

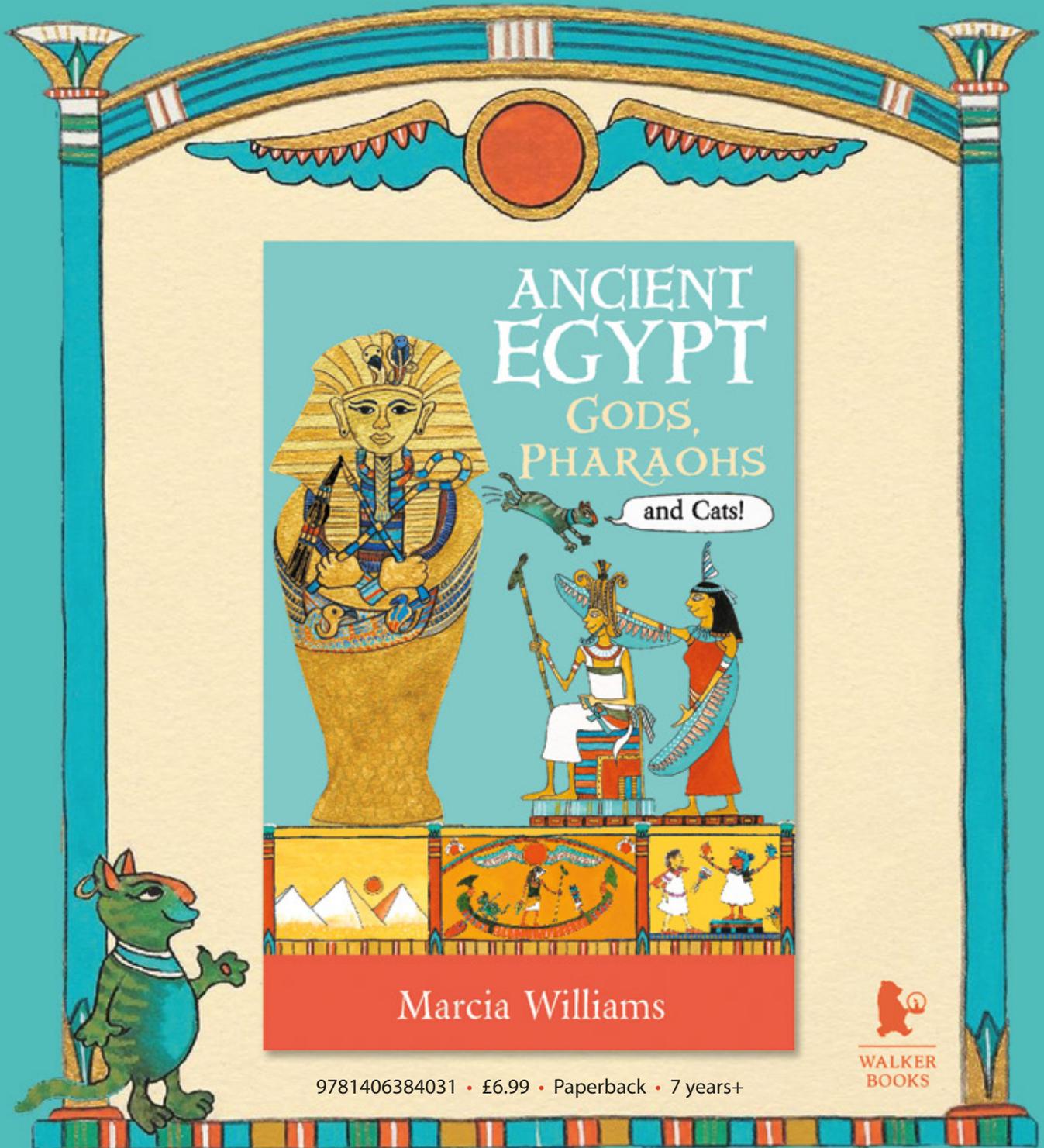
TEACHERS' NOTES

# ANCIENT EGYPT

GODS, PHARAHOHS and Cats!



