

Rest in Pickles: Year 8 Take on Meriden's Most Legendary History Lesson

Every Year 8 has heard whispers about it. Older siblings have talked about it. And, finally, Year 8 2026 lived it: Meriden's most famous History lesson. It is the perfect send-off to their study of Ancient Egypt, and the one in which the cucumbers did not survive.

The cohort has spent this term immersed in the world of the pharaohs, exploring Egyptian society, religion, and the profound belief in the afterlife that shaped every aspect of life along the Nile. As a final touch to that journey, they undertook a full mummification of...the humble cucumber.

Ask any Meriden student what they remember about Year 8 History, and the answer is almost always the same: the mummification lesson. It has become something of a school institution, anticipated by incoming Year 8s long before they set foot in the classroom. This week, the current cohort finally got their turn, and by all accounts, they rose to the occasion with impressive dedication.



The lesson began, as all good mummifications must, with the removal of the organs. Armed with skewers, students carefully hollowed out their cucumbers, replicating the painstaking work of the ancient *ibu*: the embalmer-priest whose sacred duty it was to prepare the body for its journey into the afterlife.

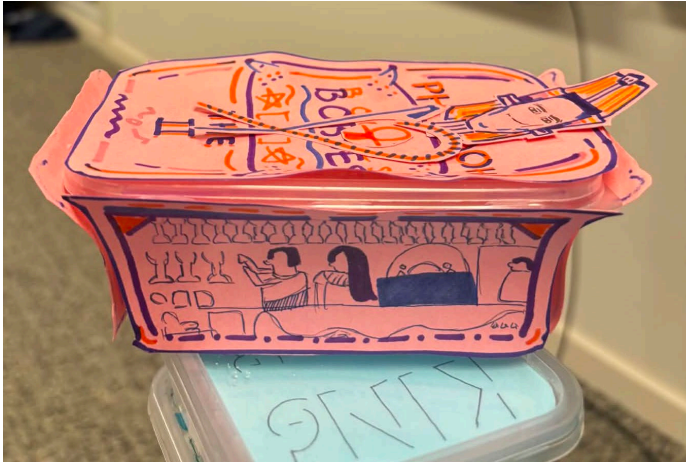
In ancient Egypt, a careful process was followed to prepare the body for burial. The brain was removed using specialised tools, while the internal organs were taken out and placed into canopic jars, each associated with one of the four sons of Horus. The

skewers the students utilised, it must be said, were a humbler instrument - but a growing appreciation for the skill and gravity of the real process was evident throughout the room.

With the cucumbers carefully hollowed, students turned to natron, the salt mixture that was the cornerstone of Egyptian preservation. Rather than using a ready-made substitute, they mixed their own from bicarbonate of soda and salt, packing it inside and around their specimens just as the embalmers would have done.

This process prompted some of the liveliest discussion of the term: how does salt draw moisture from living tissue? How did the Egyptians, without any formal scientific knowledge, come to understand that this worked and refine it into a process so effective that it has endured for thousands of years? Their precision and meticulous work allows us, even today, to come face to face with some of the most significant figures in Egyptian History - Hatshepsut, Ramses the Great and of course, Tutankhamun - and see them (almost) as they were in life.





Once preserved, the cucumber sarcophagi were decorated. Students adorned them with the rich visual language of ancient Egypt - scarab beetles, the eye of Horus, the ankh, and the gods who presided over death and rebirth, before designing their own personal cartouches. These distinctive oval frames were used by Egyptian royalty to encase their names in hieroglyphs, rooted in the belief that as long as a name existed somewhere in the world, the soul could not truly perish.

And now, the wait. Honouring the original forty-day period observed by Egyptian embalmers, the classes will leave their specimens undisturbed

before reuniting with them to examine the results. What will the natron have done to their creations? Will they indeed be properly mummified and preserved?

It is a fitting conclusion to a term spent in ancient Egypt, and a reminder of why this lesson continues to be talked about across the School. The accumulated wisdom of one of the greatest civilisations the world has ever known, distilled into a cucumber, a skewer, and a pot of homemade natron.

Thank you to all members of the Year 8 History team for their dedication and preparation in delivering this memorable experience for our students.

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