COMMON CORE CONNECTION: PAPYRUS PRODUCTION

Works of Art: Excerpts from the Book of the Faiyum; Egyptian, Roman Period, late first century BCE–second century CE, and Egyptian sculptures

COMMON CORE CONNECTION: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

OVERVIEW
Students will learn about the ancient Egyptian Book of the Faiyum, a papyrus scroll that details the religious customs and environment of the Faiyum region along the Nile River. With the Book of the Faiyum as a model, students will learn about the processes that Egyptian scribes used to create written works. Stressing precision, creativity, and group collaboration, students will work in a similar assembly-line structure to create their own "scrolls" that include both text and illustration.

SUPPLIES
· drawing paper (9" × 12" or 11" × 14")
· rulers
· pencils
· black felt-tip pens / markers
· crayons / colored pencils / color markers
· printed handouts (attached)

ACTIVITY
➊ Distribute supplies to students, including printed copies of attached handouts. You will need one copy for each student; or if you prefer, you can project the artwork onto the board.

➋ Engage students in a conversation about ancient Egypt. Ask them: What first comes to mind when you think of "ancient Egypt"? Where is Egypt located? What is the name of the famous river in Egypt? What do you know about Egyptian myths—their gods or goddesses?

➌ Read the Introduction (see attached) out loud as a class so students will learn the historical context of the Book of the Faiyum and the importance of scribes in Egyptian culture.

➍ Discuss the objects found on the image sheet (see attached). Ask students about the two images of papyrus: What do you think these are? How do you think they were used? Describe the decoration. Describe the animals that you see. Why do you think they were included on these artworks? Why do you think these animals were important to the ancient Egyptians?

➎ Introduce the students to the additional images of Egyptian statues. Compare and contrast the pieces (note the special headdresses the gods wear, or the two gods that have animal heads.) Note that the sculpted artworks are visually similar to the drawings in the Book of the Faiyum. This will help familiarize students with Egyptian art styles before they begin working on their scroll.
Give students the following assignment:

Today, you will become a scribe! Like the ancient Egyptians, you will work together with your classmates to create a complete “scroll.” There are several steps to the process. After you complete each step, you will pass your scroll to another classmate. It is important to be careful and precise, just like the Egyptian scribes who made the Book of the Faiyum!

1. Create Guidelines (Use the Guideline Sheet for guidance).
   On the back of your paper, write “Step 1” and your name. On the front of your paper, create straight, even lines using a ruler. Orient your paper horizontally. Then draw two long horizontal lines at the top and bottom of your paper. After you have done this, draw a vertical line 8 or 9” from the left edge of the paper. This line will divide the paper into an area for the words (on the right) and an area for the image (on the left). Then you can add shorter horizontal lines within the text-box, as illustrated on your guideline sheet. Draw the lines first in pencil, and then trace over them with pen or marker. Then, when the teacher says so—trade papers with a classmate!

2. Add Words.
   On the back of your new piece of paper, write “Step 2” and your name underneath the first scribe’s name. Take a look at the attached Sentence Bank. It has ten different descriptive sentences about the culture in Faiyum. Pick one of the sentences and write it in the text box on the right side of the scroll. Try to make your sentence fill up all of the lines. Use your best penmanship so that the words are even and clear. Write in pencil first, as you may have to erase and start over if your sentence doesn't fit or runs too short. When you are happy with your handwriting, trace it with pen or marker. Then, when the teacher says so—trade papers with a new classmate!

3. Add your art.
   Remember to write “Step 3” and your name on the back of your new piece of paper. Read the sentence that has been written on the paper you just received. Then, using pencil, draw an illustration of that sentence into the blank space on the scroll. If you are unsure how to draw something, use the Egyptian artworks from the Book of the Faiyum exhibit as your inspiration. Be creative! Use a pencil—don't color it in or outline your drawing. Then, when the teacher says so—trade papers with a new classmate!

4. Add Color.
   Remember to add your name and “Step 4” to the back of your new piece of paper. Your last task as a scribe is to add color to the drawing on the scroll. Don't change the pencil drawing that your classmate has made. Just enhance it with crayons, colored pencils, or colored markers. Once you have finished coloring the illustration, the scroll is finished! Sit back and admire the work of art that you have created with your classmates.