Marcia Williams



ANCIENT  
EGYPT  
GODS,  
PHARAHOHS

and Cats!

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WALKER  
BOOKS

*These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.*

## Setting the Context through Key Talking Points:

- Write the word 'Egypt' in the middle of a piece of flipchart paper. Invite the children to share what they know and what they think they know about this country. Note their comments and questions on the sheet of paper.
- Write the word 'Ancient' on the middle of another piece of flipchart paper. Invite the children to discuss their understanding and associations with this word. Note their comments on the sheet of paper.
- Pin both sheets of paper alongside one another on a working wall and place a third sheet below the two sheets. Invite the children to discuss the ways in which they think the two words might be connected. Note their thoughts on the third sheet of paper.
- Share the map of Ancient Egypt featured on pp.10-11. Give children the time and opportunity to observe, question, comment and reflect on what they notice and what this suggests about this place. Note their reflections on and around the periphery of the map.
- Share a copy of a map of contemporary Egypt, you might opt for using Google Maps to give children a virtual tour. As with the first map, invite the children to observe, question, comment and reflect on what they notice.
- Ask children to consider the similarities and differences in what they observe and what these observations suggest to us about this country.
- Read aloud the opening note from Rami the cat to the children. Allow them the opportunity to comment on whether or not they have encountered stories from this part of the world in this time period.
  - What information does Rami provide that gives us a sense of the value of stories in this culture?
  - What does the note suggest to us about how storytelling was viewed in Ancient Egyptian culture?
  - Why do you think Ra entrusted the stories to Rami and what does this suggest to us about Rami's position and status during this period?
  - What do you think is the dynamic of this relationship?
  - Why might cats have had a special status? How do you think they might have acquired nine lives?

## Chapter 1: In the Beginning

- Read the first chapter aloud to the children, pausing at points to reflect on how the information provided answers or confirms questions and speculations that arose from your previous discussions.
- Read the chapter again, this time pausing at key points to think about the power Ra has been granted. What do you think it would be like to have this amount of power and what responsibility might come with this? Consider his process and rationale for creating the world. What was most important to him? Why do you think this was? Why do you think he was so **astonished by what he has created**?
- Read the chapter one more time and this time encourage the children to note down what they recall about the different stages of creation.
- Organize the children into pairs or groups of three and give them the opportunity to share their notes and work together to formulate a creation timeline.



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- Once the groups have mapped out their timelines, read the chapter one last time to give them the opportunity to check their timelines against the one detailed in the text.
- Allow time for the groups to consolidate the details of their creation timeline. Once they have done so, provide them with a range of different coloured paper and card as well as a range of pens, colouring pencils, felt tips and writing materials. Invite the children to create an interactive creation timeline. The format and design should be at their discretion. They might choose to make a poster, a 3D interactive resource, a scroll-like timeline or a series of cards for example.
- You could also give the children the opportunity to use their learning to perform their own oral retelling of the story. Allow the groups time and space to think about how they could use their voices to draw their listener into the retelling and share the awe and wonder of this moment and the astonishment that Ra himself felt.
- Give time for the children to prepare a group retelling of the story. They can do this in their group in any way they wish. They may choose to pass round sections of the story or to collaborate on certain parts.
- Once the children have had time and space to compose and rehearse their storytelling, allow time for each group to perform to the rest of the class, and a chance to reflect on and evaluate each other's performances.
- Create a class timeline showing where the Ancient Egyptian period sits within other areas of familiar history, such as the Stone Age, Ancient Rome, the Shang Dynasty, Ancient Greece, the Mayan Civilization, the Vikings, the Anglo Saxons, the Middle Ages, the Tudors, the Victorians, the World Wars and the present-day and defines for them how long ago the Ancient Egyptians lived and the span of this historical period. This will provide children with invaluable broader and deeper appreciation for this historical period.

