

## **Lesson #4 Egypt III**

### **Lesson Overview**

With this lesson, students will review the geography of the Nile River Valley of Ancient Egypt. They will also investigate how the Egyptians viewed death and afterlife and learn about Ancient Egyptian burial rites. The majority of this lesson plan will be an activity comprised of composing an original musical score using the pan flutes they constructed in the previous lesson. Students will compose a burial rites tune, complete with their own lyrics. The students will act as a group of musicians from Thebes who must travel a long distance downriver to Memphis where the burial of a pharaoh is underway. Students will gain an understanding of basic music composition techniques. In addition, students will understand the importance of the physical geography of the region, and the role of religion in Ancient Egypt.

Discuss once again what it might have been like to be a musician in Egypt. Using the maps, explain to them that they are going to be musicians from Thebes who have been handpicked to write a special burial song for a pharaoh who just passed away. However, the pharaoh lived in Memphis, which means that they will have to spend some time getting there. How might they get there? Discuss with them what it would have been like to sail down the Nile. How long might it have taken? As they travel down the river towards Memphis, they will spend the time writing the burial song that they will perform when they arrive.

Boats played a large role in trade and travel in Ancient Egypt. The Nile River provided a perfect transportation route. The very earliest boats were made of reeds. The reeds were tied together with papyrus rope (made from the fine fibers of the reeds). Later, around 3200BCE, wood was imported to build wooden ships (have the students locate 3200BCE on the timeline).

Those who did not have boats themselves could use ferries that carried people and goods along the river. The Pharaoh and the royal family rode in special boats that were covered to keep out the sun and the eyes of the commoners.

Egyptian farmers had specially built boats that could transport their products. Some of the boats had very large decks that could accommodate cattle. Cattle in Egyptian society were highly prized and most of the farmer's income came from raising cows.

Egyptians did not travel that much because of their fear of other places. If an Egyptian were to die away from home, they feared that they might not get a proper burial. Without a proper burial, an Egyptian could not be prepared for the Afterlife. Yet, travel was still extremely important for trading, and those Egyptians engaged in commerce did travel often.

The students will watch a video about Ancient Egyptian religious beliefs of life after death and the practice of mummification.

After watching the video, students will then learn how to compose a song of their own using the pan flutes they made in last week's lesson. The students will also listen to a CD of Egyptian music to help motivate them and give them some ideas. The students will learn some basic compositional techniques.

The key to this lesson is to allow the students the opportunity to compose an original piece of music using their own lyrics and the musical instrument of their own making (the pan flute.) They will investigate the Ancient Egyptian belief of the after world and the practice of mummification. They will also gain an understanding of the effort it took to undertake a long journey and the importance of river systems in travel and exploration.

### **Objectives**

- Students will experience composing their own original piece of music and learn basic compositional techniques.
- Students will undertake an activity that requires problem solving and independent thinking.
- Students will gain a better understanding of the social and religious beliefs of an ancient civilization.
- Students will investigate the importance of the physical geography of a specific place.

### **Standards**

- a) Ancient Civilizations Standard 6.2: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilization of Egypt.
- b) National Geography Standard 15: How Physical Systems Affect Human Systems.
- c) National Geography Standard 17: How to Apply Geography to Interpret the Past.
- d) Visual and Performing Arts: Music Standard 1.3: Transcribe simple aural examples into rhythmic notation.

- e) Visual and Performing Arts: Music Standard 2.0: Creative Expression; 2.3 Perform on an instrument.
- f) Visual and Performing Arts: Music Standard 4.1: Develop criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of musical performances and compositions, including arrangements and improvisations, and apply the criteria in personal listening and performing.

### **Materials**

#### Audio CDs of pan flute music:

*The Art of the Arabian Flute* [sound recording] : the nay / Bashir Abdel Al (performer)  
Published East Grinstead, West Sussex, Great Britain : ARC Music, 1998

*Flûtes du Monde* [sound recording] = Flutes of the world  
Published Boulogne, France : Playa Sound ; [France] : Distribution, Auvidis, 1996

*Ancient Egypt* [sound recording] / composed and performed by Ali Jihad Racy

#### Video of Egyptian Burial Rights:

*Mummies And The Wonders of Ancient Egypt* (2001)  
A & E Entertainment  
ASIN: B00005MKOC

Maps can be downloaded from: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/index.html>

The University of Texas Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection also has maps for downloading:  
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/index.html>

If maps from the UT Library are used, then you must attach the following acknowledgement: “Courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.”

### **Preparation/References**

It is suggested to spend some time to understand Egyptian burial beliefs and social structures by looking at the web sites.

