

Explorer's Notebook

*A Multisensory Experience Inspired by an
Ancient Egyptian Spirit Door*

Hello, explorers!

Today, you are exploring a spirit door from a large tomb built by ancient Egyptians. In ancient Egypt, spirit doors were places where the “ka” or soul of the tomb owner could pass through, connecting the world of the dead with the world of the living. The word “door” makes it sound like it should be able to open, but most spirit doors from Ancient Egypt are made of thick stone and do not open.

Ancient Egyptians left food and drink in front of these doors so the souls of the tomb owners could get food and drink to be well fed in the afterlife.

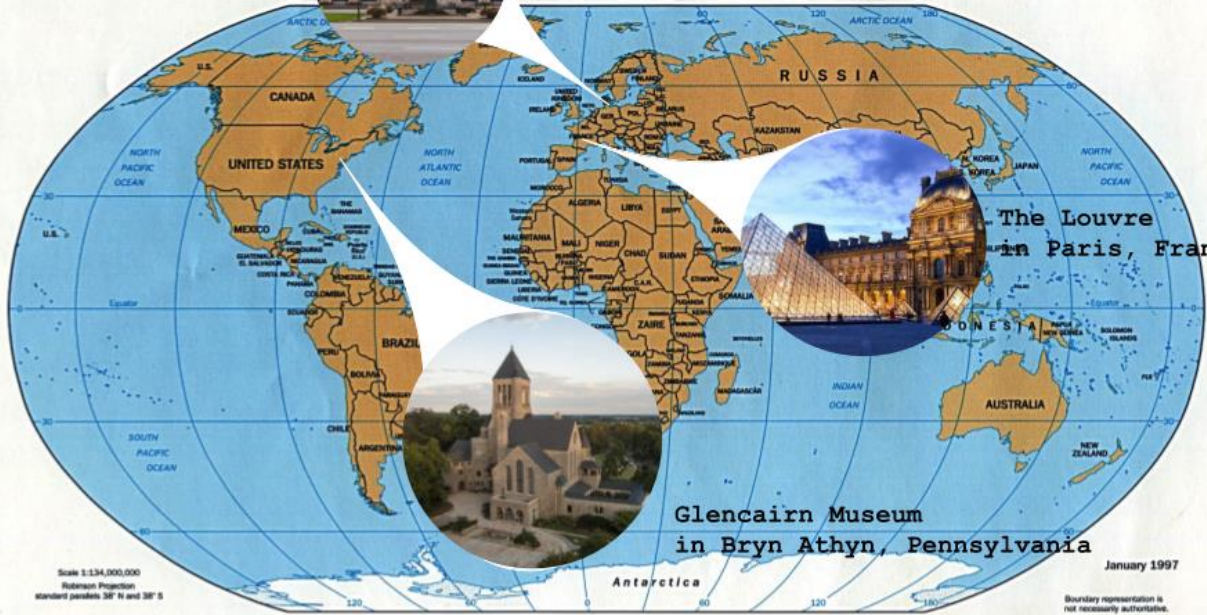
The picture above shows just one portion of three stone carvings from the tomb’s walls.

The other two pieces are in museums in Europe.



False Door of Tepem'ankh, Limestone, Giza, Western Cemetery, Tomb D. 20, Old Kingdom, 5th Dynasty

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek
in Copenhagen, Denmark



The Louvre
in Paris, France

Glencairn Museum
in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

January 1997

Boundary representation is
not necessarily authoritative.

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Have you ever traveled somewhere far from your home?

Have a good adventure!

Exploration 1:

Carving Your Name

The writing system that the ancient Egyptians used looks very different from the one used in English today. They used small pictures called hieroglyphs. They did have paper called papyrus that they could write on, but you can see on the spirit door that these hieroglyphs are carved into stone. It would be very hard to carve your name into stone, so you can use something else instead!

You will need:

- A styrofoam plate, styrofoam packing material, OR clay (see additional activity for recipe)
- A dull pencil
- The hieroglyph chart (provided)

Directions:

1. If you choose to use clay, roll it out in front of you so that it is smooth and flat, but not too thin. If you are using a styrofoam plate, you can skip this step!
2. Using the hieroglyph chart on the next page, spell out your name. You might want to practice on a piece of paper a few times -- these hieroglyphs can be tricky!
3. You might notice that there are two hieroglyph options for some of the letters.