## Chapter 2: Isis and the Cobra

- Read the opening of the chapter up to, ***"I like being pharaoh," he replied tetchily. "It's my right."***
- Pause and invite the children to offer their views as to whether or not they feel that the people's treatment of Ra is fair.
  - Should Ra be allowed to rule indefinitely?
  - Do the children think that Ra should step down and, if so, why?
  - Does Isis have a point?
  - What other motivations might Isis have for persuading Ra to let go of his power?
  - What do they think is the best solution for the country?
  - What advice would they have offered Ra if they were his advisors?
- Read on up to: ***She spent many days forming her plan until she was finally ready to put it into action.*** Invite the children to speculate as to what they think Isis's plan might involve. Ask them to consider the situation from Isis's position. If they were her, what would they do and why? Then, try to think about the situation as an outsider: If they were advising Isis, would they be supportive or would they attempt to dissuade her?
- Read on up to, ***He became known as Amen Ra and I, his beautiful cat Rami, travelled with him.*** Reflect on the actions of Isis. Do they think that the extreme course of action was warranted? Do they think she undertook this course of action in the interests of the people or because she wanted power? What details in the text make you think this? Go back to the text and highlight, text mark and annotate specific information that justifies the children's opinions.
- Read on to the end of the chapter. Invite the children to reflect on and discuss whether or not they think the end justified the means.



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## Chapter 3: Seth the Evil One

- Read the opening of chapter three up to, ***“I am both the best-looking and most in need of Egypt’s riches.”*** Discuss with the children ideas pertaining to power and leadership, particularly within this context.
  - Is Seth right to believe that he is entitled to or deserves the position any more than his brother?
  - Do his reasons for wanting power sound appropriate or justified?
  - What makes a good leader?
  - Should power be earned or inherited?
  - Why is accountability in leadership important?
  - What is likely to happen when people in power are not answerable to anyone?
- Read up to, ***“He’s my brother. All will be well,” he reassured her.*** Based on Seth’s behaviour, what kind of ruler do you think he would make? Do you think Osiris is gullible or trusting? What makes you think this? Encourage children to skim and scan back over the text to find reasons to justify their thoughts and opinions.
- Now, read on to: ***She was desperate to find his body as she believed that without it, he would never be able to pass safely into the next world.***

Pause to consider why a correct burial would be important to Isis and why, conversely, Seth is keen that Osiris doesn’t have a correct burial. In a linked History lesson, you could delve deeper into this aspect of Ancient Egyptian practice by visiting one or more of the following links: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/egyptian-death-and-afterlife-mummies> and <https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/101-videos/00000160-381a-dd2d-abe2-791fe7d80000>

- Read onto the end of the chapter. Discuss with the children what the different efforts of Isis and Seth might tell us about their characters.
  - What fuels their persistence, motivation and commitment to their plans?
  - What does their sacrifice and adaptation tell us about them as individuals?
  - How do these impressions influence your view of Isis and Seth?

## Chapter 4: Horus the Avenger

- Read chapter four, pausing intermittently to drink in the drama of the battles, cunning, bravery, villainy and heroism. Ask the children what this chapter makes them think about and how it makes them feel? If they were to describe this chapter to someone else, what would they say? Now, ask the children to reflect on what the most memorable aspect of this chapter was for them. Did they all choose the same thing or did they find different aspects memorable? Why do they think this was?
- Read the chapter again and work with the children to map out the key moments and events detailed in the chapter.
- Divide the class into small groups. In their groups, give them the task of arranging themselves into a position that allows them to capture and recreate the drama and intensity of each key moment as a freeze frame. Take photos of each key moment.
- Share some examples of comic strips. Give children the time to read them. Discuss what they notice about the ways in which the comic conveys drama and action through the text, illustration and layout choices.
- Using the photos and software or an app like - <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/comicbook/id436114747>, give the children the opportunity to create their own comic book adaptation of this chapter.



