



## ***The Mummy* (Terence Fisher, 1959)**

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### **History & English Language/Literature**

#### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Lesson Objective**

This lesson plan is designed to give pupils the opportunity to engage with an important British horror film and think reflexively on the issues it raises, in order to both develop key skills and provide a historical context to some of their studies. This lesson aims to develop pupils' critical thinking, comprehension, and communication, as well as analytical and debating skills, both independently and in groups.

In both subject settings, this lesson aims to fulfil the following learning criteria:

- Critical understanding: assessing and presenting information
- Analysing spoken and written language
- Effective communication
- Ability to form and respond to arguments

Within the context of a History classroom, the scene viewed here raises important issues on the development and use of knowledge, particularly in relation to ethical/moral debates on how such knowledge might be gained. The scene further raises debates pertaining to British colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, actions related to this colonialism, and British attitudes to earlier/'primitive' societies. The scene and activity challenges pupils to engage with these ideas and think about various views.

This activity within an English classroom provides pupils with the opportunity to contextualise their knowledge of Victorian literature and the theme of ancient Egypt in the popular imagination, as expressed through various media. The scene presents the historical context of some of the literary works they may come across in their studies, and



the activity gives them the opportunity to draw on their experience of language and literature, using their creative imagination through appropriate language.

**You will need...**

Internet access  
*The Mummy* DVD



## **Synopsis of the film until the beginning of the scene**

Egypt, 1895. The archaeologist Stephen Banning is digging for the tomb of the Princess Ananka, assisted by his brother-in-law Joseph and his son John (the latter convalescing in the camp tent having broken his leg). According to legend, Ananka was purported to have died on a pilgrimage to the site of her patron god, Karnak. Causing a tomb to be created near to where she died, the High Priest Kharis, who was in love with the princess, oversees her burial, only to return that night to attempt to revive her by reading from the Scroll of Life. However, he was discovered, and as punishment was buried alive within the tomb so that he may guard it and the princess for eternity.

As Stephen and Joseph are about to enter the tomb, they are stopped by an Egyptian man, Mehmet Bey, who warns them not to enter, lest their desecration bring retribution. Ignoring his warning, they enter the tomb, finding it intact, and confirm it is that of Ananka. As Joseph leaves the tomb to inform John, Stephen continues looking around and finds the Scroll of Life. Reading it, he unwittingly brings to life the mummy Kharis. On seeing the mummy, Stephen cries out and Mehmet orders the mummy back to his place, taking the Scroll of Life before running away. Joseph finds Stephen out of his mind and unable to speak, and the latter remains in this state for many years.

England, 1898. John visits his father in the mental home he has been residing in since his encounter with the mummy, where the doctor tells him that Stephen has started speaking. Stephen tells John of the mummy, warning him that it is seeking to kill those who disturbed the tomb. John tells his father that this is a figment of his imagination. Meanwhile, a container of Egyptian 'relics' is being transported by two locals to a nearby house taken by an Egyptian man. On hearing Stephen's cries from the asylum, the locals gee the horses, causing the container to fall into a swamp. The next evening, Mehmet Bey, the Egyptian man to whom the box belonged, goes to the swamp and brings Kharis back to life by reading from the Scroll. He orders the mummy to kill the three men for disturbing the tomb, beginning with Stephen. Some days later, Joseph is also killed, and John suspects that this is the action of the mummy his father warned him about, meaning that he is



to be killed next. He tells the Inspector Mulrooney, and as the latter gathers evidence from the locals, the mummy attempts to kill John, but is stopped by John's wife Isobel, who Kharis mistakes for Ananka, owing to a striking resemblance between the two. The mummy returns to Mehmet Bey, who believes that John is dead. John is later informed by the Inspector that an Egyptian man has taken a house nearby, but warns him not to visit and to leave the police to investigate.



## Activities

Watch the scene beginning with Mehmet Bey (Akir) praying to Karnak and ordering Kharis into his sarcophagus in preparation for their return to Egypt (approximately 1 hour 5 minutes 10 seconds into the film), to when John Banning leaves the house and Mehmet calls Kharis to complete their task (approximately 1 hour 14 minutes 55 seconds into the film).

Choose to be one of the three characters in the scene: Mehmet Bey, Kharis the mummy or John Banning (alternatively, the teacher might select which pupils are which characters). Make notes on the thoughts and feelings of your selected character, reflecting on your conflicts, motivations and the situation you are in, and thinking about the context of the scene and the period in which the film is set. Get into groups according to which character you are in to discuss what you have made notes on. Then each group can take it in turns to put forward their views, and debating on the issues raised in the scene. You might want to think about:

- Kharis's emotional conflicts and his task and situation, particularly his relationship with Mehmet
- Mehmet Bey's reasons for his actions in light of what he says about contemporary archaeologists' activities (and how this might relate to colonial politics and moral/ethical debates on the disturbance of the dead)
- John Banning's search for knowledge about the past and how Victorian people view such societies

## Extras

## Other Ideas

- Within the context of an English classroom, you might want to get pupils to write an internal monologue in the guise of their selected character (instead of, or in addition to, the debating activity). This can give pupils the opportunity to creatively reflect on and compose thoughts and feelings of the character, the situation they are in, and other characters with which they are engaging. This might be a monologue written in prose or, for an additional challenge, poetry.

## Read

- *Anthony and Cleopatra* (William Shakespeare, c.1603-4/1606-7)
- *Ozymandias* (Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1818)
- *The Mummy!* (Jane Webb, 1827)
- *Some Words with a Mummy* (Edgar Allan Poe, 1845)
- *The Ring of Thoth* (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1890)
- *Lot No. 249* (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1892)
- *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (Bram Stoker, 1903)

## Watch

- *The Mummy* (Karl Freund, 1932)
- *The Mummy's Hand* (Christy Cabanne, 1940)
- *The Mummy's Tomb* (Harold Young, 1942)
- *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (Seth Holt, 1971)
- *The Mummy* (Stephen Sommers, 1999)