There are also many, many more hieroglyphs than you see on the chart! You can choose whichever hieroglyph you like best if more than one is shown.

4. Once you've practiced, use the dull pencil to carve your name onto the plate or the clay. Be careful not to poke all the way through!
5. You can decorate the plate or clay if you would like and then put it on display!

Hieroglyph Chart

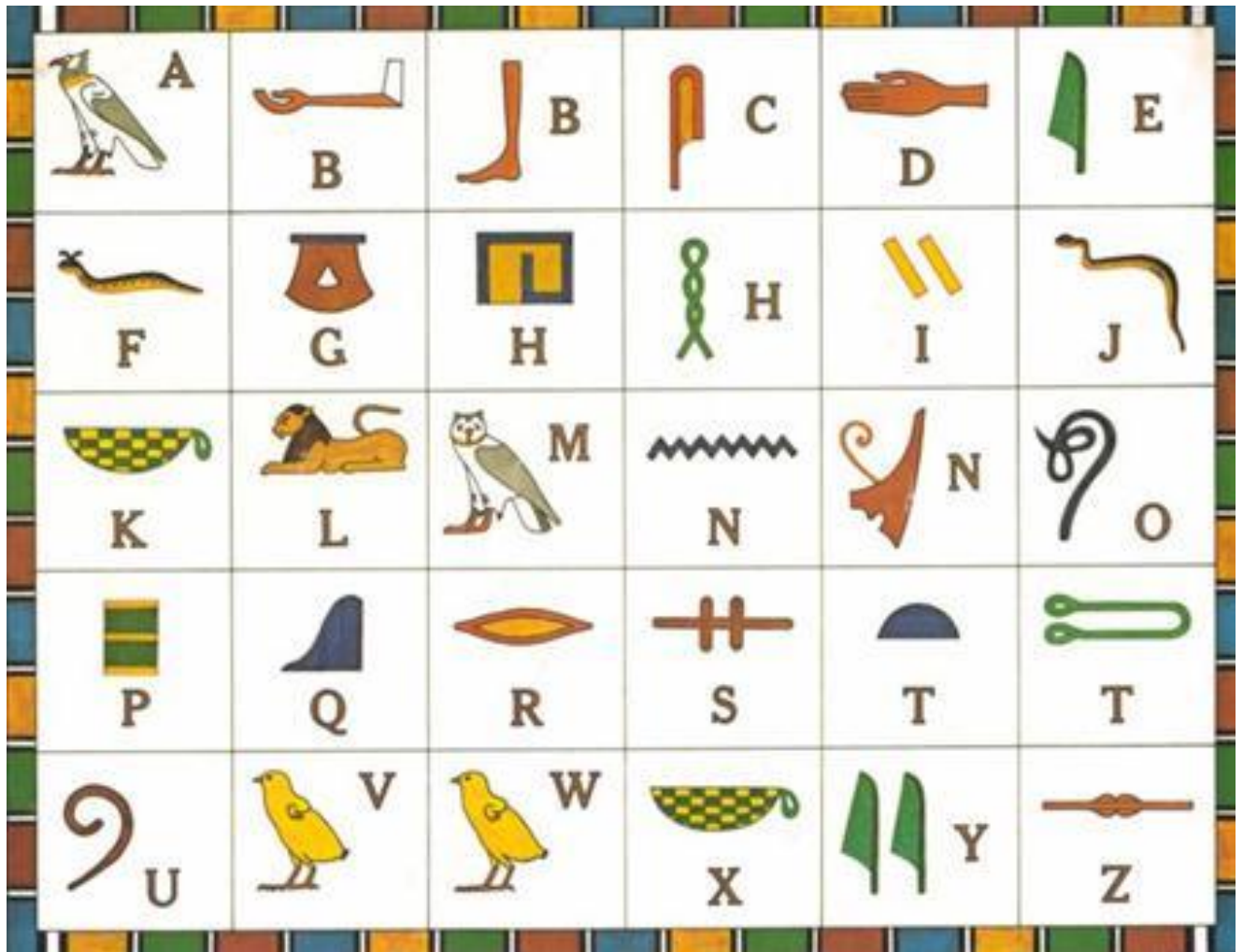
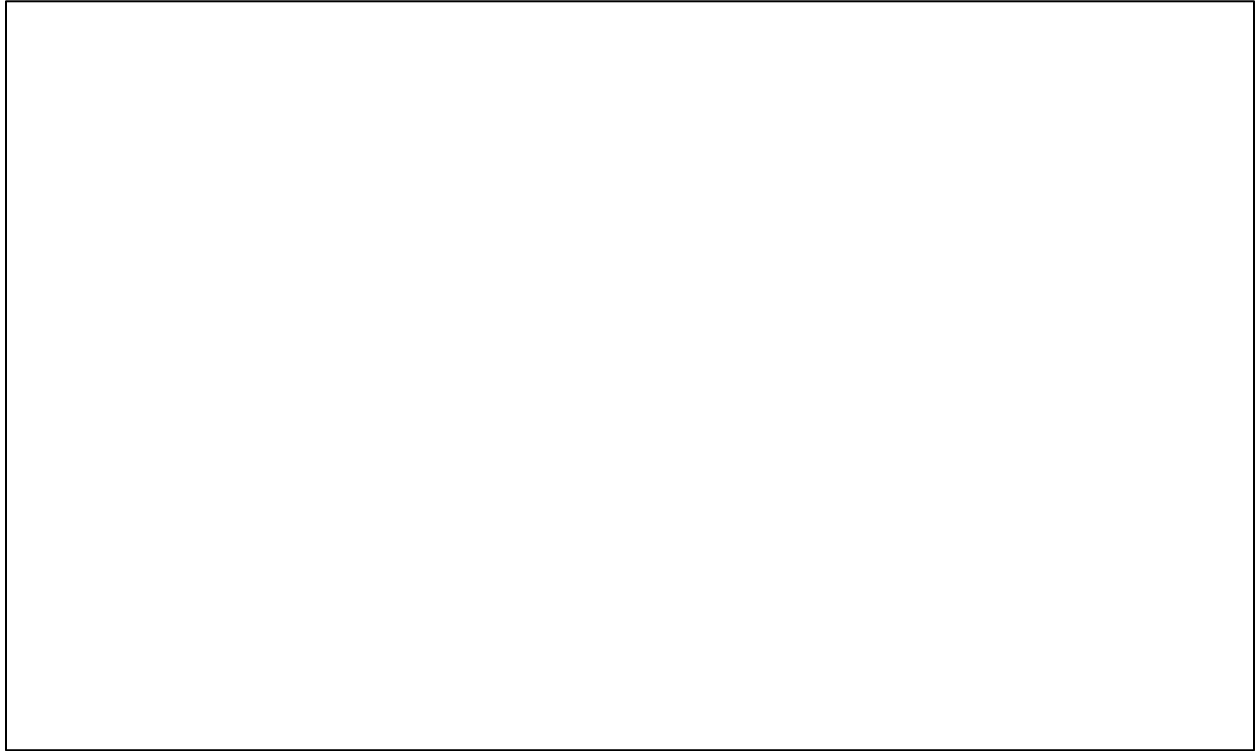


