

Egyptian Relief Sculpture by Amaco®

(art + history)

Hieroglyphics were the ancient writing system of the Egyptians. They were pictograms that covered the walls of the pyramids and other ruins with the stories of ancient civilization. Hieroglyphic writing is like a picture puzzle and used more than 2000 characters. Each character represented the sound of an object's name or an idea associated with an object. Numbers and fractions were also written as pictograms.

Students should research hieroglyphs and find a hieroglyphic symbol that has meaning to them. They might choose their initial as a their symbol, or create a figure in the style of an Egyptian Queen or Pharaoh.

Next, students will carve a low-relief sculpture in Balsa Foam, much like an ancient Egyptian scribe would have done in sandstone.

Grade Levels 4-6

Note: instructions and materials based upon a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Recommended resources:

[Walch Hands-On Culture of Ancient Egypt](#); book, (71836-0000)

Process

1. Find an image of the piece of art that you want to produce. Draw or trace an outline of the shape onto the Balsa-Foam by pressing with a narrow modeling tool just heavily enough to indent the shape into the surface.
Using a flat modeling tool, cut around the outline that you have drawn to create an outline of your piece.
2. Study your image and determine which parts of the image will be carved more deeply and which will be left raised. Using the finer modeling tools, carve into the surface of the shape to create dimension.



Materials

[Amaco® Balsa Foam, Project Squares](#) Classpack of 48, 3" x 3" x 1/2" pieces (33111-0200); need one per student

[Boxwood Clay Tool Sets](#), 6", 10-tool set (30304-1069); share one set between four students

[Blick® Matte Acrylic](#), assorted 2-oz colors (00727-); share 3-4 bottles across class

[Blick® Artists' Acrylic Gesso](#), 8-oz (00623-1025); share one across class

[Blick® Scholastic Wonder White](#) Round brushes, assorted sizes (05857-); need one per student

Optional Materials:

[Blick® White Glue](#), 8-oz (23882-1005); share four bottles across class

Toothpicks

[Amaco® All-Purpose Sealer](#), waterbased, 8-oz (34900-1008)

Process, continued

- Continue to mark out successively more detail on the piece, then carve these. Hints:
 - Work slowly on the piece carving very small areas at a time. Carve a small piece away and then take a look at the piece and determine which area you will carve next. The more careful you are, the better your final result will be.
 - When adding dimension to the figure by carving different layers, you don't need a very big difference in depth to give the appearance of something being on a lower level. So keep the carving very shallow and ensure your Balsa Foam is never any less than 1/4" deep.
- Finish by adding the fine details such as hatching and holes to give the character texture.
- Coat each piece with a layer of gesso and set aside to dry. Using the acrylic paints, paint each character in colors using the original piece of art as a guide.
- To finish, coat with a thin application of All-Purpose Sealer.

Options

- To make a 6-step pyramid, begin with a piece of 3" x 3" balsa foam. Plan how to cut the balsa foam into successively smaller squares to make a six step pyramid - you might want to sketch your design to scale so you know how big each piece needs to be.
Cut the pieces to make the 6-step pyramid. Use toothpicks to hold them together and join them using white glue. Set aside to dry.

Tips

If a piece breaks it can be joined together using a small amount of white glue. A toothpick broken in two and inserted between the broken pieces will hold it steady while the glue dries.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

K-4 Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

Content Standard #3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

K-4 Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art

5-8 Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

Content Standard #4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

K-4 Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures

5-8 Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

Content Standard #6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

K-4 Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

5-8 Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts