

Connecting Osiris

Topic

Religion of Ancient Egypt

Objective

Students will identify Ancient Egypt as the origin of the idea that moral worth was the key to eternal life.

Materials

- an overhead projector and transparency sheet
- the accompanying picture of Osiris (page 34)
- sealable (those with a zipper are preferable) plastic bags—one per student team

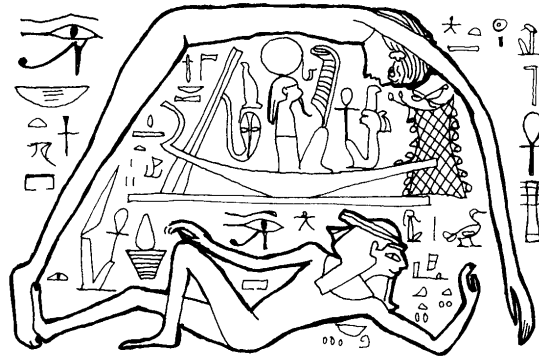
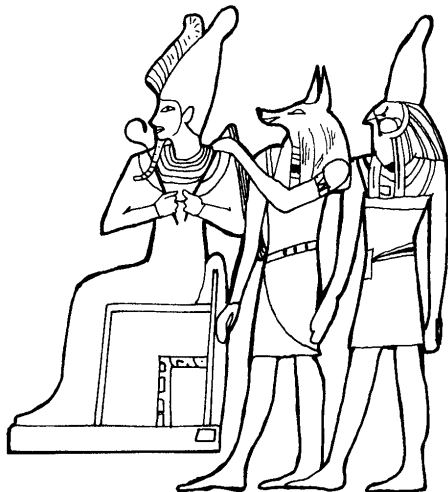
Preparation

1. Make an overhead transparency of Osiris.
2. Make copies of Osiris equal to the number of student teams within the class.
3. Cut each copy of Osiris into approximately 20–24 irregularly shaped pieces. (Each may be cut separately, or several copies may be cut together to expedite the process.)
4. Place pieces for each copy into separate plastic bags.

Procedure

1. Ask the students if they understand the concept of immortality or eternal life. Allow some discussion of their ideas of eternity.
2. Pass out the Osiris puzzle bags to each team.
3. Instruct students that they will unlock the “key” to the Ancient Egyptians’ view of immortality as they work the puzzle in front of them. Project the image of Osiris on the overhead.

Allow student teams time to complete their respective puzzles.



Connecting Osiris *(cont.)*

Procedure (cont.)

4. After groups have successfully completed their puzzles, share the importance of Osiris' legend with the students (See Background.) Have students compare the Egyptian version of eternity with that of the Ancient Mesopotamians. (See "Akbar's Dilemma," page 17.) Which one would be more favorable? (The Egyptians had a much more positive view of eternity than the Mesopotamians.)

Background

The idea that moral constitution, not material wealth, dictated eternal happiness started in Egypt about four thousand years ago. Its origin is in the legend of Osiris, one of the sons of Ra, who was killed and dismembered by his evil brother, Seth. Osiris's wife, Isis, gathered the various parts of Osiris' body, and he came back to life to serve as the god of the dead. He would determine the worthiness of any dead person by placing the person's heart on a balance offset with the weight of a feather. If the heart was light and good, it would balance, and the person would be welcomed into eternity. A heart malignant with wickedness would easily tip the scales, and that person would be thrown to a voracious monster to be devoured.

Follow-Up

Have students compile a list of values or virtues that they think are important. These lists may be developed and discussed in teams and/or whole class sessions.

The teacher may want to ask students to write a descriptive paper on what they perceive eternal life to be. They may cite religious beliefs or other references for their particular conceptions.



Connecting Osiris Picture

