

THE LOST SCROLL
AN EGYPTIAN PLAY FOR CHILDREN
BY
JOYCE TYLDESLEY



Seth, Nephthys, Osiris and Isis: Illustration by Julian Heath from Joyce Tyldesley's *Stories From Ancient Egypt* (2005), Bolton: Rutherford Press.

THE LOST SCROLL
AN EGYPTIAN PLAY FOR CHILDREN
BY
JOYCE TYLDESLEY

RUNNING TIME

Estimated 25-30 minutes, depending upon the amount of audience interaction.

CHARACTERS

Professor Pyramid/narrator

Osiris

Seth

Isis

Nephthys

Horus

Other cast members can act as non-speaking crowd

SETTING

The play is set in the (fictitious) lost library of the Pharaoh Tut.

COSTUMES (*see cover illustration for ideas*)

Professor Pyramid (Egyptologist): Pith helmet, baggy shorts and large magnifying glass

Osiris: Egyptian-style crown, crook and flail

Seth: Aardvark/donkey-like mask, Egyptian-style sword

Isis: Egyptian-style wig and jewellery. Shawl for disguise. Detachable wings

Nephthys: Egyptian-style wig and jewellery

Horus: Falcon/hawk mask

PROPS

Egyptian-style music

Lengthy papyrus scroll

Magnifying glass

Throne

Party invitation

Decorated box/coffin large enough to fit Osiris inside

Toilet rolls and masking tape

Baby Horus

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Source

The Lost Scroll is adapted from two traditional Egyptian myths - the Story of Isis and Osiris, and the Quarrel Between Horus and Seth – as re-written for primary school children by Joyce Tyldesley (2005), *Stories from Ancient Egypt* (Bolton: Rutherford Press Limited).

Stories from Ancient Egypt provides Key Stage 2 readers with more Egyptian stories, illustrations to colour in, a hieroglyphic alphabet and a useful series of questions and answers for classroom use.

The play reflects the Abydos/Osiris theme of the upcoming Garstang event at Kendal Museum. However, the play is suitable for performance by other schools/museums/theatre groups.

Classroom Support

The play is designed to be watched, with some audience interaction. It should be supported by classroom sessions focussing on:

- The social structure of ancient Egypt,
- The names and roles of Egypt's main gods
- The use of papyrus and the hieroglyphic text
- The role of the Egyptologist: what do they do? What tools do they use? What happens to the objects that they find?

Ideally, the play should also be supported by a visit to a local museum to allow the children to discover what happens to the objects that the Egyptologists recover.

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives are based on the National Curriculum history and citizenship targets for Key Stage 2. The History element of the play is obvious. Other themes incorporated into the play include:

- Ancient Egypt provides us with stories and world views that are different from our own
- The Ancient Egyptians accepted many gods
- The importance of developing independence and self confidence
- Issues of social justice and moral responsibility
- The importance of resisting bullying

SCENE 1: IN THE LIBRARY

Egypt: The lost library of the Pharaoh Tut. Random Egyptian-style artefacts – including a conspicuous scroll, a decorated coffin/box, a throne, a crown and a crook and flail - are dotted about. Music plays.

Professor Pyramid enters, peering through a large magnifying glass, clearly looking for something. Lifts objects up and puts them down, peers into corners etc. Comedy search. Does not see audience. Music fades

PROFESSOR

(Muttering)

Oh dear, where is it? It must be here somewhere. Why can I not find it?

(Resumes search. Suddenly sees audience: jumps and yelps)

Goodness gracious me! How long have you been there?

Hello! I am Professor Pyramid, the famous Egyptologist. You must be Egyptologists too. But who are you? Where do you come from? Eh? Shout up! I cannot hear you?

(Encourages audience to shout out responses)

Let me test your Egyptology:

What did the pharaoh say when he got scared?
I want my mummy!

Quite right. Excellent. You are obviously very good Egyptologists indeed. Well, it very nice to meet you all. Have you come to help me? As you can see, I have discovered the long-lost library of the Pharaoh Tut. But the library has been robbed. Thieves have stolen all the books!

I am looking for a papyrus scroll. The scroll that tells the story of Osiris, Isis and Horus. I need to read that scroll because I want to discover the name of Egypt's first mummy.

But I can't find it anywhere. I have looked on the top shelves for the hieroglyphics. I have looked on the bottom shelves for the lower-glyphics. It is not there. Can you help me? Where is that scroll?

(Encourages audience to shout out. Still can't see it. Eventually...)

Ah, here it is! At last! Why on earth did you lot not tell me where it was?

