Welcome to ancient Egypt’s Middle Kingdom! During this period of time around 4,000 years ago many older ideas changed and a lot of beautiful art works were created. Use this guide to find sculptures of people and creatures as you explore the exhibition.

Before you start your journey, find Egypt on the world map.

Words to Know

**Afterlife:** life after death

**Archaeologist:** a scientist who explores human history by digging up and studying the artifacts and monuments left by ancient people

**Cartouche:** [car-TOOSH] an oval-shaped frame around a set of hieroglyphs that protect a royal name

**Faience:** [fay-AHNS] a ceramic material often made in a blue or blue-green color, which symbolized life

**Hieroglyphs:** [HI-ro-glifs] pictures that represent sounds and, sometimes, words or ideas, which are part of the ancient Egyptian writing system. There are more than seven hundred signs in hieroglyphic script!

**Nemes:** [NEM-es] a stiff, pleated, linen headdress worn by ancient Egyptian kings

**Nile River:** one of the world’s two longest rivers, which flows north through northeastern Africa to the Mediterranean Sea

**Papyrus:** [pah-PY-rus] a thick paperlike material made from papyrus, a tall plant that grows in marshes.

**Pharaoh:** [FEH-ro] ancient Egyptian king

**Relief:** a kind of sculpture with figures or designs carved into a flat surface so that they stand out from the background

**Scribe:** a person who can read and write and whose job includes keeping written records. (Very few people in ancient Egypt could read or write.)

**Sphinx:** [sfinks] in ancient Egypt, most often a creature with a lion’s body and a human head that usually depicts the king, or pharaoh

**Uraeus:** [yoo-RAY-us] the image of a protective cobra, often shown on the forehead of ancient Egyptian kings or gods

Keep Exploring

After you’ve enjoyed exploring the exhibition, continue your journey through ancient Egypt! Visit the Egyptian Art galleries on the 1st floor to uncover works of art from the past. As you explore, search for pharaohs, scribes, sphinxes, and animals.

Then, head downstairs to Nolen Library in the Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center for Education on the ground floor to check out a selection of children’s books all about ancient Egypt.
Meet a Pharaoh

Look
Find this sculpture in the gallery. King Amenemhat [ah-MEN-em-haht] I is at the center of this image. He wears a short black wig with the royal uraeus, or cobra, at the front, and a false beard. Both show that he is the pharaoh, or king. He’s surrounded by gods and hieroglyphs.

Look for hieroglyphs that spell one of his names. A clue: find a cartouche—an oval-shaped frame used only for royal names—around a group of hieroglyphs.

Create
What would you want people to know about you in the future? Make up a name for yourself that expresses this idea and create a picture to go along with it.

King Amenemhat I with Gods, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, reign of Amenemhat I–Senwosret I (about 1981–1952 B.C.); from Egypt, Lisht, Pyramid Temple of Amenemhat I; painted limestone; Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.200.5)
Think Sphinx

With the body of a powerful lion and the head of a human, this sculpture of a sphinx shows the pharaoh, King Senwosret III. He wears a stiff, pleated, linen headdress, called a nemes, which is only worn by the king. It once had a uraeus, or cobra, at the top. Most Egyptian sphinx statues were guardians of temples, or sacred places. They were often shown lying on their bellies with legs firmly planted on the ground. Imagine this sphinx in action—ready to pounce!

Sphinx of King Senwosret III, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, reign of Senwosret III (about 1878–1840 B.C.); from Egypt, Thebes, probably Karnak temple; gneiss (a type of stone); Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1917 (17.9.2)

Take Note!

Look around this gallery to find other kings wearing the royal nemes headdress and other royal crowns. In the space below, use pictures or words to make notes about the kings’ heads. How are they the same or different?

Please use only pencil in the galleries. Thank you!

Look

Sphinx of King Senwosret III, Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, reign of Senwosret III (about 1878–1840 B.C.); from Egypt, Thebes, probably Karnak temple; gneiss (a type of stone); Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1917 (17.9.2)
A Day in the Life

Look
Peek inside this model granary (a storehouse for grain) to find ancient Egyptians busy at work. Every person has a job to do: look for some men carrying grain, and others working to measure and record it. There are four scribes taking notes—two hold wooden writing boards while the other two write on papyrus scrolls resting across their laps.

Fun Fact!
The grain inside this model is real and is about four thousand years old! Archaeologists found this object—and twenty-one others like it—in a tomb. Ancient Egyptians believed that the figures inside would supply food to those who were buried in the tomb, magically keeping them alive forever.

What would you need in the afterlife?

Model Granary from the Tomb of Meketre,
Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty, early reign of Amenemhat I (about 1981–1975 B.C.); from Egypt, Thebes, tomb of Meketre; plastered and painted wood, linen, grain; Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1920 (20.3.11)

Please use only pencil in the galleries. Thank you!
Creatures Big and Small

Find this hippo and his friends made of faience (fay-AHNS). They are decorated with pictures of lotus flowers and buds, showing their natural habitat, a marsh. Lotus flowers symbolized rebirth to the ancient Egyptians because they close in the evening, but open again in the morning.

Look closely: how are these hippos the same or different from each other?

Draw

Ancient Egyptians created small sculptures of animals and life along the Nile River. In the space below, draw one of the hippos or other animals you find in this room. Add details to the background to show the habitat where your animal lives.

Figure of a Hippopotamus, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, first half Senwosret I to Senwosret II (about 1961-1878 B.C.); from Egypt, Meir (Mir), Tomb of Senbi; faience; Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1917 (17.9.1)
The Tisch Galleries
2nd Floor, Gallery 899

Entrance

2nd Floor

Great Hall Balcony

King Amenemhat I
with Gods
08.200.5

Sphinx of
King Senwosret III
179.2

Model Granary from
the Tomb of Meketre
20.3.11

Figure of a
Hippopotamus
179.1

This way!