Teacher's resource site on ancient Egypt:

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/egypt.htm#A1>

Overview of life on the Nile:

<http://carbon.cudenver.edu/stc-link/AE/culture.html>

Sites with many links:

[http://library.thinkquest.org/J002046F/ancient\\_egyptian\\_life.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/J002046F/ancient_egyptian_life.htm)

<http://www.civilisations.ca/civil/egypt/egtut09e.html> <http://www.neferchichi.com/mummies.html>

The following site is an excellent resource to help develop questions to ask students:

<http://www.egypt-tehuti.org/faq-ancient-egypt.html>

Source for printable maps:

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/maps/mainmap.html>

Encyclopedia on Egyptian mythology:

<http://www.probertencyclopaedia.com/D2.HTM>

### **Procedure/Sequence**

1.) Students should look at the map(s) and discuss how they might get themselves from Thebes to Memphis. Locate the two places on a map. Prompt them to try to determine how far it is. How will they get there? On foot, and by land? Why? Why not? On the river? By boat? What kind of boat? How long will it take? How did people travel in Ancient Egypt?

- 2.) Once they have determined how to get to Memphis, they will spend their traveling time writing a song for the burial of the pharaoh who just died.
- 3.) At this point they will begin an investigation into the beliefs of the Egyptians. Prompt them with some questions (ask them what they might already know from previous lessons.) Discuss with them who might have been allowed such expensive and fancy burials (especially one with music all the way from Thebes!)
- 4.) After the discussion, show them a video that explains burial rituals, beliefs, and mummification.

*(Follow through from last week when you had asked them if they think they could play the flute and ask them if they could compose their own compositions and if they thought it would be easy.)*

#### Learning to make music:

##### Compositional techniques exercises:

*Demonstrate an example of each of these exercises before you ask the students to repeat them. Make sure the students understand the connection with the term and the compositional technique.*

##### a) Dynamics

Ask the students to sing a long note. Direct them to start very quiet, grow louder and then back again to quiet, all in one breath. Repeat the exercise until they are able to do it without a conductor.

Reverse the previous exercise: loud-soft-loud on one breath

##### b) Tempo

On a single syllable, like “ma”, sing

Fast

Slow

Fast-slow-fast (gradually from fast to slow etc.)  
Slow-fast-slow

c) Call and response

“Call” to the students and have them respond with one of the above “patterns”.

Now listen to some of the music examples on the CDs and ask the students to discuss in pairs among themselves, what they heard. Did they hear any of the patterns/compositional techniques above? Before they go into their own discussion, please explain to them one example you just heard (*for example: “In the piece we just heard, the singer was singing very fast, then very slow”*)

Then ask them to share their examples with the class.

Now, using the techniques they have just learned, ask the students to compose a piece consisting of both music and lyrics for voice and flute. Have the students think up a set of lyrics for their song. The lyrics should be about their journey down the Nile River as they travel from Thebes to Memphis. Tell them that as they traveled, they began to forget about the pharaoh and instead became interested in the landscape around them and in the river itself.

- 1) Write the lyrics on the board. Let the students come up with their own lyrics, but do prompt them to keep them on the right track. What does it feel like to be sailing down the river? Is the sun bright and warm on their faces? What do they see as the float past the landscape? Fields of grain? What do they see in the distance? Desert? Mountains? Do they see fish as they move down the river? Do they think of home? Are they excited about seeing Memphis? Do they just want to travel on and on and not even go to the burial?

***Note: Limit the lyrics to no more than 5-6 lines (or less) otherwise they won't be enough time. If it seems to be going along smoothly, you can extend them. Break the students up into smaller groups and have each group work on one of the above suggested thoughts. For example, one group might compose lyrics about being homesick, while another group can describe the feeling of the floating down the river, etc..***

- 2) Once the lyrics have been sorted out, begin setting them to music. Discuss with the students the tempo they think is appropriate for each line of lyrics. Discuss with them certain decisions they will be making (tempo, textures, etc.)
- 3) See if the students can repeat playing some of the notes and guide them in putting together the piece. You may find that it will work easier to break them into sections, having some of them sing the lyrics and others play notes --and then switching them.
- 4) If all goes well, they will sing and play their new musical composition.

### **Assessment**

Discuss the issues of geography and travel in Ancient Egypt. What was the mode of transportation? How did people move from one place to another? Why were settlements along the Nile?

Were the Ancient Egyptian's religious beliefs different than religions today? Were they at all similar? How?

Have the students use musical vocabulary to evaluate their composition (tempo, dynamics etc.).