







What Did Cleopatra Eat?

Overview:





Students will sample what first grew along the Nile River in Egypt and how the diet of Egyptian nobility was different from that of farmers/slaves. *Note: This is less of a lesson and more of a celebration. It is a great culminating activity for the Ancient History of Egypt Unit.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson students will be able to:

-  **Describe** what conditions along the Nile River made it a good place to grow food.
-  **List** different crops that grew along the Nile.
-  **Explain** why the diet of Ancient Egyptians varied depending upon social position and wealth.
-  **Identify** any of these crops growing in the garden.




Vocabulary:

 Cleopatra	 pomegranate
 hierarchy	 dates
 staple crops	 mulberries
 social status	 spelt




Learning Activities:

- I. Warm-up (5 min.)
 - A. Review the conditions that made the Nile River an optimal place for a variety of food to grow.
2. Presentation (30 min.)
 - A. Tell students that today's lesson will be about the last Pharaoh of Egypt. Ask students if they know her name and when she lived. (Her name was Cleopatra and she lived from 69 BCE until 30 BCE.)


Materials:

-  Map of the world
-  Map of Egypt
-  Teacher Supplement: "Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners"

On the Board:

-  Social hierarchy pyramid (from the Gift of the Nile lesson)
-  Vocabulary
-  Student Reflection Questions

Suggested Snack:

-  An Egyptian Feast (See the lesson for a list of possible items to include.)

Other Resources:

-  http://www.ehow.com/info_8539732_ancient-egyptian-snacks-kids.html
-  <http://www.historyonthenet.com/egyptians/food.htm>

- B. Pass around printouts of the painting “Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners” (an 1887 painting by the French artist Alexandre Cabanel that is now in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp). The painting shows Cleopatra sitting at a banquet observing the effects of poisons on prisoners condemned by her to death. (Or project this painting as an overhead.)
- C. Review the social hierarchy pyramid from the last lesson, “A Day in the Life of an Egyptian.”
- Ask students where Cleopatra fit on the pyramid.
 - Tell students that she was highly educated and spoke seven languages, including Egyptian. Her ancestors came from Greece (Macedonia).
 - At this time in Egypt women were equal to men. They were allowed to own property, do business, inherit money, and get divorced.
 - The Romans won a war with Egypt and took control of the country. Many think Cleopatra committed suicide because she could no longer be the pharaoh.
 - But before she died she and the rest of Egyptian nobility used to enjoy great feasts.
- D. Ask if students remember how diets were different between the upper and lower classes of Egyptian society. The wealthy had a more varied selection of food to choose from including: beef, fish, duck, poultry, and mutton (all preserved by salting or drying), fruits and vegetables (grapes, raisins, pomegranates, melons, apricots, olives, chickpeas, mulberries, figs, lentils, onions, lettuce, and radishes), cheese, barley seeds, pita bread, spelt bread, honey, and oils (olive and sesame).
- E. Ask students how do we know what Egyptians used to eat?
- Many tomb paintings have been found that depict harvest and food preparation scenes.
 - Archeologists have found remains of food in tombs. (Wealthy Egyptians were sent to the afterlife with food “to travel.”)
 - Records of medical information written in hieroglyphics represent different foods that were common.
3. Snack: An Egyptian Feast (10 min.)
- A. Tell students that in the last lesson they got to sample an Egyptian peasant’s meal. In this class, they will have an Egyptian feast, fit for pharaohs.
- B. Present a large spread of food that Egyptian nobility used to eat.
- C. Ask students if there are any food items they have never seen before?
- D. Go over each item and have students identify what it is.
- E. Allow students to serve themselves from the feast and enjoy their snack.

4. Have students answer the Reflection Questions in their garden journals. (5 min.)

Student Reflection Questions:

1. How was an Egyptian noble's diet different from a farmer's?
2. Which foods were only available to the upper classes? Why?

Assessment Questions:

1. Explain one way we know what Egyptians used to eat.
 - **Many tomb paintings have been found that depict harvest and food preparation scenes.**
 - **Archeologists have found remains of food in tombs. (Wealthy Egyptians were sent to the afterlife with food "to travel.")**
 - **Records of medical information written in hieroglyphics discuss different foods that were common.**
2. Describe the differences between a typical Egyptian peasant's meal and a pharaoh's meal?

Peasants ate much simpler meals consisting of bread, beer, vegetables, and pickled and salted fish.

 - **Pharaohs and government officials often ate lavish meals with meat, goat, sheep, dates, figs, melons, multiple kinds of bread, butter, cheese, and wine.**

Standards:

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Acknowledgements:

"Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners." Alexandre Cabanel. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp.

Ancient Egyptian Social Classes

