Garnet

1. Garnet

What Is It? What Does It Look Like?

There are many kinds of garnet - each given a different name depending on the impurities and the resulting colour. The Egyptians probably used pyrope or almandine - a deep red, almost black colour, caused by the presence of iron.

Where Does It Come From?

The source of our sample is Karelia, in the former USSR. The sample is worth about $100. The most abundant sources of pyrope garnet are in Arizona (USA), South Africa, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Myanmar, Scotland, Switzerland, and Tanzania. Almandine garnet occurs around the globe.

How Does It Form?

Pyrope is found in volcanic rock, and may indicate the presence of diamonds. Almandine is found in metamorphic rocks.

Interesting Facts and Uses

Garnet was mainly used by the Egyptians as beads in jewellery.

Garnet is the birthstone for January.

Historically, garnet was thought to cure melancholy and to warm the heart.

Slices of garnet have been used in windows in churches and temples. Legend has it that Noah suspended garnet in the ark to disperse light.

The word garnet may come from the Latin *pomum granatum*, meaning the fruit pomegranate, since the colours are similar.

Garnets are used as an abrasive in sandpapers. Synthetic garnets are used in lasers.

Where Is It In the Galleries?

Samples of garnet can be found in jewellery artifacts in the Egyptian Gallery.
Garnet
Royal Ontario Museum
Department of Museum Volunteers
Gallery Interpreter Program

Earth Sciences Specimens
Used in the Earth Sciences and Other Galleries

Questions and Answers

1. Garnet
   a. Is garnet a rock or a mineral? A mineral - valued as a gemstone.
   c. What month were you born in? Garnet is the birthstone for January.
   d. What colour is a pomegranate? The word garnet comes from the Latin *pomum granatum*. A similar, deep red colour is found in the fruit around the seeds.
Egyptian Jewellery

1. Is the Jewellery Displayed in its Original Condition?

No - the Jewellery displayed in the case on the western wall of the Gallery is considered to be a "dealer’s confection" - the individual elements were NOT strung together in antiquity - the assembly is modern - but the elements are all genuine - they are 'found' elements. Only rarely has jewellery been found in its original condition.

2. Jewellery in Ancient Egypt

Both Egyptian men and women adorned themselves with jewellery made from a variety of semi-precious stones and precious metals (gold, silver, and copper). Semi-precious stones included lapis lazuli, turquoise, emerald (not the quality of our modern emeralds), garnet, carnelian, red jasper, amethyst, rock crystal, and glass. Glass was expensive, although perhaps not as expensive as true semi-precious stones. Examples of these semi-precious stones in jewellery can be seen in the Jewellery case in the gallery.

Note that emerald was mined rather late in Egyptian history. Egyptian emerald mines were near the Red Sea, east of Aswan. Greek miners worked these mines at the time of Alexander the Great, and Cleopatra had these mines worked for emeralds in the Ptolemaic Period. Egyptian - emerald was milky and opaque, and would not be considered valuable today. The Egyptians were frugal - many of their emerald beads have been found to be green feldspar, olivine, and possibly, malachite. True gems like diamond, ruby and sapphire were not known to the Egyptians.

Faience was used to make great quantities of inexpensive jewellery in many colours - again, the lucky blue and green colours were most popular. One could say that faience jewellery was amongst the first examples of costume jewellery - it looked more expensive than it was!!

Much Egyptian jewellery was amuletic in origin - designed to provide protection from both tangible (wild creatures) and intangible (evil spirits) harm. For example, the 'sacred eye' or 'udjat' eye connected with the god Horus was a favourite symbol.

Since most clothing was white linen, Egyptians liked their jewellery to be brightly coloured, so the semi-precious stones mentioned above were popular. These were commonly imitated - from the New Kingdom on, carnelian and red jasper in red glass; lapis lazuli and turquoise in blue glass. Earlier, pale green amazonite was imitated in faience.

The colours were significant - carnelian, garnet, turquoise and lapis lazuli were considered to have protective qualities.
Orange/red had a schizophrenic significance. Red was the colour of blood with connotations of energy, power, and life itself. Red is the colour of the desert and the colour of the desert god Seth. Seth was the brother of Isis and Osiris and the murderer of Osiris. As his colour, red signified disorder, storms, and aridity. Seth is often portrayed as a red-head.

Dark blue (lapis lazuli) was the colour of the all-embracing night sky. The Egyptians envisioned the sky as a female deity. Nut, who created the gods and humans from her union with the earth a male deity called Geb. Lapis lazuli had to be imported.

