of primary sources. They have considered secondary source accounts of the topic. This section includes two suggested follow-up activities. Neither of these is a required part of the lesson. They do not have to be undertaken right away. However, we do strongly recommend that you find some way to do what these options provide for. They give students a way to write or debate in order to express their ideas and arrive at their own interpretations of the topic.

Two suggested follow-up activities are included here:

- **Document-Based Questions**

Four document-based questions are provided. Choose one and follow the guidelines provided for writing a typical DBQ essay.

- **A Structured Debate**

The aim of this debate format is not so much to teach students to win a debate, but to learn to listen and learn, as well as speak up and defend a position. A more interactive and more civil debating process is the goal.

Document-Based Questions

Document-Based Questions (DBQs) are essay questions you must answer by using your own background knowledge and a set of primary sources on that topic. Below are four DBQs on ancient Egypt. Use the sources for this lesson and everything you have learned from it to write a short essay answer to one of these questions.

Suggested DBQs

What can and cannot be learned about ancient Egypt from its tombs and all the other evidence from its funerary culture?

Using the sources for this lesson, explain what is unique about the Egyptian concept of the afterlife and what that concept tells us about ancient Egyptian society as a whole?

“The Egyptians organized their society around their ideas about the afterlife. All you need to know about that society is in those tombs.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).

“The tombs and temples of ancient Egypt show it to have been a highly organized tyranny in which the pharaohs ruled without regard to anyone else in society.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).

Suggested Guidelines for Writing a DBQ Essay

Planning and thinking through the essay

Consider the question carefully. Think about how to answer it so as to address each part of it. Do not ignore any detail in the question. Pay attention to the question’s form (cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, assess the validity, etc.). This form will often give you clues as to how best to organize each part of your essay.

Thesis statement and introductory paragraph

The thesis statement is a clear statement of what you hope to prove in your essay. It must address all parts of the DBQ, it must make a claim you can back up with the sources, and it should be specific enough to help you organize the rest of your essay.

Using evidence effectively

Use the notes on your “Source Analysis” activity sheets to organize your thoughts about these primary sources. In citing a source, use it to support key points or illustrate major themes. Do not simply list a source in order to get it into the essay somehow. If any sources do not support your thesis, you should still try to use them. Your essay may be more convincing if you qualify your thesis so as to account for these other sources.

Linking ideas explicitly

After your introduction, your internal paragraphs should make your argument in a logical or clear way. Each paragraph should be built around one key supporting idea and details that back up that idea. Use transition phrase such as “before,” “next,” “then,” or “on the one hand..., but on the other hand” to help readers follow the thread of your argument.

Wrapping it up

Don’t add new details about sources in your final paragraph. State a conclusion that refers back to your thesis statement by showing how the evidence has backed it up. If possible, look for nice turns of phrase to end on a dramatic note.

A Structured Debate

Small-group activity: Using a version of the Structured Academic Controversy model, debate alternate interpretations of this lesson's topic. The goal of this method is not so much to win a debate as to learn to collaborate in clarifying your interpretations to one another. In doing this, your goal should be to see that it is possibly for reasonable people to hold differing views, even when finding the "one right answer" is not possible.

Use all their notes from previous activities in this lesson. Here are the rules for this debate.

1. Organize a team of four or six students. Choose a debate topic based on the lesson *What We Can Learn From Egypt's Tombs*.

(You may wish to use one of the DBQs suggested for the "Document-Based Questions" activity for this lesson. Or you may want to define the debate topic in a different way.)

2. Split your team into two subgroups. Each subgroup should study the materials for this lesson and rehearse its case. One subgroup then present its case to the other. That other subgroup must repeat the case back to the first subgroup's satisfaction.
3. Then the two subgroups switch roles and repeat step 2.
4. Your team either reaches a consensus which it explains to the entire class, or it explains where the key differences between the subgroups lie.

Answers to “Source Analysis” Activities

Source Analysis: Document 1

Sourcing: Answers will vary. Some may say the photo shows a very deteriorated structure and thus is not accurate. Others may see that the photo adds to a sense of the achievement of building such a lasting structure.

Interpreting meanings: It shows their ability to mobilize and sustain huge numbers to work on these buildings.

Given a lack of machinery, the ability to cut huge stones and transport them and put them in place is impressive, etc.

Some may see it as a sign of fear of the pharaoh's power. Others as a sign of how important the pharaoh's afterlife was to ordinary Egyptians.

Source Analysis: Document 2

Interpreting meanings: The steps of the Djoser pyramid are replaced by smooth sides built up evenly. The new pyramids are larger, etc.

Some think the shape is meant to imitate the sun's rays streaming down, though this interpretation is not accepted by all.

Contextualizing: The regular Nile inundation, or flood, brought water and fresh fertile soil each year and made regular agricultural surpluses possible.

Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 3

Interpreting meanings: Have students share their ideas in order to build up a picture of this process.

Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Sourcing: Burial evidence is often better preserved than other kinds, etc.

Corroborating sources: Some may see the frail human form of the pharaoh and be struck by how different it is from the monumental images and statues, etc.

Source Analysis: Document 4

Sourcing: Egyptian hieroglyphics are not easily translated into flowing English. Students should see that all such translations are also interpretations.

Interpreting meanings: Especially in #219, where Unas as Osiris is said to be son of two different deities.

In the first part of #213 where Unas is said to sit on the throne of Osiris, god of the underworld, etc.

Phrases placing Unas on the “throne” of Osiris, claims that “Unas judges, he is not judged,” etc.

Source Analysis: Document 5

Interpreting meanings: Answers will vary, but students may see a spirit of independence in Kyky's tone, a desire not to be bound or deeply obligated to any other man, etc.

It's hard to answer this in a specific way, but the protection seems to be very broad and general, relating both to this life and the next one.

Contextualizing: Answers will vary and should be discussed. Some students may see a time of instability and chaos as one where people seek their own spiritual salvation rather than relying on a trustworthy social or political authority.

Source Analysis: Document 6

Interpreting meanings: Answers may vary, though clearly the heart is at least a symbol here for a person's entire moral life and behavior, etc.

Answers will vary, but students may notice how standardized Egyptian images are, always showing the same features in the same way. The stylized animal-heads of deities may be meant to show those deities as having characteristics like the animals, rather than showing exactly "what they looked like."

Contextualizing: This may suggest to some students that Egyptians also took "symbols" like the heart literally.

Source Analysis: Document 7

Interpreting meanings: Answers will vary, but examples might be such general statements as, "I have caused no man to suffer."

Such specific statements as "I have not obstructed water when it should run" could be used to identify key aspects of Egypt's specific social and economic order, etc.

Corroborating sources: Answers will vary, but in general these statements make clear how closely Egyptian ideas about the afterlife were linked with moral behavior in this life.

Source Analysis: Document 8

Interpreting meanings: The *shabti* spell suggests there will be forms of work in the afterlife similar to those performed daily in Egypt, it implies typical social-status differences, etc.

Contextualizing: They are not simply decorative, but all have a power to continue to serve the person in the afterlife.

This could reveal a general dislike of hard labor, a longing for higher status or more independence, etc.

Source Analysis: Document 9

Interpreting meanings: Perhaps the passage "O, Lord of every land, you shine upon them," etc.

Monotheism is a belief that there is one god only to the exclusion of all others. Answers may vary as to whether Akhenaten is a true monotheist. It is not clear he rejected all other gods.

Contextualizing: Answers will vary but Egypt's vast elite priesthood tending all the other deities may have been offended, as could ordinary Egyptians who believed in many local deities as well as those of Egypt as a whole.

Source Analysis: Document 10

Interpreting meanings: The first eight lines, especially, where Ramses II calls on the sun god, who then comes to aid him.

Perhaps it was a way to emphasize or exaggerate his own bravery.

Contextualizing: The battle is thought to have been mainly a draw, with the Hittites maneuvering cleverly to catch Ramses II and the Egyptians off guard.

By the time of the New Kingdom, Egypt was competing with and more threatened by empires to the northeast in Mesopotamia, etc.

Evaluating Secondary Sources: Activity 1

These are not definitive answers to the questions. They are suggested points to look for in student responses.

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question. What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here?

The Story of Art is concerned less with tombs and Egypt's funerary culture than with the nature of Egyptian art. However, since so much of that art is directly linked with burial customs and religious purposes in general, the book does focus heavily on those aspects of ancient Egyptian society.

The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt is a complete survey of ancient Egypt's history. The passages included here, however, deal directly with the relative value of archaeological evidence from tombs, mortuary temples, etc, and evidence from settlements along the Nile where most people spent their lives.

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about ancient Egypt and its tombs? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

The Story of Art does not exactly state a viewpoint directly about ancient Egypt and its tombs. However, it does strongly suggest that the art and other features of the funerary culture reveal essential aspects of the Egyptian social order, culture, and ways of thought.

The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt as a whole focuses a great deal of attention on the tombs, temples, and other aspects of Egyptian religion with its emphasis on burial practices and the afterlife. However, in the passages reproduced here, it raises some key questions about how representative that evidence is given how much harder it is to find evidence of the ways of the ordinary Egyptians in this life.

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

In these passages from *The Story of Art* and *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, no specific primary sources are mentioned. However, such sources are really the entire focus of each passage. In one case, they are the many works of art, sculpture, etc., on which Gombrich bases some views about Egyptian art in general. In the case of *The Oxford History*, the passage sums up findings from many excavated sites, specifying only a few of them that stand out.

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

Neither *The Story of Art* nor *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* passage do this in any obvious way.