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## Chapter 5: Pharaoh Zoser and the Great Famine

- Read chapter five up to, ***So Horus was the last of the ancient gods to rule Egypt and a man was made a mortal pharaoh.*** Invite the children to discuss what they think of this decree. Do they think this is a wise decision? What might some of the advantages and/or disadvantages be for the subjects of Egypt?
- Read on to, ***Of course, there was a danger that a mortal pharaoh might suffer from pride and put himself above the ancient gods – but most pharaohs were far too wise ... until the time of Zoser.*** What details does the text offer us to anticipate why Zoser's rule might be problematic? Discuss with the children what other models of leadership could have worked. What model would they propose and why?
- Read on to, ***There was no doubt that for as long as it stood, Pharaoh Zoser would be remembered, which made him very, very happy.*** Reflect on whether or not the happiness of the Pharaoh should be his primary focus as a ruler. Consider why this pride and vanity might not only make him vulnerable with regards to the Gods but also how this might affect the way he is viewed by his subjects. Reflect on whether a leader's public image is important.
  - How might their public image affect their leadership?
  - How might it affect their relationship with their subjects?
  - Can you think of any contemporary examples in which public image has affected the leadership of a ruler and if so, in what ways?
- Continue reading to: ***"Next year the Nile is bound to rise!" said Pharaoh Zoser, who had a rich store of food and was not overly concerned by the plight of his people.*** Is Pharaoh Zoser naïve, arrogant or foolish in your view? Where do you think his complacency might lead?
- Now, read up to, ***"He's angry – we are all angry!"*** Reflect with the children on whether it is right that the anger of the Gods should extend to the subjects and cause them as much suffering as Zoser.
- Read to the end of the chapter. Consider who benefits and who loses from a societal model that favours one person with godlike status above others.
  - What in your view are the key necessary principles to ensuring a fair and equitable society?
  - Do you think Zoser learnt his lesson?
  - What more could he do to improve living conditions for all of his subjects?
  - What aspects of societal inequity could he choose to revise to improve life for all?

## Chapter 6: Hatshepsut, a Great Queen for Egypt

- Read the first part of the chapter aloud, up to, ***"There is no woman alive who is quite special enough," he smiled to himself, "but with a little bit of godly help we will have a fine queen!"*** What might this last sentence suggest about how Amen Ra views women? Is this fair, particularly in light of Zoser's failings?
- Now, read on up to, ***All Egypt rejoiced, for Ra put it into the minds of the people that even though this was a girl baby, she was special and would do great things for Egypt.*** What does this last statement suggest about the status of women during this period? How might having a female leader change such perceptions?
- Continue reading to, ***"Be kind to your people. Be fair to your people. Be generous to your people," Pharaoh Thutmose advised.*** Take a moment with the children to observe the panel illustration that accompanies the text on pages 104-105. Re-read the last sentence noted here and invite the children to consider how the words of Pharaoh Thutmose correspond to the reality depicted in the illustration:



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- What contrasts do you notice between the words and what is depicted in the illustration?
  - How does this impact on our view of him as a leader and a father?
  - What does this suggest about how he views himself as a leader and how he views his subjects?
  - How might this influence or shape Hatshepsut as a future leader?
- Now, read up to, ***She knew far more than her husband about ruling Egypt and made most of the decisions of state while Thutmose spent most of his time hunting.*** In what ways is the dynamic of this marriage similar to that of Isis and Osiris? What might this indicate to us about these two women? How might Hatshepsut's rule have changed perceptions about women's capacity to lead and rule?
  - Reread the speech bubble at the end of the chapter. Reflect on why Rami might have been embalmed at this point. You might choose to share the information provided by this British Museum link that provides some detail about this particular practice: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/egyptian-death-and-afterlife-mummies>

## Chapter 7: Prince Thutmose and the Sphinx

- Read the opening of chapter seven up to ... ***brotherly jibe.*** Clarify children's understanding of the meaning of this phrase – what is a jibe? And, what does it mean to be brotherly? Reflect on whether the behaviour of the brothers can indeed be defined as ***brotherly.*** Ask the children if they can think of any other sibling relationships in any other books that this might remind them of.
- Come back to reflect on the situation Thutmose finds himself in. What advice would they give to him?
- Continue reading, to: ... ***so he prayed to the God, asking that his brothers might leave him in peace.*** Considering that he was in the presence of a God and could have asked for anything, what does Thutmose's prayer suggest about his character and the burden that his brothers have placed on him? What do they think might happen next? Do they think his prayers will be answered?
- Read to the end of the chapter. Discuss with the children whether or not they felt that the outcome of the story of Thutmose was fair and just? Did they like the ending? Encourage them to give reasons why, or why not.