Turquoise was not differentiated from green. It was the colour of new vegetation, growing crops, fertility and resurrection.

Among the most common types of necklaces, the characteristic deep, broad, decorative collar, worn by both sexes, was introduced early. These brightly hued bands were made of embroidered and beaded materials and set around the neck and shoulders either on bare skin or on top of a white cape or gown. The weight of these heavy collars was supported at the back by a counterpoise called a mankhet.

Broad collar necklaces were very popular throughout Egyptian history, and are seen in artwork. There is a good example on display. Some were worn in life - others were made solely to go into the tomb. These necklaces could be heavy - ones worn in real life required a counterpoise (a counterweight).

Head ornament took the form of diadems or filets, based on bands of live flowers, but also executed in metal and semi-precious stones. Earrings did not appear until the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, and could be quite elaborate. Limb ornaments consisted of armlets, bracelets, and anklets. Finger rings were also worn - the most usual being a signet ring formed of a button seal or scarab, although other amuletic types were popular.

Jewellers were organized in a strict hierarchy, ranging from goldsmiths at the top to bead makers at the bottom. Goldsmiths were a wealthy class of craftsmen, making jewellery for civilian, royal and religious clients.

Jewellery is often found in tombs - but rarely intact. Thus, many necklaces, such as those shown in the Jewellery case in the Egyptian Gallery have been restrung. The order of the beads may be questionable, and dealers and curators must guess.

Even animals were adorned with jewellery - cats with earrings for example.

3. What is Faience?

Faience was developed by the Egyptians to make pottery shapes. It was made by making a paste of ground quartz (i.e. sand) with water and an adhesive; moulding or hand-shaping the paste into a form; glazing the shape, and firing the shape in a kiln. Coloured faience could be achieved by adding colourant to the original mixture. The colourant would migrate to the surface upon firing to form a glaze. Alternately, pigment solution could be painted onto the fired core before firing to produce a colourful glaze. While there were many colours for glaze, the favourite lucky colours were blue, imitating lapis lazuli, and green, imitating turquoise.
Among the shapes made were small animal figures, human figures, jewellery beads amulets, and divine figures, including shawabtis for inclusion in tombs. Hippopotamus figures were very popular, as were scarabs. Faience tiles were made for use as wall decorations in houses and palaces. Do not confuse this with French faience, a form of tin-glazed earthenware.

The Egyptians also used quartz in making glass and glazes, and as an abrasive to smooth pottery. Quartz (rock crystal) tools were used in the ‘Opening of the Mouth’ ritual in the mummification process.

Information about lapis lazuli, turquoise, garnet, carnelian, malachite, amethyst, quartz, and rock crystal is available in separate Information Sheets.

4. Methods of Making Jewellery

Joining Metals

Solder was used to join two pieces of metal using heat. The join is made by an alloy with a melting temperature that is lower than that of the metal to be joined.

Forms

The circlet was inspired by strands of flowers and herbs that were placed on the brow to keep hair in place. Starting in the Old Kingdom, these were copied in gold and semi-precious stones. They developed into the crowns worn by kings and queens.

The diadem began as a linen band tied around the brow with lotus flowers tucked in, and tied at the back with streamers.

Faience

During Roman times, faience beads were distributed widely from Britain to Afghanistan. Cylinder beads were produced by shaping the piece around a straw, twig or even a thread which would burn away during firing, or on a wire that contract upon cooling.

Glass

Beads were wound or moulded. From 1400-1200 BC on, glass almost entirely superseded coloured stones in jewellery.

5. Egyptian Symbols

Jewellery and amulets were used in funerary customs. At every stage of the wrapping of a mummy, funerary jewellery and amulets were placed on the body, within the bandages at specified positions.

Jewellery intended solely for the use of the dead was flimsy, and would suffer no damage from the immobile mummy.

The wearing of funerary jewellery conferred special protection upon the mummy.

Embalming or mummification became more democratized from the time of the Middle Kingdom onwards. Previously, the right to be mummified and the prospects of the afterlife were restricted to royalty and nobility. However, by the Middle Kingdom, the opportunity was open to all if you could afford it.

Funerary texts were solely to aid the king in reaching the afterlife. They were inscribed inside the pyramids. They were copied by commoners on the inside of their coffins.
Often, one could find several hundreds of pieces of funerary jewellery and amulets on a single body.

