

The Use of Symbols in Egyptian Religion:

Ancient, Coptic Christianity, and Islam

Lesson Plan – Ms. Sharlyn Scott – Desert Vista HS in Phoenix, AZ

Grade Level: Sophomore regular and/or honors World History and Geography

Background: This lesson could follow a unit on Orthodox Christianity and the Rise of Islam, having covered Ancient Egyptian history at an earlier time. This lesson could also function as part of a unit on religion in a geography course.

Objective: The student will be able to understand the cosmological perspective of Ancient, Coptic Christians, and medieval Muslims in Egypt. The student will be able to analyze artwork, sculpture and architecture to determine different cultural world views and values. The student will be able to understand the impact of cultural and religious diffusion using Egypt as the case study.

Essential Questions:

- How did ancient and medieval Egyptians see the world and universe?
- What was the cosmological/world view of the different religions in Egypt?
- What symbols were important in each of these religions?
- Why were symbols important?
- What cross-over in symbolism was there between the religions?

Applicable Arizona State World History Standards:

Concept 2: Early Civilizations

The geographic, political, economic, and cultural characteristics of early civilizations significantly influenced the development of later civilizations.

PO 2. Analyze the development and historical significance of Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

Concept 3: World in Transition

People of different regions developed unique civilizations and cultural identities characterized by increased interaction, societal complexity, and competition.

PO 1. Contrast the fall of Rome with the development of the Byzantine and Arab Empires (e.g., religion, culture, language, governmental structure).

Applicable Arizona State Geography Standards:

Concept 2: Places and Regions

Places and regions have distinct physical and cultural characteristics.

PO 4. Analyze the differing political, religious, economic, demographic, and historical ways of viewing places and regions.

Time Frame: 3 class periods

Procedures:

- Present “The History of Religion in Egypt” [Power Point](#) and [Lecture Guide](#)
- Present and discuss “The Use of Symbols in Egyptian Religion” [Power Point](#)
- Cooperative Learning Activity (approximately 1 class period) :
 - o Students should be put in groups of 4-5, and given 5 images from either the [Ancient, Coptic Christian, or Muslim group of images](#) (there is an [image guide for teachers](#) – write a number on the back of the images so that you can keep track of them).
 - o Give them 15-20 minutes (or more depending on how much time you would like to spend on activity) to examine the images and answer questions about them on their [student analysis of images worksheet](#). You can have students complete this individually within their groups or just turn in one set of answers to you for the group as a whole.
 - o Rotate the groups of images so that each student group has examined images from the Ancient, Coptic Christian, and Muslim groupings.
- *Alternative Procedure: Have each group only look at Ancient, Coptic Christian or Islamic images and present their findings to the class.
- Discuss student findings and present actual academic interpretations of what these symbols mean within each of the religions.
 - o I have included [Symbolism Essentials](#) (for the basics of what the symbols mean in these religions’ art/architecture) and for further information, [background reading on the use of symbols and their meanings](#) for each of the religions; this can be read independently by the instructor to inform the class discussion or by the class as a whole.

Assessment: Culminating project will be an art project (painting, mosaic, or multi-media, etc.) in which students must express their own belief system/world view symbolically and explain in a short essay what their artwork reflects.

- If time, may have students individually or in a group setting present their work.