## Chapter 8: The Boy King Tutankhamen

- Read the opening of chapter eight up to: ***He sacked all of Amen Ra's priests and ordered the destruction of the shrines and temples built in his honour.*** Take time to consider what you have heard. Why might this be a dangerous and risky act, given what they have learnt so far about the Gods and the way power dynamics worked during this period?
- Continue reading, up to, ***Pharaoh Akhenaten was obsessed with his new cult of Aten. He took little interest in governing Egypt and no interest at all in the welfare of his people. He thought only of building temples and shrines in honour of Aten.*** What advice would have they have given if they were in the advisor's position?
- Now, read on to, ***"Then let them fight the Nubians, just don't bother me about it," snapped Akhenaten. "Can't you see I'm busy designing another temple for the one and only god Aten?"***
  - What do the children think about Akhenaten's leadership here?
  - What could this narrow minded approach to leadership lead to?
  - How are the subjects likely to react?
  - How might this disrupt the country's way of life and societal structures?



- Continue reading, on to, ***“I think it is most possible,” declared Tutankhaten. “Time for some changes!”*** What kind of changes would you consider implementing if you were in his position? What do you think should be a priority?
- Now, read up to, ***“Your father will be turning in his tomb!” his mother complained.*** Do you think he was right to make these changes? What would have been the likely outcome if he had continued to rule as his father had done?
- Read to the end of the chapter. Invite the children to reflect on what it was about the reign of Tutankhamen that made him so successful? In what ways did the decisions he made help to unite the country?

## Chapter 9: Cleopatra, the Last Pharaoh of Egypt

- Read the opening of chapter nine up to: ***Cleopatra didn’t want to share power with anyone – certainly not her brother!*** Reflect with the children on how this description compares with descriptions of other female figures in earlier chapters. What might this suggest about how the status and role of women in this society may have evolved over time?
- Now, read on to: ***“One has to put one’s country before all things.”***
  - How does this sibling dynamic compare with others explored in earlier chapters?
  - Discuss with the children whether they believe that Cleopatra is driven by the interests of the country or her hunger for power.
  - Which particular details in the text suggest this to them?
- Continue reading up to: ***“Gift for the mighty Caesar,” proclaimed the slaves, as they approached the guards with their precious bundle held aloft.*** Building on earlier discussions about the evolution of the role of women, consider why the same cannot be said with regards to the liberation of slaves. Why do they think that the abhorrent institution of slavery continued to be a feature of this society and many thereafter?
- Read on to: ***“Rid me of Ptolemy, oh mighty and deliciously handsome Caesar, and together we can rule the world!”*** she promised. Knowing what we know about Cleopatra so far, do we think Caesar should trust her?
- Keep reading, up to: ***Relieved to be safely back in Egypt, Cleopatra set about restoring her power, her reputation and her country’s wealth.*** Invite the children to reflect on how Cleopatra’s choices may have impacted her power both in Egypt and Rome. How might the subjects of Rome have viewed her? How might her time abroad in Rome have compromised her leadership in Egypt?
- Read on to: ***Without a Roman ally, Cleopatra knew that she did not have the power to prevent Egypt from becoming part of the Roman Empire.*** Clarify children’s understanding of the word ally, using a print or online dictionary, such as: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ally>. What benefit might ally-ship bring for Rome? If you were a representative working on behalf of Cleopatra and Egypt, what arguments might you make in favour of ally-ship?
- Now read on to: ***He stayed with her for several years, abandoning both his duty to his country and his wife.*** What do the actions of Mark Antony suggest about his character and leadership qualities? In what ways might this relationship benefit or harm the stability and wellbeing of Egypt and its subjects? Reflecting on what you have learnt, ask the children to consider; do you think Cleopatra was right to pursue this relationship? How else might she have sought or achieved ally-ship with Rome?
- Read on to, ***Mark Antony landed in Egypt a broken man. He had betrayed his country for Cleopatra, and now she had betrayed him.*** Was Cleopatra right to retreat from the battle? Was Mark Antony entitled to feel betrayed? Why might he have felt this way?



