

Egypt Lesson 2

Putting It Together

The Basics

Objective: To introduce participants to the idea that primary sources are often found in fragments.

Performance of Skill Expectations/Enduring Understandings: The participants will put together the pieces of broken plates to aid in understanding the efforts of those who work to reconstruct the past.

Prerequisite Lessons: None, but it should be followed by the lesson *The Doomed Prince*.

Estimated Materials Preparation Time: 3 minutes.

Duration: Instructor discretion.

Materials Provided: Large bags containing broken plates and pieces of plastic.

Materials to be Provided by the Instructor: Flat surfaces where small groups can sit and put together the plates.

Other Notes: The participants will be working in small groups.

Concepts/Vocabulary

Fragment: A part that has been broken or detached.

Procedure

Preparation: Place the bags where they are ready for quick distribution.

Introduction/Instruction:

1. Explain to the participants that artifacts that are excavated by archaeologists are often found incomplete or in pieces/fragments. Part of the job of reconstructing the past is putting together those pieces or making guesses as to what incomplete objects would look like if they were complete. Having previously observed other artifacts of the same type will help the person in his or her reconstruction, for the person will know what components should be present on the complete artifact. This is why observing many artifacts is so important. In the same way that a familiar object—the key—was used to introduce the participants to the idea of artifacts, plates are used in this lesson to introduce the idea of reconstructing fragments.

2. These are ceramic plates, so the edges will be sharp. Warn the participants ahead of time to handle the pieces carefully.

Development: Distribute a bag to each group of participants. Have them take the piece of plastic out of the bag first and put it on the table/desk where the plate is to be reconstructed. This will protect the working surface. Then have the participants put the plate together. Tell the participants that the reconstruction is easier if everyone holds up the edges of the plate nearest them, as it is easier to find what pieces fit together when the plate is in its natural position.

Once you have confirmed that a group has completed the plate reconstruction, have the participants put the plastic and the plate pieces back in the bag and seal the bag completely. You can choose to have them put together multiple plates during this activity. You can also have them draw the plate before putting it away so they can record the design/pattern that was on the plate. If you have the participants work on multiple plates, you might have them put one together upside down, so they don't have the pattern to help them.

NOTE: Over the years, small fragments may be lost or placed into the wrong zipper bags. If a group points this out concerning the plate it is working with, remind the participants that archaeologists often find pottery that is incomplete; so now they (the participants) will understand even better what reconstruction is like.

Reflection: Generate a short discussion with these questions:

- What clues did you use to put the plates together?
- Was this activity hard to do? Did it become easier with time?
- Were certain patterns easier to put together than others?
- What clues were used when a plate was reconstructed upside down?

Assessment: Were the participants able to work together in groups? Were they able to reconstruct at least one plate?