(Reads label attached to rolled up scroll)

“The story of Egypt’s first kings. Top secret. To be read only by real Egyptologists.”

Well, that is ok – we are all real Egyptologists here, aren’t we?

(Unrolls inordinately long scroll, which drops to the ground. Starts to read.)

I say - this story is jolly interesting. Would you like me to read it to you?

Yes?

Well, are you sitting comfortably?

Then I will begin.

(Moves to side of stage and starts to narrate. Lights dim. Music plays.)

SCENE 2: THE ROYAL FAMILY

The Professor is now narrating the story from the side of the stage. Attention is focussed on the action in the centre as the Professor reads. Occasionally the Professor breaks off to allow the actors to speak.

PROFESSOR

(Reading. Music gradually fades away)

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, the sky goddess Nut married the earth god Geb. Nut and Geb had four children, two boys and two girls. Their first son, Osiris, was a good boy, but he did show off a bit, and not everyone likes a show-off.

OSIRIS

(Steps forward)

I am the god Osiris, son of Nut and Geb. I am clever, and handsome, and good. In fact, I am practically perfect! The people of Egypt love me. My parents love me. Everyone loves me. Most of all, I love me too!

(Steps back and stands looking very pleased with himself)

SETH

(Steps forward)

I am the god Seth, son of Nut and Geb. I am clever too. In fact I am far cleverer than my brother Osiris. But I am not handsome like him, and I am not good either. I am jealous of my brother Osiris, because everybody loves him. I want everyone to love me best!

(Makes rude gesture at Osiris, who ignores him. Steps back)

ISIS

(Steps forward between Osiris and Seth, separating them)

I am the goddess Isis, daughter of Nut and Geb. I am beautiful and clever and brave, and I am a powerful magician. I try to protect Osiris from harm, and I try to stop Seth and Osiris from quarrelling.

(Steps back and puts a protective arm round Osiris)

NEPHTHYS

(Steps forward, whispering)

I am the goddess Nephthys, daughter of Nut and Geb. I am beautiful and clever too, but I am very shy: I rarely speak.

(Steps back)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

Osiris was chosen to be king of Egypt. He was a good and popular king. He taught the men of Egypt how to work in the fields and how to grow crops.

Isis was his queen. She taught the women of Egypt how to weave cloth and how to bake bread. The people were very happy with their new king and queen.

(Osiris sits on the throne. Isis crowns him, and hands him the crook and flail. Nephthys and Seth stand beside him. Seth looks glum.)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

But one person was not happy. Seth was so filled with jealousy he could hardly speak. He had always wanted to be king of Egypt, and now his brother was king. And Osiris was a good king, too! Everyone loved him even more.

(Seth stalks away from the others and gives them filthy looks)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

Seth hated his brother. He started to think terrible thoughts. He decided that he must kill Osiris so that he, Seth, could be king of Egypt.

(Lights dim)

SCENE 3: SETH'S PARTY

Lights go up on Seth's party. Music in the background. Guests (all cast members except Osiris) are circulating, enjoying themselves.

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

Seth planned a magnificent party. The tables were piled high with food. There was beef and mutton, roast birds, grilled fish and heaps of bread and cake. And to wash it all down there were many jars of strong wine, and many jars of strong beer.

(Music plays loudly. Guests perform Egyptian-style dance. Audience is encouraged to clap in time to the music and to make Egyptian style dance movements in their seats. If practical, two or three audience are selected to join in the dance on the stage. The music fades...)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

Seth had invited his best friends - all of them evil - to the party. But the guest of honour was his brother Osiris, king of Egypt.

(Seth hands party invitation to Osiris)

OSIRIS

(Reading from party invitation)

“Dear Osiris. Please come to my party. There will be food and drink, and we will play an exciting new party game. I do hope that you can come. With lots of love from your brother Seth.”

(Osiris walks into the party and is greeted warmly by Seth. High five)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

Seth's guests ate and drank until they felt sick. Then, when no one could possibly eat any more, Seth dragged a box into the centre of the room.

The box was beautiful. Carved from the finest wood, it was decorated with silver and gold and jewels. The guests all stared in wonder at the beautiful box.

SETH

Excuse me! Attention everyone! I have invented a new game, especially for you. Look at this marvellous box – it is beautiful. If any one of you can fit inside this box he or she can keep it as a prize.

(Stands by box and opens lid)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading: guests rush forward and attempt to squeeze into the box)

Seth's friends tried very hard to fit into the box, but they were all too big. None of them won the prize.

(Osiris removes his crown, puts down his crook and flail, and lies in the box).

Then Osiris stepped forward to try. He was easily able to lie down inside the box. It was a perfect fit.

