

Language Arts: Voices and Texts of Ancient Egypt

Language Arts: Voices and Perspectives in Ancient Egypt

Subject: Language Arts

Grade Level: Middle School (Grade 8)

Duration: 5 days (45 minutes each)

Standards:

- **ELA.8.R.1.1, ELA.8.R.1.2, ELA.8.R.1.3** – Analyze interactions, figurative language, tone, and themes in literary texts.
- **ELA.8.R.2.1, ELA.8.R.2.3** – Identify author's perspective and analyze rhetorical devices.
- **ELA.8.R.3.1** – Analyze how figurative language contributes to meaning and explain examples of symbolism in text(s).
- **ELA.8.C.1.2, ELA.8.C.1.3, ELA.8.C.1.4, ELA.8.C.1.5** – Compose narratives, express personal perspectives, revise for clarity, and write expository pieces.
- **ELA.8.C.5.1** – Prepare and deliver multimedia presentations.

Objectives:

- Interpret and analyze ancient Egyptian texts and proverbs.
- Evaluate tone, symbolism, bias, and rhetorical techniques in historical documents.
- Write in a variety of styles (narrative, persuasive, expository, poetic) based on historical context.
- Develop empathy and perspective through first-person writing and visual storytelling.
- Synthesize learning in a scroll-style portfolio presentation.

Day 1: Voices from the Past – Exploring the Book of the Dead

Materials:

- Excerpts from the Book of the Dead
- Highlighters, student notebooks, mirrors
- Scroll-style paper or tan construction paper
- Ambient background music

Hook (10 min):

- Dim the lights and play ambient Egyptian music.
- Hand out excerpts on “papyrus” scrolls.
- Ask students to imagine they are ancient scribes uncovering sacred wisdom. Invite them to briefly read silently before beginning.

Mini-Lesson (10 min):

- Using the projector or smartboard, introduce the historical and spiritual context of the Book of the Dead.
- Explain how the text used narrative and symbolic language to guide souls through the afterlife.
- Focus on key metaphors such as the Feather of Ma’at and the weighing of the heart.

Guided Practice (15 min): Students work in pairs to read and annotate the text. Use guiding questions:

- What symbols stand out to you?
- What do they represent?
- How would you describe the tone of the passage?

Activity (10 min): Using drawing paper, students create a visual map of the soul’s journey through the afterlife. They label key stages (e.g., the weighing of the heart, journey through the underworld) and draw relevant symbols.

Closure (5 min): Reflection prompt: “If you wrote your own wisdom scroll, what would it say?” Write in journals or on the back of the visual map.

Assessment:

- Highlighted and annotated text
- Completed visual map
- Written reflection scroll entry

Day 2: Royal Decrees – Writing as Power

Materials:

- Translated royal decrees
- Persuasive writing organizers and rubrics
- Highlighters, sample propaganda images

Hook (10 min): “Decree Detective”:

- Display several royal decrees out of context on the board.
- In pairs, students guess who wrote them and what their motives were.
- Encourage students to highlight powerful or persuasive language.

Mini-Lesson (10 min):

- Project excerpts from decrees by Ramses II and Hatshepsut.
- Walk through each, identifying the author's voice, the intended audience, and persuasive strategies such as repetition, appeals to divinity, or use of legacy.

Activity (20 min): In small groups, students receive one decree and an analysis guide. They:

- Highlight bias or propaganda
- Identify rhetorical devices
- Present a summary of tone and intent to the class

Writing Task (15 min): Students write their own "Royal Decree" as a pharaoh. Prompts may include:

- Announcing a new temple
- Declaring war or peace
- Creating a new law for the kingdom Encourage students to use formal, persuasive language and visual embellishment.

Closure (5 min): Students share favorite lines aloud. Classmates offer compliments and feedback.

Day 3: Biographies of Leadership – From Tomb to Text

Materials:

- Biographies of Hatshepsut, Imhotep, and Akhenaten
- Character trait graphic organizers
- Chart paper, colored markers

Hook (5 min):

- Show a photograph of a richly decorated tomb wall.

- Ask: “What can we infer about this person's role and values from these images?”

Mini-Lesson (10 min):

- Introduce key figures and the art of biographical storytelling.
- Discuss how biographers choose facts to build a particular image of the person.
- Emphasize tone, word choice, and historical interpretation.

Activity (25 min): Students select or are assigned one historical figure. They read a brief biography and complete a character trait graphic organizer noting achievements, values, and leadership qualities.

Creative Writing Task (15 min): Students write a brief first-person narrative from the viewpoint of the historical figure reflecting on their legacy. Encourage voice, historical detail, and personal tone.

Closure (5 min): Each student shares one sentence aloud beginning with: “I want to be remembered for...”

Day 4: Wisdom Literature – Egyptian Proverbs Then and Now

Materials:

- Ancient Egyptian proverbs handout
- Proverb reflection templates, chart paper
- Pencils, markers

Hook (5 min):

- Write on the board: “A house has the value of the person who lives in it.”
- Ask students to silently reflect and write whether they agree or disagree, then discuss.

Mini-Lesson (10 min): Review the characteristics of proverbs: metaphor, brevity, and cultural values. Model interpretation of an example.

Group Activity (15 min): Students in groups read and analyze 2–3 ancient proverbs using provided questions:

- What is the theme?
- What values are expressed?
- How might this apply today? Groups summarize and decorate their interpretations on chart paper.

Writing Task (15 min): Students write two original proverbs that express a lesson or truth from their own lives, using metaphoric language.

Closure (5 min): Gallery walk and peer voting for most insightful or poetic proverb.

Day 5: Scrolls of Memory – Portfolio Showcase

Materials:

- Brown paper or “scroll” materials
- Student work from previous days
- Glue sticks, ribbon, stamps, cardboard tubes
- Peer feedback forms

Hook (5 min): Ask students to answer on a sticky note: “What do you most want your classmates to remember about your work this week?”

Mini-Lesson (10 min):

- Model how to compile a scroll portfolio.
- Emphasize thoughtful sequencing, title creation, and symbolic decorations.

Activity (25 min): Students assemble scrolls including:

- Highlighted Book of the Dead text
- Royal Decree
- Biographical reflection
- Proverbs Each portfolio ends with a written reflection: “What I Learned from Egypt’s Words.”

Presentation (10 min): Gallery walk. Students leave comments on feedback forms or compliment cards.

Closure (5 min): Circle share: One thing learned from a classmate’s scroll.