

# Teacher's Guide to DIG: Egypt's Great Sphinx

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**Getting Ready:** Display the magazine cover. Have student volunteers read the questions about the Great Sphinx. Divide students into small groups and have each group decide on two or three additional questions they would like answered about the Great Sphinx. List the questions on the blackboard or bulletin board to help direct student reading and research.

**Ongoing project:** Have a group of students draw a Great Sphinx of Giza timeline extending from 26 BC to the present day. As students come across dates in the articles of the Sphinx, have them insert information about the Sphinx at that point in history and contemporary rulers on the time line. Students may also add drawings of the Sphinx and its surroundings for the different dates.

## Guardian on the Plateau (6-9)

Have students inspect the photographs in the article and discuss where the sphinx is placed and how it was built.

**Read for understanding:**

1. How does the description of the Sphinx show that it is a "security guard"? *It is posed as a crouching lion with the head of a man; the rearing cobra on the headdress was a "protector" of kings.*
2. What does the Sphinx seem to guard? *The three pyramids of Giza.*
3. How was the Sphinx made? *It was carved with simple tools such as chisels out of the limestone plateau and then sanded to smooth its surface.*
4. What are the two theories about who had the Sphinx built? *Some archeologists think that Khafre, the king who built the middle pyramid, had the Sphinx carved in 2250 BC; others suggest that Khafre's father Khufu had it built.*
5. Why do you think that a man/animal combination was used as a guardian? *(open-ended answer)*

**Art:** Draw and color the Sphinx as it looked originally, using the information from the article to place the Sphinx in its setting.

**Creative writing:** Imagine that you are a priest at the temple of the Sphinx. Write a prayer or poem about the Sphinx that uses the information on Egyptian religious beliefs at the end of the article.

## Who is the Sphinx? (10-11)

In a short essay, answer the title question, supporting your argument with details from the article and photographs.

Divide the students into pairs and have them trade papers; each should read both paragraphs and argue for his or her point of view. Then discuss, did anyone change opinions or ideas? Why?

## Shape Tells All (12-15)

Read for details

1. What different animals were represented in Egyptian sphinxes? (*lion, with and without mane; ram; falcon*)
2. What purposes did the sphinxes serve? (*entry guards to temples and pyramids; wall decorations; symbols of Egyptian power over enemies; representations of kings, queens, and gods*)
3. How is the Greek sphinx different from the Egyptian sphinx? (*Greek sphinx had the head of a woman, the body of a lioness, eagle wings, and a snake for a tail*)
4. How did the Romans use the Egyptian sphinxes? (*as garden and home decorations; as models for their art*)
5. According to the author, what is the sphinx's meaning today? (*as an eternal symbol of Egypt*)

Research project: Find examples of temple guardians from different cultures and discuss how they are the same and how they are different.

Art project: Imagine a sphinx to guard your secrets. Think carefully about what animal parts you would choose and why. Draw or model the sphinx and name it.

Time Hurts (16-20)

Drawing conclusions:

1. How did attitudes change toward the Sphinx during the New Kingdom? (*Pharaoh Amenhotep II treated the Sphinx as a guide, perhaps for good hunting grounds; Thutmose III saw the Sphinx as a prophet for his good fortune as a future king and imposed his own appearance on the Sphinx.*)
2. How did attitudes toward the Sphinx change again in the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty? (*The Sphinx was considered to be a specific god Horemakhet and thus was restored.*)
3. If Napoleon's soldiers didn't shoot off the Sphinx's nose, how was it lost? (*It may have been made of softer limestone and decayed through abrasion by the sand and wind; it may have been destroyed by other invaders or armies.*)
4. What would a present-day archeologist think of Richard Howard-Vyse's treatment of the Sphinx? (*They would disapprove because archeologists try to preserve artifacts discovered in their digs.*)
5. Why did Egypt invest in a 10-year restoration project for the Great Sphinx? (*to show pride in their national heritage; to attract tourism*)

Research project: Can you discover other national monuments which have been the focus of restoration attempts in order to preserve them? Can you discover some world monuments that have been destroyed by human activity in modern history?

It's a Woman! (21-23)

Art Appreciation:

Examine the five representations of female sphinxes carefully and read the text. Which representation do you like the best? Discuss why you think the artist chose that particular design for the sphinx in the context of Egypt's history and religion?

A Riddle Across the Sea (24-27)

Read for information:

1. What does the word "sphinx" mean and where did it come from? (*strangler, Greek*)
2. What role did the sphinx play in Greek legend? (*guardian, opponents for heroes*)
3. How did Prince Oedipus defeat the Sphinx in Greek legend? (*He answered her riddle.*)

4. How is the Greek Sphinx different from the Egyptian? (*It has the face of a woman, long wild hair, and wings.*)

#### Looking Ahead (28)

##### Organizing Information:

With the whole class, draw a 2-column table labeled Threat to the Sphinx and Conservation Method. Then list the threats and conservation methods together.

Discuss with students other information they have on conservation of national monuments such as Mount Rushmore, the Taj Mahal, the Bamiyan Buddhas, etc.

##### Wrapping Up:

Review the time line kept by students and their original list of questions. What is the most important thing they learned about sphinxes? How has it changed their understanding of Egypt and its culture?

**Play Stump the Sphinx:** Challenge students to write a riddle that will stump their classmates. Remind them that the riddle has to make sense, although the meaning may be hidden. Then, have one student at a time ask their riddle to their classmates or play with two teams, questioning and answering in turn.