OSIRIS

(Shouts excitedly)

Yeah! I have won. The prize is mine! Thank you, Seth! Great game!

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

But before Osiris could sit up again, Seth slammed the lid shut and locked it. The decorated box had become a coffin. Seth laughed.

SETH

(Laughing evilly)

Mwaaaaaaah

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading. Seth and guests drag coffin to side of stage)

The party was over. Seth dragged the box to the River Nile and threw it in. He laughed again.

SETH

(Laughing evilly)

Mwaaaaaaah

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading. Seth and guests drag coffin to side of stage)

... as he saw the box float slowly down river and head out to sea.

Osiris had vanished. Seth could be king of Egypt. There was no one to stop him.

(Seth picks up Osiris's crown and puts it on his own head. Picks up the crook and flail and sits on the throne)

Hurrah. Now I am king of Egypt, and everyone will love me. Osiris will soon be forgotten!

(Lights dim. Music)

SCENE 4: ISIS RESCUES OSIRIS

Lights rise. Seth still sits on his throne. Music fades away

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

But Seth had forgotten all about the brave Isis.

(Isis enters, grieving, and searching. Nephthys is with her)

ISIS

Oh Nephthys. Wherever can Osiris be? He went to Seth's party, and vanished! That was many months ago. I just don't know where to start looking for him.

(Nephthys shakes her head, sadly. Isis turns to Seth)

Seth! Have you seen Osiris? He vanished on the night of your party and no one has seen him since. Do you have any idea what has happened to him?

(Seth shakes his head, smiling. Isis turns to the audience)

What do you think? Can I trust Seth?

Yes...?

No....?

(encourages children to shout out)

No? But Seth is king of Egypt. He would not hurt Osiris! Oh dear, I don't know what to do,

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

Isis did not forget Osiris. With Nephthys by her side, she spent many years wandering through Egypt, hoping to find news of Osiris.

At long last she heard a rumour that the precious wooden box had been washed ashore in the far away land of Byblos.

ISIS

(Eager)

Nephthys - you must help me. I must transform into a bird so that I can fly to Byblos and rescue Osiris.

(Nephthys fixes wings to Isis's back. Isis speaks the magic spell that will allow her to fly)

Heka-wer, let me fly
Let me soar across the sky!

(Isis can fly!)

PROFESSOR

(Reading: Isis flies to coffin)

Isis flew to far away Byblos. She found the body of Osiris and brought it back to Egypt. Still grieving, she hid Osiris safe in the desert. Then she went home to visit her young son, Horus.

(Isis leaves. Seth leaves his throne, puts down the crook and flail, picks up his sword, and starts to walk around. He is stalking an animal)

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

One night, while Seth was out hunting in the desert, he discovered the coffin.

(Seth discovers the coffin and opens it. Horror.)

Seth could not believe his eyes.

SETH

(Astonished)

I cannot believe my eyes!

I thought that I would never see Osiris again. But here he is. Back in Egypt. How has this happened? How did he get here? I will have to get rid of him again!

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

(Seth wields his sword over coffin. Then reaches in and finds suitably repulsive body parts – throws them around the stage making sure that the audience gets a good look, then sits again on the throne, picking up the crook and flail.)

Filled with rage Seth took his sword and hacked Osiris into many pieces. He threw the body parts far and wide.

(Isis enters as a bird. She flies around, collecting body parts and putting them back in the coffin.

(Resumes reading)

Once again Isis transformed into a bird. She searched high and low, collecting all the bits of Osiris. Luckily, she was good at jigsaws!

Isis was able to put Osiris back together again. Then she used a powerful magic spell to bring him back to life.

ISIS

Heka-wer, heal his pain
And let Osiris rise again!

(Isis waves her hands over the coffin. Then reaches inside and helps Osiris to step out. He stands still beside the coffin.)

ISIS

(Speaking directly to audience)

Children – will you help me? Osiris has been cut into many pieces. I have put him back together again, but I need to use bandages to stop him from falling apart.

I am going to mummify him. He will be Egypt's first mummy.

Nephthys will help me, but we need two assistants.

Who wants to help us?

(Isis picks two helpers from the audience. Nephthys enters with rolls of toilet paper and masking tape. Music plays cheerfully and the mummification takes place. Eventually Osiris is bandaged with his head unwrapped. Music stops).

ISIS

(Speaking directly to audience)

Thank you so much everyone. Osiris is whole again. But he is a mummy – he can no longer live in Egypt. He can no longer be king.

Osiris will live in the Underworld where he will rule over the kingdom of the dead.

