

The Fields of Yaru - Lesson Idea

The Ancient Egyptians believed that when you died you had to pass through a dangerous place filled with perils such as poisonous snakes and fiery pits in order to reach the Fields of Yaru (Ancient Egyptian Afterlife). They believed these dangers could be overcome with the correct spells and so they often left these in or beside the coffin. The following story starter is based upon this belief.

The last thing Seth saw on Earth was the snake that killed him slithering off across the sand. For a moment there was darkness. Then through the darkness came a grey and swirling mist. As the mist cleared, Seth found himself in a place like nowhere he had seen before. His journey to the Fields of Yaru had begun...

Before asking the children to copy and complete this story it might be useful to brainstorm possible perils that Seth might face. These could include:

- Monsters of all descriptions. In Ancient Egypt, monsters were often imagined to have body parts of various animals.
- Fiery pits or walls of fire.
- Crocodile-infested rivers.
- Quicksand.
- Towering rocks or mountains.
- A shiver of snakes.
- Scorpions.

Remind the children that their stories are based upon the beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians. Although they are free to use their imaginations to some extent, they should also take into consideration the landscape, technology and wildlife of the time and place.

The Egyptians believed that before they could gain entry to the Fields of Yaru they had to pass one final test at the Hall of Two Truths. The heart, which was the only organ left in a body, was placed in one side of a balance. In the other side was placed the Feather of Truth. This contained all of the sins that the person had committed in their past life. If the heart passed the test then they would be allowed to enter. If it failed then it would be eaten by the demoness Ammut. Ammut, also known as "The Devourer", was said to have the head of a crocodile, middle of a lion and backside of a hippopotamus. Once the heart had been eaten then the person was destroyed forever.

This belief could be the ending of the children's stories. Alternatively, it could form the basis of another lesson.