Image via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hieroglyph_picture_write_alphabet.jpg

If you want to write your name in hieroglyphs digitally, you can click [this link](#).

Can you read your carved name by feeling it with your fingertips instead of looking at it? What does your name feel like? Draw it here.



What other ways can you think of to read your carving besides seeing and feeling?

Additional Activity: Making Clay

If you would like to, you can make your own clay to carve your name into. You can add food coloring to this recipe to make fun colors!

You will need:

- A grownup to help you with the hot water
- 2 cups of flour
- 1 cup of salt
- 1 cup of hot water
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil (optional, makes the clay smoother)

Directions:

1. Stir the flour and salt together in a large bowl.
2. Add the water (and oil if using) and stir thoroughly.
3. Wait until the mixture is comfortable to the touch and then knead it until it is smooth and not sticky. This step can take a little while, so be patient!

Exploration 2: Making Maamoul

Maamoul is a sweet pastry or cookie filled with walnuts, dates, and sometimes figs. Walnuts, dates, and figs were eaten in ancient Egypt, and sometimes they are even found in tombs, as it was believed that the soul of the tomb owner would eat them. Today, in Egypt and around the world, many people make and eat maamoul to celebrate on holidays like Eid-al-Fitr, which is an Islamic holiday, Purim, which is a Jewish holiday, and Easter, which is a Christian holiday.