(Osiris hops/moves to the side of the stage. Isis leaves. Seth remains on the throne. Music. Lights dim)

SCENE 5: THE NEXT KING

Many years later. Horus has grown up.

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

For many years Seth ruled Egypt. Horus and his mother Isis were forced to hide in the marshes.

(Isis carries baby Horus across stage in a furtive way)

Eventually Horus grew up. He left the safety of the marshes to claim his father's throne. But Seth liked being king – he did not want Horus to take his place

HORUS

(Steps forward)

I am Horus, son of the dead Osiris. I should rule Egypt because my father was king before me, and because I am young and brave.

So, please cheer if you think that I should be king

(audience cheers)

SETH

(Steps forward to stand beside Horus)

I am Seth, brother of Osiris. I should rule Egypt because my brother was pharaoh before me, and because I am older, wise and much stronger than Horus.

So, please cheer if you think that I should be king.

(audience cheers)

HORUS

I should be king

SETH

No - me!

HORUS

Me!

SETH

Me!

HORUS

Me!

SETH

Me!

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

No one could decide who should be the king of Egypt. Some thought that Horus should be king because he was the son of Osiris. Others thought that Horus was too young to rule Egypt. They thought that Seth should be king because he was a clever and brave man.

The quarrel lasted for eighty years, and still no one could decide who should be king of Egypt.

HORUS

Me!

SETH

Me!

(they start to push and shove each other in a childish way)

HORUS

No - me!

SETH

Me!

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

Everyone was getting fed up with the quarrel. So, Isis decided to trick Seth into saying that Horus should be king. She disguised herself as a beautiful woman.

(Isis puts shawl over head)

ISIS

Now I am the most beautiful woman in the world. Seth will not recognise me. He has very bad eyesight! I will be able to trick him into saying that Horus should be king of Egypt.

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

Seth saw the beautiful woman, but he did not realise that she was Isis. He thought that it would be fun to talk to the beautiful woman.

SETH

(Trying to be charming)

Well hello there, beautiful! My name is Seth, and I am king of Egypt. Let me be your friend and we can walk and talk together holding hands in the cool shade of the trees.

(Seth tries to hold Isis' hand. She draws away)

ISIS

(Voice disguised)

Greetings, O king. I will talk to you gladly. I want to tell you my story. I want to know what you think about it.

Many years ago I was the wife of a herdsman who looked after a field of cattle. We were a happy family, my husband, our young son and I. Then my husband died, and my young son began to do his father's job. But one day a stranger came to our house. The stranger stole our cattle. He said that my son should not do his father's job.

What do you think of my story, O king?

SETH

You poor thing. What a terrible, sad story. A bully has cheated you and your son. And bullying is always wrong. Your son should definitely have his dead father's job.

Now, can we hold hands?

(Seth attempts to hold Isis' hand)

ISIS

(throws off the shawl and reveals herself)

Ha – I have fooled you with my disguise, Seth.

I am not a stranger at all. I am Isis, mother of Horus! And you have just agreed that my son Horus should have his father's job. I agree! Horus should be king of Egypt, as Osiris was before him. I am going to tell the other gods what you have just said!

PROFESSOR

(Reading)

Realising that he had been tricked, Seth grew angry. But he still thought that he should be king of Egypt. The quarrel continued. Nothing had been decided. No one knew what to do.

(Seth and Horus start to fight, and are separated by Isis)

HORUS

I should be king

SETH

No - me!

HORUS

Me!

SETH

Me!

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

Then Nephthys had a brilliant idea.

Nephthys

I have had a brilliant idea. We must let Osiris decide who should be king.

PROFESSOR

(Resumes reading)

And so Osiris decided....

OSIRIS

(Steps forward)

My son Horus should be king of Egypt, of course. A son should always inherit his father's crown.

(Takes crown from Seth and gives it to Horus. Horus sits on the throne holding the crook and flail. Music, dancing etc)

PROFESSOR

(Reading. Music fades)

Everyone agreed! Horus was crowned king of Egypt and Isis was happy at last.

What happened to Seth? He was sent to live with the sun god Re. Every day he helped the sun to travel across the sky, bringing light to Egypt.

(Puts down scroll)

And that is the end of the story, children.

Now, at last I know the name of Egypt's first mummy. But... I have already forgotten it.

(scratches head)

Who was it, children. Was it Horus... or Seth.... or Osiris?

(encourages children to give right answer)

Ah yes, Osiris, of course. Thank you.

And now I really must be going. Thank you so much for all your help. It has been a pleasure working with you. I hope to see you all again soon. Goodbye! Goodbye!

(Music. The Professor bumbles his way out of the library. Light dim.)

THE END