A. Osiris

Osiris was the good king who was treacherously murdered by his brother Seth (also called Typhon). He was subsequently avenged by his son, Horus, who had been raised in secret seclusion by his mother, Isis.

Osiris was a great benefactor of mankind, who brought people the knowledge of agriculture and civilization. When killed by Seth, he became the ruler of the underworld. He was, thus, a great symbol of the creative forces of nature and the imperishability of life. He is usually shown as a mummified king, and according to tradition, wears the double atef crown, given to him by his father, the god Geb. He holds the age old symbols of priestly kingship:

- The Crook and Flail in his hands, showing dominion and power.
- The Ankh which is thought to represent the tie straps of sandals, or a mirror in a casing, and symbolized connected ideas for ‘life, living, alive’. The ankh does not appear very often as a funerary amulet. It is a looped cross.

B. Djed Column

The djed column was a symbol of stability, and found on almost every mummy – both as an image on the coffin, and carved as amulets in the linen wrappings. It could be made from various materials - precious metals, stone, wood, faience, or glass.

It is a pillar or column with four bars across it.

It may symbolize raising a column with ropes, or may symbolize the backbone of either of the gods Seker (or Sokar, a Memphis god of the dead), or Ptah (a later Memphis god). It also became associated with Osiris, in representing his spine, and his victory over his nemesis Seth.

Placing the djed column on a mummy granted the deceased stability. It should bring about the resurrection of the dead, allowing his/her life to be eternal, and his/her fertility to be undiminished.

C. Tit

The tit was an amulet in red jasper, the colour of the blood of the goddess Isis. It represented the knotted girdle of the goddess.

If placed at the throat of the deceased, the power of Isis would be the ‘magical protection of his limbs’.

D. Wadi

The wadi was a papyrus-shaped amulet, usually made of green feldspar. The papyrus plant was green, full of sap, and the promise of new life.

The placing of the wadi on the mummy would grant eternal youth.
E. Scarab

The scarab became the MOST important funerary amulet.

Why?

When making a mummy, the Egyptians preserved all body organs, EXCEPT the brain. They thought the brain was useless (many of us still know people today about whom we could say the same). Instead, they thought that the heart was the seat of intelligence and all emotions. Thus, it was important to have your heart for use in the afterlife. There were no less than four spells in the Book of the Dead concerned with preventing its removal. Without it, it would be difficult to enter the afterlife. Even with it, there were still obstacles to be overcome. Texts from the earliest times show that not even the Pharaoh expected to enter the afterlife unopposed. For ordinary mortals, it would be difficult.

In the Old Kingdom, only Pharaoh and nobility could be reasonably assured of an afterlife - living one’s life according to a strict moral guide was considered sufficient to securing eternal bliss.

However, during the First Intermediate Period, there was a breakdown in society, which led to tomb robbery and desecration of cemeteries. It shattered these beliefs.

To deter such wrongdoing, and to encourage the idea that judgement would be passed on the dead for actions they committed in this life...

Initially, an anonymous Great God passed judgement.

Once Osiris became the god of the dead during the Middle Kingdom, it was natural that the judgement should take place before him.

To be deemed worthy to enter the ‘field of reeds’, the heart was weighed against the Feather of Truth (Maat). This Weighing of the Heart ceremony was supervised by the god Thoth, in his aspect of an Ibis-headed god. If the heart was lighter than or the same weight as the Feather, the deceased was assured a place in the afterlife, as long as the heart did not also admit to any sins. This confession was a negative confession. In modern times, we are familiar with a positive confession, as in “I did this or that”. For the Egyptians, it was a negative confession - “I never cheated anyone - I never hated my parents”. It must have been a very long confession to confess to all the things you NEVER did. The heart could easily make a mistake and confess to something wicked if not protected from doing so.

If the heart failed, it was devoured by the monster Anmit - part lion, part hippo - always lurking nearby waiting for any heart found unworthy.

No matter how wicked you may have been in this life, you were assured of an afterlife if you had a heart scarab inscribed with the proper spell which would prevent the heart from admitting to any sins during the Weighing of the Heart.

The heart scarab was placed over the heart.

By the New Kingdom, the heart scarab could be placed anywhere near the heart.

Scarabs were made from many materials, although a glazed steatite was common.
The scarab became the symbol for re-birth.