What foods do you eat on holidays or important days in your life?

Maamoul Recipe

There are many traditional maamoul recipes that are special to different families and cultures. This recipe offers you just one way to explore making maamoul easily at home.

You will need:

- A grownup to help you with using the oven.

For the pastry:

- 4 cups of flour
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 tablespoons of orange flower water (orange juice with a little bit of orange zest can be substituted)
- 3 tablespoons of chopped walnuts
- 2 tablespoons of milk

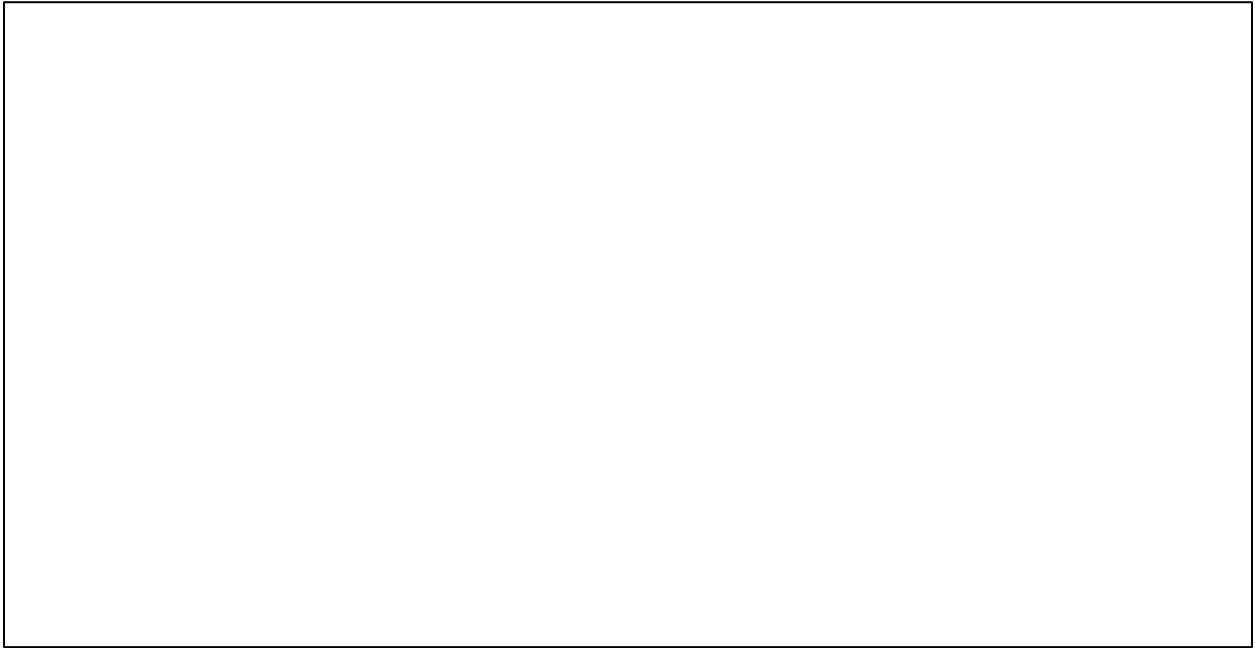
For the filling:

- 2 cups of walnuts
- 1 cup of chopped figs
- 2 tablespoons of orange flower water (orange juice with a little bit of orange zest can be substituted)
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons of powdered sugar