5. As a class, discuss the activity.
   Why do you think Egyptian scribes worked on scrolls together? What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a group? What was the hardest part of this activity, and why? Of all the scrolls you worked on, do you feel more ownership over a certain one—if so, which one? If you had to pick one job as a scribe—drawing guidelines, writing, illustrating, or adding color—which would you pick, and why?
INTRODUCTION

About the Book of the Faiyum

The *Book of the Faiyum* (pronounced FYE-yoom) is a mysterious ancient Egyptian text, written and elaborately illustrated across two rolls of papyrus dating to the late first century BCE–second century CE. Papyrus (pronounced pah-PYE-rus) was an ancient form of paper, made out of a grassy plant of the same name that grows around the Nile River in Egypt. We call this text a "book" because of its length, but it did not have pages or a binding like a modern book. Instead, long sheets of papyrus were rolled into scrolls. Rather than turning pages, readers would hold the papyrus rolls across their laps and slowly unroll them as they read.

During Egypt’s Roman period (30 BCE–395 CE), the *Book of the Faiyum* was a popular text. The Walters version is one of many copies that existed long ago; most of them have been destroyed over time. The Walters copy is fragmentary (other parts of this papyrus survive in the Egyptian National Museum, Cairo, and in the Morgan Library and Museum, New York); however, it is in pretty good shape considering that it is 2,000 years old!

The book celebrates the crocodile god Sobek and his special relationship with the Faiyum region, an oasis in the desert to the west of the Nile River. The book teaches us about life in ancient Egypt. For example, the hundreds of gods and sacred places represented in this papyrus offer a glimpse into local beliefs. The centerpiece of the scroll is a map-like image of Lake Moeris, the source of prosperity in the Faiyum region. The book is best understood as a collection of stories handed down over hundreds of years. It includes, for example, the Egyptian Book of the Celestial Cow and details from the fifth-century BCE Greek historian Herodotus's (pronounced hair-AH-doh-tuss) account of the Faiyum region. Creating the book was a major effort that involved many people.

The book is written in hieroglyphs, a special form of writing in which tiny pictures are used to represent words and speech sounds. Since the printing press had not yet been invented, all books had to be hand-copied. The people who wrote books were called “scribes.” Scribes were highly skilled workers who trained for years and were viewed as important members of society.

Several scribes, each with his own task—such as planning the layout, sketching, writing, or illustrating—would have been involved in the creation of papyrus scrolls like this. The draftsman who prepared the layout of the first scroll of this *Book of the Faiyum* made mistakes, like forgetting a horizontal line and putting in line-divisions in the space designated for illustrations. These mistakes created problems for the other scribes. Some scholars believe that the end product may have been too flawed to sell. Precision was very important in creating these scrolls.
GUIDELINE SHEET

Students: use this diagram as a model for drawing guidelines on your scroll. If your paper is 11" × 14", use the second set of measurements (2" and 9"). If your paper is 9" × 12", use the first set of measurements (1.5" and 8").
1. **Ancient Egyptians believed that the sun god Re traveled in a boat across the sky during the day.**
2. **A singer named Gautsoshen presents offerings to the god Osiris, ruler of the underworld.**
3. **A crocodile is resting on the bottom of the Nile, clenching a fish in its jaws.**
4. **The goddess Tawaret has the body of a hippopotamus, the tail of a crocodile, and the limbs of a lion.**
5. **The royal scribe Min-nakht sits on the floor and reads a papyrus scroll by unrolling it across his lap.**
6. **This woman from Faiyum wears costly jewels: a necklace and earrings of emeralds and pearls.**
7. **A falcon appears behind the goddess Neith, wrapping its wings protectively around her body.**
8. **Two tilapia fish swim through the Nile waters, lotus blossoms blooming from their mouths.**
9. **The god Thoth, patron of scribes, has the body of a man and the head of an ibis.**
10. **The land of Faiyum was a lush, green oasis along the Nile River, surrounded by a harsh desert.**
Excerpt from the Book of the Faiyum, showing the goddess Taweret
Excerpt from the Book of the Fayyum, showing the god Sobek
Left: the goddess Taweret; Right: the scribe Minnakht.
The goddess Neith
An ibis-headed god believed to be Thoth