**F. Udjat Eye - the Eye of Horus**

The udjat eye was only slightly less important than the scarab. Initially, Horus was an early creation god whose right eye was the sun, and whose left eye was the moon. Horus struggled endlessly with his brother Seth. During one such struggle, Horus' left eye was plucked out. It was healed and restored to Horus by the god Thoth. Udjat means ‘that which is whole or sound’.

Later, when Osiris rose to prominence, his son, also called Horus, attained greater importance over Seth. The udjat came to be regarded as the Eye of Horus, son of Osiris.

Horus offered his healed eye to his dead father, and so powerful a charm it was, that it brought his father back to life.

Osiris is associated with the seed that dies, is planted, and grows again.

An udjat eye amulet had great protective powers - it was placed on the plate covering the embalmer’s chest incision. Many have been found on mummies. They were made from a variety of materials - metal, wood, glass, stone, bone, semi-precious stones, and faience.

When painted or carved on coffin lids, through these eyes, the mummy could look out at the world. They were essential on coffins - even poorer ones.

**G. Was**

The ‘was’ was a symbol of authority for male gods.
Royal Ontario Museum  
Department of Museum Volunteers  
Gallery Interpreters  

Egyptian Gallery  
Selection of Jewellery on Display  

See also the Information Sheet titled *Egyptian Jewellery.*

There is a case of jewellery displayed in the Gallery. It contains a variety of necklaces, earrings, rings, bracelets, and waistlets, including jewellery for cats!!

The case illustrates the array of materials used to make jewellery.

Here is a short list of some selected necklaces.

- Blue Faience Necklace with ‘Udjat’ Eyes of Horus, Late Period, 1085 BC - 324 AD.
- Amethyst and Gold Necklace, Middle Kingdom, 2040 - 1674 BC.
- Carnelian and Gold Necklace with central pendant heart, New Kingdom, 1567 - 1085 BC.
- Faience Necklace with central cat pendant, New Kingdom, 1567 - 1085 BC.
- Garnet Necklace with central gold pendant of Bastet, New Kingdom, 1567 - 1085 BC.
- Garnet and Silvered Glass bead Necklace, Roman Period, 30 BC - 324 AD.
- Faience beads with central carnelian bead Necklace, Late Period, 1085 BC - 324 AD.
- Gilded Glass, Garnet, and Gilded Copper Necklace, Roman Period, 30 BC - 324 AD.
- Broad Collar, Faience, Amarna, New Kingdom, circa 1370 BC.
- Beryl (Emerald) and Gold bead Necklace, Roman Period, 30 BC - 324 AD.
- Gold beads with Bulti Fish and Vases Necklace, New Kingdom, 1567 - 1085 BC.

  The bulti fish was a symbol of regeneration to the Egyptians. After the fish lays her eggs, the mother takes them in her mouth until they hatch from her mouth. The fish is colourful, and when representations were made of it, clay pebbles were often sealed inside (representing the eggs), and the fish could be used as a rattle.

- Beryl and Gold beads Necklace, Roman Period, 30 BC - 324 AD.
Mannequin of a Lady Dressing

1. What is It?

On the western wall of the Egyptian Gallery, there is a diorama containing a mannequin of a lady dressing for a banquet. The liberated Upper Class Egyptian woman of about 1400 BC would have prepared for a banquet using all the things that ‘have made her heart glad’.

Essentially, women enjoyed the same social and legal position as men. Women could own their property, and could dispose of it without the permission of a husband or father. Women could initiate divorce proceedings, give testimony in court, and exclude the husband and children from their will. Equality was greater than that of any later Western society until the mid-1800’s. Note, however, that with only rare exceptions, women could not be the pharaoh.

A widely-circulated precept advised men to be kind to their wives...

‘Fill her belly, clothe her back. Ointment is the prescription for her body. Make her heart glad as long as thou livest’.

This lady’s maids would have dressed her in a gown of fine linen.

She is putting on her makeup, including kohl eye-liner. Kohl offered some protection against the rampant eye infections of ancient Egypt.

An elaborate hair arrangement would have been done using braids from the basket on the floor. Wigs were worn by both men and women. As well as being ornamental, they provide protection from the sun. On this lady's wig, a reproduction circlet is seen. An original circlet might have been gold with faience beads.

This lady's wig is modern, courtesy of Mr. Robert Gage, and was made by Giovanna Calibretti, who also did the wigs for the Toronto production of The Phantom of the Opera.