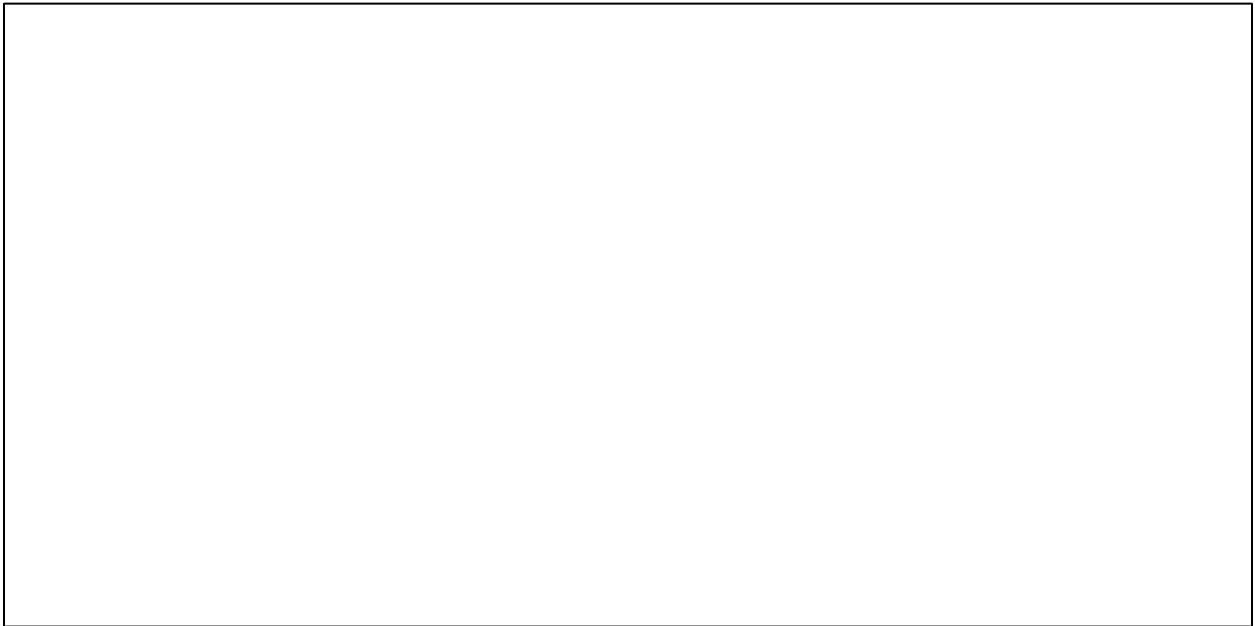
Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Rub the butter and flour together until you have fine crumbs. Add the orange flower water and milk and knead into a pliable dough. Set aside.
3. Soften the figs with warm water if they are dried. Mix the walnuts and figs to form a fairly fine paste. Add the orange flower water, cinnamon, and powdered sugar and mix well.
4. Divide the dough into golf ball sized lumps and flatten into a circle. Drop a tablespoon of the filling into the middle of each circle of dough. Press the edges of the dough together, encasing the filling.
5. Bake the maamoul for 20 minutes or until golden brown on a parchment paper covered or greased tray.
6. Allow to cool well before serving and then enjoy topped with powdered sugar.

What did you smell as the maamoul was cooking? You can write about it or draw a picture here.



What does the maamoul taste like? Have you ever tasted something like it before? Write about or draw what it reminds you of here.



Exploration 3: The Music of Ancient Egypt



Sistrum
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The ancient Egyptians played music with instruments, some of which were similar to some instruments that still exist today. For instance, they had flutes and drums, some of which have survived in tombs. In Egypt today there is a kind of flute called an arghul, and a kind of drum called a darbuka.

Today, we are going to make our own version of an ancient instrument called a sistrum. A sistrum might remind you of a rattle or a maraca. This instrument was a part of many cult rituals and the sistrum is closely connected to the worship of several Egyptian goddesses.

You will need:

- A grownup to help you
- A wire coat hanger
- Wire cutters
- Strong tape, like duct tape or electrical tape
- Additional wire or string
- Beads, buttons, or washers
- Two popsicle sticks

Directions:

1. Straighten the hook of the coat hanger, sandwich it between the two popsicle sticks, and tape it together securely to form the handle.
2. Bend the rest of the coat hanger into a “U” shape and use tape as necessary to hold the shape in place.
3. Attach two or three pieces of wire or string to one side of the “U.”
4. String the beads, buttons, or washers onto the strings or wires and secure the strings or wires on the other side of the “U.”

What sort of sound does the sistrum make when you shake it? Can you make it make different sounds?

