

# CANOPIC JARS



*The purpose of the four canopic jars in ancient Egypt was to store and preserve the inner organs of the human body. Each canopic jar was protected by one of the four sons' of the god Horus and each jar was in the shape of the protector god's head.*

*The organs were removed during mummification, separately mummified, and wrapped before being placed inside separate jars. These canopic jars were always placed in the burial chamber close to the mummified body. Only the heart, believed to be the center of consciousness, was left in place. The jars were stored in a canopic chest; an elaborate box made especially for the jars safe storage.*



**This is a fairly simple and goof-proof project that allows students to create a beautiful Egyptian canopic jar. This project can be completed easily without a lot of frustration especially for beginning sculptors. Students create an armature from foil and a yogurt cup that is then covered with plaster gauze. The final step is finishing the sculpture with acrylic paints and oil based translucent.**

## Materials:

- Approximately 200 square ft. roll of aluminum foil for each class.
- Plaster gauze wrap
- Sculpey modeling clay (for hieroglyphs)
- Acrylic Paints
- Translucent antiquing oil (brown)

- Bowl of water
- Duct tape
- Yogurt cup with lid
- Bowl of water
- 1 can of acrylic paint sealer
- Toothpicks

## CREATING A CONOPIC JAR

Students should begin this project by making thumbnail sketches and brainstorming for a design ideas for their canopic jar. There is a table at the end of this lesson that helps describe each jar and its meaning.

Start out with a small ball of foil and form it into shape. The foil head will be attached to the lid eventually, but for now students should use the lid as a guide for creating the base of the head.

The foil does not need to be packed too tightly (just firm enough to hold the form until the plaster hardens in the later step). Students can begin with a rough form and add layers of foil. Duct tape or strong masking tape can be used sparingly to hold pieces together or in place.

Once the desired shape is completed it can be attached to the lid of the yogurt cup. Place the lid on top of the yogurt cup and the foil head on top of the lid. Duct tape should now be used to encircle the entire lip of the lid and neck of sculpture to ensure the head is securely attached. (Do not tape lid to yogurt container)

Once the sculpture is formed and the piece is assembled students should examine their

sculpture for bumps and loose pieces of foil. This is the armature for the plaster gauze. Press down the bumps and tape any loose foil down securely.

Now the yogurt cup and the sculpted head are ready to be covered with plaster gauze. Plaster gauze should be cut into approximately 3”x 3” patches that are easy to work with. If the gauze is too narrow or too long it sometimes folds over and is difficult to use. Strips that are slightly longer, approximately 3”x5” work great for covering the cup.

Wet the gauze in a small bowl. Do not let it sit in the bowl. Simply dip-in and pull-out. Let extra water drip off into the bowl and then run the plaster strip between the fingers to remove excess water. Apply plaster strips to largest area first and work out to surrounding areas. If a second application of plaster gauze is necessary in some areas try to apply it before the plaster begins hardening.

Students should smooth out the plaster with their fingers and try to fill in any small holes created by the gauze as they work. Wash hands well with soap and water when complete.

Let plaster dry for at least one day. Areas that are too weak can be patched with extra plaster gauze. If extra repairs were made the plaster should dry an extra day before painting.

Sculpey modeling clay can be used to add hieroglyphics or they can simply be painted on the front of the jar. If using Sculpey or other self-hardening clay hieroglyphic stamps can be used. Students can also create their own designs using paper clips or toothpicks to carve into the clay.

Acrylic paint can be added when sculpture is dry. It works well if at least on base coat of a cream color acrylic is applied to the entire sculpture before decorative painting begins. If an antique look is desired use an oil base translucent A list of great colors to use are at end of lesson plan.

This project can be modified to fit a variety of sculpture lessons. The size of the sculptures can be large or small. Students can do abstract or realistic sculptures.

<b>Sons of Horus</b>	<b>Shape of Head</b>	<b>Netert (goddess)</b>	<b>Contents of Jar</b>	<b>Direction of Head</b>
Duamutef	jackal/dog	Neith	stomach	north
Qebsennuf	hawk	Selkit	intestines	south
Hapi	baboon	Nephthys	lungs	east
Amsset	man	Isis	liver	west

# EGYPTIAN CANOPIC JAR

