

Chapter 1



Mysteries of Egypt, a large format Film

Preparation for Viewing the Film

Objectives

To spark interest in ancient Egypt, prepare students for viewing the film, and develop critical thinking.

Discussion and Research Projects

To introduce the film *Mysteries of Egypt*, start by discussing the word “mystery” and the methods used to solve mysteries, then move to a discussion focused on ancient Egypt.

1. What does the word “mystery” mean?

The dictionary gives several definitions:

- a hidden or secret thing, something beyond human knowledge or comprehension, an enigma;
- a truth known only by divine revelation;
- in ancient religions, certain rites to which only the initiated were admitted;
- a doctrine of faith involving difficulties that human reason is incapable of understanding.

2. In a murder mystery, who helps solve the case? How do they go about their work?
3. Which “detectives” search for clues about the unsolved mysteries of ancient cultures?

Multidisciplinary teams work on collecting data, analyzing their findings and drawing conclusions from them. As more information is brought to light, earlier conclusions or theories are often modified or discarded in favour of new ones.

The “detectives” who work on solving the mysteries of ancient Egypt are called Egyptologists. This is a general term that includes a large number of specialists such as:

anthropologists, historians, art historians, environmentalists, botanists, ecologists, geologists, zooarchaeologists (ancient animal remains), paleobotanists (ancient plant remains), physical anthropologists (ancient human remains), epigraphers (ancient writing systems), soil scientists, theologians, microbiologists (DNA analysis), architects, mathematicians, astronomers.

4. Why do you think the film is called *Mysteries of Egypt*? Can you describe some of the mysteries surrounding ancient Egypt?
5. What do you know about ancient Egypt? Where did the Egyptians live? How old is their civilization? What are some of their famous accomplishments? What do you know about the pharaohs?
6. The film shows views of many of the famous sites of ancient Egypt. If you were the filmmaker, what would you want to include in a film on this topic? Make a list of the sites you would choose and compare it with what you see in the film.
7. Many historical events are re-enacted in the film. Why do filmmakers use this technique? What type of research should be done in order to make these scenes historically accurate? Before shooting begins, what has to be done (research and writing a script, production of costumes and props, set design and fabrication, hiring actors and crew, securing shot locations, etc.)?
8. If you were the filmmaker, what historical events would you re-enact in a film on ancient Egypt? Make a list of these events and compare it with what is included in the film.
9. What do you know about IMAX® technology? How big are the camera, projector and screen?
10. Use **Activity Sheet 1** to get your students thinking about some of the mysteries that surround ancient Egypt.

Follow-up after Viewing the Film

Objectives

To reinforce what your students learned from the film, and to develop the ability to summarize and evaluate the content of the film.

Discussion and Research Projects

1. What did you like best about the film? How would you rate the film in terms of its educational and entertainment value?
2. Pretend you are a film critic. Write a review of the film, or present one orally. Outline the main theme and the storyline, and describe the special effects.
3. Before viewing the film, you made a list of the sites and historical events you would include in the film if you were a filmmaker. How closely does your list agree with the content of the film? Do you think the filmmakers made a good choice? Explain why.
4. Why did the filmmakers use black-and-white film for the re-enactment scenes of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb by Howard Carter in 1922?

5. The English girl in the film is visiting her grandfather, who takes her to some of Egypt's most important sites. What did she learn from her grandfather?
6. Ask your students if any of them have returned to their family's homeland to visit their grandparents. What did they learn about their country of origin from their grandparents?
7. Have your students discuss what they have learned from their grandparents about the history of their family and their country of origin.

FACT SHEET:
The large format Film *Mysteries of Egypt*

The splendours of the ancient Egyptian civilization have been a source of inspiration down through the ages. Since the Greek historian Herodotus first wrote about his travels through Egypt in the fifth century B.C., people have speculated about how the Egyptians built their massive monuments, and marvelled at the beauty of their art and architecture.

The Egyptian civilization originated over 5,000 years ago, and the country's historic sites are among the world's greatest tourist attractions. The seeds of civilization were sown in the fertile Nile Valley, surrounded by the endless desert, at the crossroads between East and West. Here, the first multinational state was born, one of the first writing systems using hieroglyphs was invented, and the concepts of kingship, religion and bureaucracy were developed.

Ancient Egypt's monumental achievements have now been captured on the giant IMAX screen. Through the magic of large-format cinematography, *Mysteries of Egypt* takes you on a breathtaking flight over the world's longest river, through the Valley of the Kings and into the famous tombs of the pharaohs.



The Great Sphinx at Giza
CMC S97 10293



Priests prepare Tutankhamun's mummy for burial. Re-enactment scene from the film *Mysteries of Egypt*.
CMC ECD98-016 #45



Omar Sharif and Kate Maberly in the Valley of the Kings. Re-enactment scene from the film *Mysteries of Egypt*.
Photo: Adham Mostafa (CMC S97 10659)

You will go back in time to relive important chapters in Egyptian history, to witness the building of pyramids and the drama of the tomb robbers. You will see how Tutankhamun's mummy was ceremoniously placed in his tomb and feel the excitement when Howard Carter first peered into the tomb. You will also learn about the mummy's curse!

In *Mysteries of Egypt*, the ancient Egyptian civilization is seen through the eyes of a young girl (British actress Kate Maberly) who visits her grandfather. Played by well-known Egyptian actor Omar Sharif, the grandfather takes her around the country to introduce her to the wonders and magic of the ancient Egyptian civilization. At first, she doesn't share her grandfather's enthusiasm, but she soon changes her mind. Like so many tourists who visit the pyramids, she is awestruck by the sheer magnitude of these architectural wonders. As she listens to her grandfather's stories, she is fascinated by the mummy's curse and begins to appreciate the incredible legacy of the land of the pharaohs.

Western civilizations trace their roots to the ancient world, the Greeks, the Romans and the Egyptians. *Mysteries of Egypt* explores the legacy of the Egyptians. Only the giant IMAX screen can truly capture the magnitude of this amazing civilization!

IMAX® Technology

Since the film is extremely large, it is not surprising that the IMAX camera is oversized and heavy, weighing 38 kg (84 lbs.). Lightweight portable cameras are used for special applications, but the regular camera is the workhorse of the film crew. Sturdy tripods, cranes, dolly tracks and pure muscle



IMAX camera filming a re-enactment of the building of pyramids
CMC ECD98-010 #76

are required to manoeuvre it into position. Special mounts on helicopters and small planes hold the camera steady for those exciting aerial shots audiences have come to expect in a large format film.

A frame of the film holds an image 10 times larger than that of a 35 mm film, so a cartridge is good for a mere three minutes of recording. The usual camera speed of 24 frames per second is sometimes increased to 48 or 96, which really limits the time a film cartridge can be used. For this reason, the IMAX camera is reloaded often during the filming of lengthy sequences.

The IMAX projector is the most powerful projector ever built and has the highest resolution. Its lamp is so bright that it would be possible to see it from the moon.

Both IMAX and IMAX dome-screen theatres use a “15 perf 70”^{*} format. The only difference between them lies in the size and shape of the screen. Films are projected onto a flat vertical screen that is approximately six to seven storeys high or onto a circular ceiling screen with a diameter as large as 24 metres (79 feet).

^{*} “15 perf 70” means that there are 15 perforations per picture frame on a 70 mm film.