- Encourage the children to think more deeply about the situation. What other options might have been available to the warring parties?
- Read to the end of the chapter and invite the children to reflect on whether or not they think that Cleopatra was a remarkable ruler, and if so why.

### Drawing the learning together:

- Share the section titled, **Ten Terrific Things You Never Knew About Ancient Egypt** along with a copy of the glossary. Allow the children the time to discuss in groups what this and the text as a whole has added to their knowledge about this period of history.
- Use this to start a discussion about how important historical research is to ensure that information presented is reliable. Where could we go to find out more factual information about this era? How do we know which sources are reliable? How might we recognize if something is inaccurate or biased before we report it ourselves?
- Now, allow the children to begin to explore their responses to the entire text through booktalk with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls ‘the four basic questions’. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
  - Tell me... What did you like about each text?
  - Was there anything that you particularly disliked?
  - Was there anything that puzzled you?
  - Were there any patterns...any connections that you noticed... Did it remind you of anything else you’ve read or seen?
- The openness of these questions, unlike the more interrogative “Why?” question encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the “wrong” answer.
- Asking these questions will lead children inevitably into a fuller discussion than using more general questions. You may, for example, ask the children if they had favourite parts of the story, and why this was.
- Extend the children’s thinking through more evaluative questions, such as:
  - What do you think about the author’s choice to use a feline narrator to help readers learn about the history of the period? Did you think this was effective? Why or why not?
  - What did you think about the author’s use of humour to set a comedic tone throughout the book? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
  - How does a text like this compare with a more traditional information text?
  - Do you like the way that the author has chosen to present facts in a fictional narrative? Why or why not?
- Leave multiple copies of the books in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.

### After reading, you could also:

- Think about different ways to share your knowledge of this period in history. This could include turning your classroom into a class museum at the end of the work and using different activities to share information, such as:
  - Making replica artefacts for a class museum, with gallery cards sharing knowledge of how these were made and why these were used.



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- Building a scale model of a burial chamber for the class museum and sharing information about the burial practices and beliefs on information cards or posters.
- Planning for interactive stations as part of the museum exhibition at which visitors can either have live or recorded workshops teaching them how to make papyrus and use the hieroglyphic code provided at the end of the book to create their own sign.
- Sharing other important Ancient Egyptian moments in the form of hieroglyphic paintings for an installation in the class museum, with gallery cards to describe what the paintings show.
- Paintings of the Nile through the ages to give visitors a sense of the rich and evolving history of this place and the significant role of this river. Episode two of the BBC's Earth's Great Rivers is a very useful resource to draw on for this work: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bwqng8>
- Models of a royal barge and weaponry to inform visitors about the military feats of this civilization.
- Talks or presentations on different aspects of Ancient Egyptian history, culture, society, theology, leadership and storytelling to give at an open day for your class museum, where parents/carers or other classes in the school are invited to attend.
- Articles on different aspects of Ancient Egyptian civilization for a class magazine to give out at the open day.
- Information about different aspects of Ancient Egyptian civilization for a class blog or webpage to share information beyond the class museum.
- Sharing other stories or poems about this period in history drawing on factual information about the era, as Marcia Williams has. These can form part of the display in the class museum.

## Other links to support the widening of historical knowledge explored in the text:

BBC Bitesize – Ancient Egypt:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zg87xnb>

Dorling Kindersley Find Out! – Ancient Egypt:

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/ancient-egypt/>

The History Channel – Ancient Egypt:

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/ancient-egypt>

The British Museum – Key Stage 2 resources on Ancient Egypt:

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/learn/schools/ages-7-11/ancient-egypt>



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