The lady might have placed a perfumed cone of fat on top of her head, tied under her chin with a string, to surround herself in perfume.
2. Objects on the Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Accession #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trinket Box</td>
<td>931.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necklace of carnelian and gold fly beads - flies were a symbol of persistency and bravery</td>
<td>920.81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnelian necklace with central pendant</td>
<td>910.48.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue faience necklace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnelian earrings</td>
<td>991.x.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faience ring</td>
<td>910.47.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faience and shell necklace</td>
<td>910.48.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen handkerchief</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cosmetic dish</td>
<td>933.7.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-liner pot and lid</td>
<td>909.80.163</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye-liner applicator</td>
<td>909.80.522</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye-liner pot</td>
<td>948.34.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated pot imported from Mycenae</td>
<td>910.85.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The furniture, basket, clothing, and wig are reproductions closely based on ancient originals.

3. More About Hair

Heavy wigs or a padding of false hair, worn by both men and women, are known from an early period. They served not only as an adornment but also to protect the wearer's head from the burning rays of the sun, thus in a way acting as hats. Semicircular kerchiefs, tied by the corners at the nape of the neck under the hair, were sometimes worn to protect the wig on a dusty day. Wigs were dressed in many different ways, each characteristic of a given period; generally speaking, the hair became longer and the arrangement of curls and braids - set with beeswax - more complicated as time went on.

The earliest records indicate that the Egyptians grew hair on their chins. They frizzed, dyed, or hennaed this beard and sometimes plaited it with interwoven gold thread. Later, a metal false beard, or postiche, which was a sign of sovereignty, was worn by royalty. This was held in place by a ribbon tied over the head and attached to a gold chin strap, a fashion existing from about 3000 BC to 1580 BC. Eventually, all men still wanted beards to demonstrate their masculinity. A
fake beard would be worn, attached by strings hooked over the ears. Mummy coffins for men would generally have a hole in the top, for the attachment of a fake beard.

The Egyptians considered body hair to be unclean. The wealthy would be shaved regularly - tip to toe - men and women. A hirsute appearance was considered a sign of uncleanliness and personal neglect. The only exceptions to this were an occasional thin moustache or goatee type of beard on men. Thus, the razor had a long history in Egypt. In the absence of soap, unguent or oil was probably used to soften the skin and hairs of the area to be shaved. Tweezers were also used to remove unwanted hair.

However, hair was still considered to be fashionable. Thus, elaborate human hair wigs were worn. For day-to-day at home, a wig might not be worn all the time. For entertaining, or special occasions, a wig would be mandatory. A hairdresser would certainly be used if one could afford it; otherwise a friend would help.

4. More About Perfumed Cones of Fat

Both men and women may have achieved a perfumed smell by taking animal fat, into which was placed sweet-smelling flower petals, or drops of pleasant-smelling oils. The fat was shaped into a cone, and attached to the top of the head over a wig, secured with a string under the chin. As the fat melted in the heat, it ran down onto the wig and the shoulders, releasing what was thought to be a pleasant smell (one wonders!!). The wig could be cleaned easily enough to remove the fat. This method of perfuming was deduced originally from pictures painted on mummy cases. Recent research indicates that the depiction on mummy cases may have been used as symbol representing the use of perfume. The cone of fat may NOT have been used in real life. Research continues.

5. More About Makeup

Cosmetics were extensively applied by both sexes, and considerable knowledge of their use is available because of the Egyptian custom of burying comforts and luxuries with the dead. While cosmetics were an important part of dress, their application was often a matter of personal hygiene and health. Oils and creams were an essential protection from the sun and dry, sandy winds. Examples both of the cosmetics and of the means of making, applying, and keeping them may be seen in museums, especially in Cairo and London. The Egyptians applied rouge to their cheeks, red ointment to their lips, and henna to their nails and feet. The chief focus of makeup was the eye, where a green eye shadow (made from powdered malachite) and a black or gray eyeliner (kohl) was applied.

The Egyptians used mineral pigments for makeup, paints, and inks.

Pigments are not dissolvable. Finely ground powders are mixed with a liquid. The liquid could be an oil-based or water-based paint, ink, or cosmetic. The Egyptians probably mixed the powder with oil/water and gum resin on a palette. Mineral pigments are very durable - lasting thousands of years.

Pigment colours were prepared as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Pigment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red ochre - earthy hematite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Yellow ochre - iron oxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Malachite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Blue  Mix yellow with green; or lapis lazuli
Black  Kohl, Soot (Coptic era)
White  Gypsum or calcium carbonate

Hematite  See the separate Information Sheet.
Henna  See the separate Information Sheet.
Kohl  Egyptian kohl was a powder, used to line the eyes.