Exploration 4: Cutting and Coloring

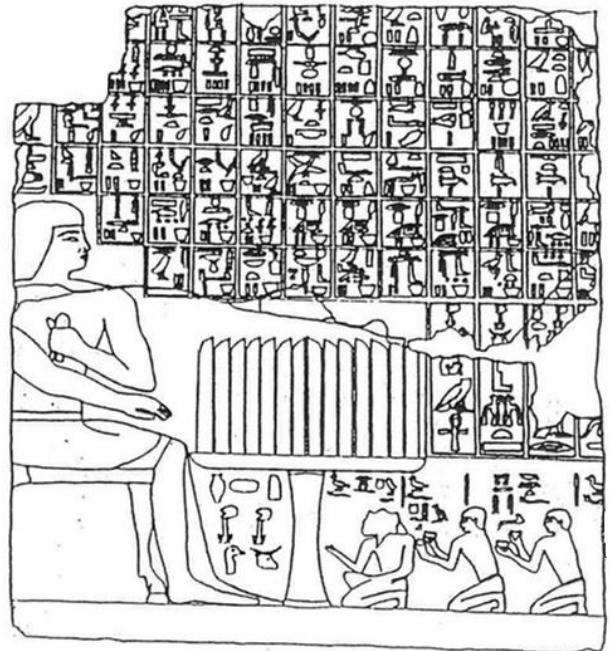
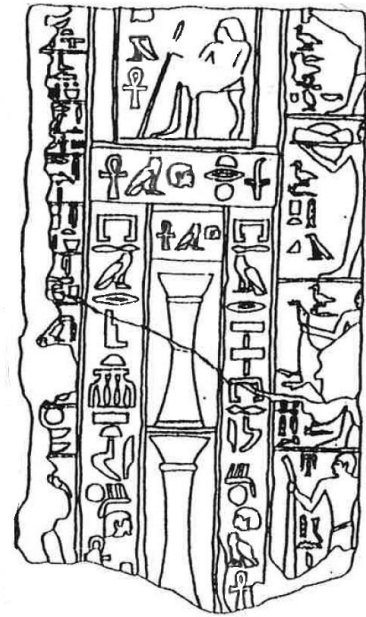
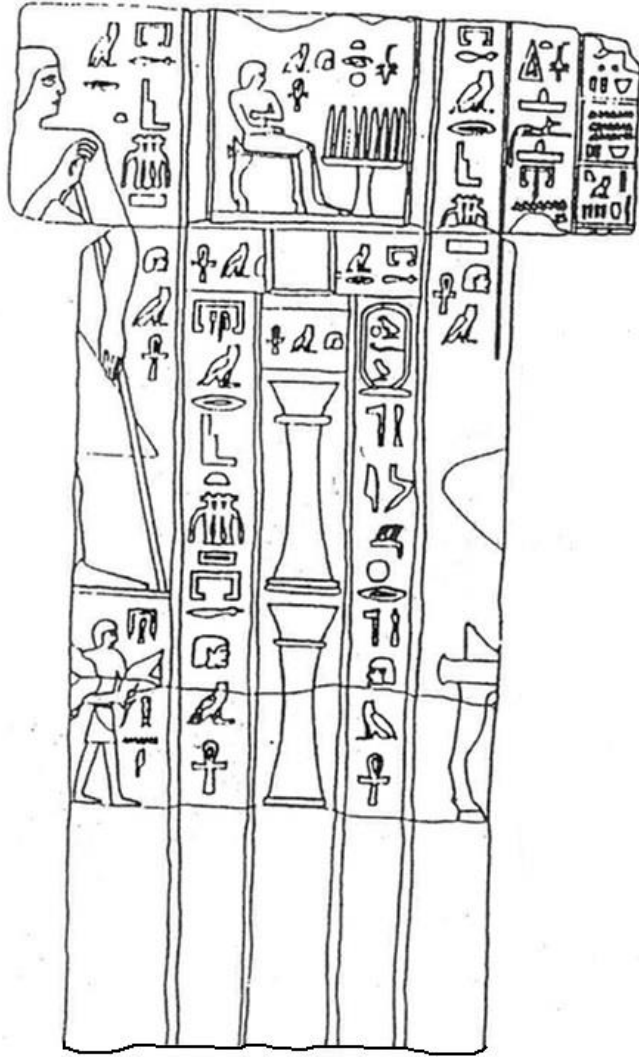


*False Door of Tepem'ankh, Limestone, Giza,
Western Cemetery, Tomb D. 20, Old Kingdom,
5th Dynasty*