At different times, kohl was made from different components. In earlier times, it was made from ground malachite. Later, it was made from a combination of cerussite (lead carbonate - extremely rare - the Curators wonder where on Earth the Egyptians got it!) or galena (lead sulphide), mixed with stibnite (antimony sulphide). The lead content probably helped to prevent the bacterial infection of the eyes, a common problem in ancient Egypt. However, the lead would have been absorbed by the skin. It's documented that Romans died from lead poisoning as a result of using lead in cosmetics. Sometimes vanity doesn't pay!!

It was mixed with a liquid (oil or water), and applied using an applicator stick.

A modern use of antimony-lead alloy is for plates in car batteries, in bullets, and in coverings for cables.

Lapis Lazuli  See the separate Information Sheet.
Malachite  See the separate Information Sheet. Malachite was used as eye shadow, but throughout the Old Kingdom, was more popular than lead-based kohl as an eyeliner.

The green colour around the eyes symbolized the eye of Horus, a potent amulet.

Soot  Soot, the black residue left after burning wood and other materials, was used by the Egyptians as a black pigment for paints and inks. It was not used as a cosmetic throughout most of Egyptian history - instead, kohl was used. In the Coptic period, soot was used for eye-liner.
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Gallery Interpreter Program

Map of Ancient Egypt

Mediterranean Sea

Alexandria

Lower Egypt

Giza

Heliopolis

Cairo

Memphis

Saqqara

Lisht

Nile River

Hermopolis

Amarna

Upper Egypt

Badari

Abydos

Nagada

Deir el-Bahri

Thebes (Luxor)

Hieraconpolis

First Cataract

Aswan

Egypt
Chronology of Egyptian Cultural Periods

Predynastic Period 4000 to 3100 BC

- Egypt moved from the hunter and gatherer stage through the agricultural revolution to a unified nation.

Archaic Period 3100 to 2686 BC

- Egyptian belief grew that the pharaoh is a god who lives among men.
- Upper and Lower Egypt are unified and the first capital is founded at Memphis.
- Calendar and hieroglyphic writing are developed.
- Narmer Palette was made - see reproduction in the Gallery.

Old Kingdom 2686 to 2181 BC

- Strong central monarchy centred around Egypt's divine rulers provided stable political structure.
- Remarkable flowering of architecture and art occurred.
- At beginning of period pharaoh, Djoser built the Step Pyramid at Saqqara, the first great royal tomb of stone.
- In the 4th Dynasty, the Great Pyramid complex at Giza was erected.

First Intermediate Period 2181 to 2040 BC

- Climatic change resulted in inadequate Nile floods, which produced widespread famine, economic decline and social upheaval.
- Central government was weakened and Egypt was disunited.
- Pyramids and estates were ransacked.

Middle Kingdom 2040 to 1674 BC

- Mentuhotep II ushered in the Middle Kingdom by reuniting Egypt.
- Egyptian power expanded south into Nubia and east into the Sinai.
- Thebes became the new capital city under Mentuhotep II; later, the capital was moved back to the area of Memphis.
- Period of artistic and literary splendour.

Second Intermediate Period 1674 to 1567 BC

- Asiatic rulers, the Hyksos, gained control of Lower Egypt and Egyptian kings were forced to govern a diminished nation from Thebes.
New Kingdom 1567 to 1085 BC

- Hyksos were expelled and Egypt was reunited and ruled by a succession of warrior kings.
- Egyptian empire was expanded to its furthest reaches.
- Tribute from conquered nations provided great wealth, while contact with foreign cultures enriched the work of Egyptian artists.
- Religious revolution briefly occurred during the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaten (1379-1362 BC) and Queen Nefertiti, who instituted the worship of a single god, Aten.
- Elaborate tombs, such as that of King Tutankhamun (1334-1325 BC), were built in the Valley of the Kings.
- Hatshepsut's Punt Wall was created - see reproduction in the Gallery.
- Thurmose III wall painting was created - see reproduction in the Gallery.

Late Period 1085 BC to AD 324

- Egypt was continuously invaded by Libyans, Nubians, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians and Romans.
- Despite political upheaval, Egyptians continued to cling to ancient cultural values, religion, and artistic traditions.
- Victory Scarab of King Shebako was created - see the original in the Gallery.
- Bust of Cleopatra VII was created - see original in the Gallery.