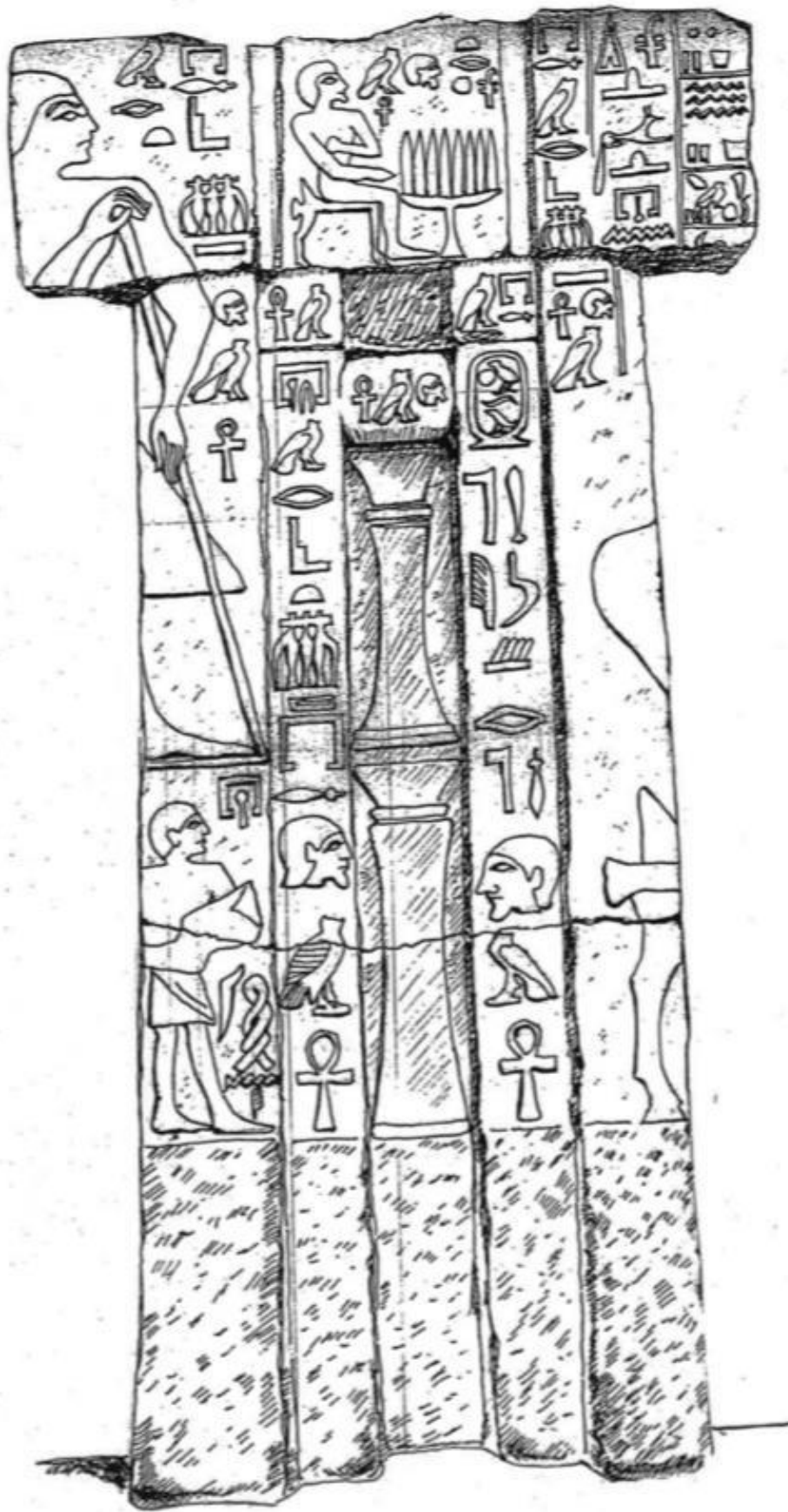
Even though this spirit door is all one color now, it was probably painted bright colors in the past.

What colors do you think this spirit door might have been?

On the next page, you can color the spirit door however you would like. Then, you can cut out the shapes and try to see how they fit together thousands of years ago. To see if you were right, check out [this picture!](#)



The next page has a larger image of the part of the door in
Glencairn's collection for you to color.



Sources

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Credits

Developed by Fiona Dwyer for Glencairn Museum

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