



Glasgow, Kelvingrove Museum 1898.209.a (given by the Egypt Exploration Fund)

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Hieroglyphs for Beginners

(Hieroglyphs 1)

2025-2026, Semester 1



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Hieroglyphs for Beginners

This module introduces students to the basics of writing and reading of Middle Egyptian written in hieroglyphs. Students will gain the ability to read basic vocabulary and recognise key formulae, titles and names repeated on Egyptian material culture which will facilitate reading of objects in successive modules.

Credits: 20

Lecturer: Assoc Prof Katharina Zinn

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- Know the language and writing system of ancient Egypt and are aware of the impact and the social role of orality and literacy within past societies
- Read and translate basic formulaic texts found especially in the funerary sphere by application of grammatical rules
- Are aware about epigraphic methods necessary when dealing with inscribed objects

ASSESSMENT

The assessment is a portfolio of 4 parts. In order to pass the module, you will need an overall portfolio pass mark of 40+.

- a. **In-class** test: one-consonant signs, 10 min (worth 350 words), **02/10/2025** (15% of portfolio mark)
- b. **In-class** test: more-consonant signs, 15 min (worth 450 words), **09/10/2025** (15% of portfolio mark)
- c. **In-class** test: reading direction, 20 min (worth 700 words), **23/10/2025** (20% of portfolio mark)
- d. **In-class** test: reading and grammar, 90 min (worth 2500 words), **14/01/2026** (50% of portfolio mark)

We will undertake in-class exercises to prepare for parts a-c and have a look at a Mock Portfolio d exercise. The best preparation for each part of the portfolio is attendance and collaboration in class.

Syllabus:

This module – 36 contact hours – will be taught **over the full semester 1 (long and thin)** with one session per week.

The following shows the planned topics. It might be that we will be faster or slower and I will adapt each session accordingly. As this is an interactive language class, you are also expected to do homework from one week to the other in order to consolidate the learned stuff. Additional tasks (such as finishing exercise) might be given as well.

Date	Title	Readings / Notes
H1 Thu 25/09 @ 2pm in TL03 (Welcome Week)	a) Introduction: one and more consonant signs, transliteration, Gardiner sign list (and other sign lists)	Manley ch. 1, 3-4,6-7,9,13; sign list pp. 144-153. Allen 2000, lesson 2-3 Collier/Manley, 1-18 Hoch 1998. Gardiner 1957. 438-548 (Gardiner Sign List)
	b) Societies and writing – mind-mapping the importance of writing	Manley, pp. 112-121 Zinn 2012a-c Bestock 2013
	c) Literacy in ancient Egypt	Zinn. 2018 Zinn 2012c
H2 Thu 02/10 @2pm in TL07	a) Portfolio 1 In-class test: One-consonant-signs	
	b) Language and writing system of Ancient Egypt	Manley, ch. 14
	c) Calligraphy: how to write nice hieroglyphs?	Fischer 1979.
	d) Reading Directions	Manley, ch.2
H3 Thu 09/10 @2pm in TL03	a) Portfolio 2 In-class test: More-consonant-signs	
	b) Royal names	Manley, pp. 82-96
	c) Exercise Sign order and reading first words	Manley, ch. 19
	d) The Offering Formula	
H4 Thu 16/10 @2pm in TL03	a) Reading Merire	Manley, pp. 10-14,
	b) We love grammar – offering formulae and grammatical structures: word order	Manley, pp. 44-48 Allen 2000, lesson 4-5
H5 Thu 23/10 @2pm in TL03	a) Portfolio 3 In-class test: Royal names, signs and words	
	b) Other formulaic object types (funerary cones) and longer texts	Manley, pp. 49-81
	c) How to use a dictionary: introduction and exercise	Faulkner 1991

H6 Wed 29/10 @ 2pm in TL02 (Reading Week)	a) More grammar: Nouns	Allen 2000, lesson 4 (esp. 4.10-4.13)
	b) Pub Quiz	
	c) Even more grammar: suffix Pronouns	Allen 2000, lesson 5.1.-5.3.
H7 Fri 07/11 @1pm in Flemming, Halliwell	a) Exercises nouns and suffix pronouns	
	b) Even more grammar: Pronouns – dependent / independent / interrogative	Allen 2000, lesson 5.4-5.11
H8 Fri 14/11 @1pm in Flemming, Halliwell	a) Even more grammar: Adjectives	Allen 2000, lesson 6
	b) Exercise noun phrases	
Fri 21/11	There will be no teaching during these two weeks, as Katharina will be in Egypt. The classes will be frontloaded into the sessions on Thu 25/09 (Welcome Week) and Wed 29/10 (Reading Week).	
Fri 28/11		
H9 Wed 03/12 @1:30 in TL10	a) More grammar around nouns – connections and possessions (noun phrases) with exercise	Allen 2000, lesson 7
	b) Reading the Stela of Shenwy and Hedjret (UCL4334)	Manley, pp. 68-77
H10 Wed 10/12 @1:30 in TL03	Our first sentences: combinations of nouns, adjectives – nominal sentences	Allen 2000, lesson 8-9
H11 07/01/26 @1:30 in TL01	Further nonverbal sentences (adjectival and adverbial)	Allen 2000, lesson 7 (esp. 7.2-7.5)
	MOCK in-class test	
H12 14/01/26 @1:30 in TL01	Portfolio 4 In-class test: reading and grammar	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

As “nearly” textbooks:

Manely, B. 2012. *Egyptian Hieroglyphs for Complete Beginners: The Revolutionary New Approach to Reading the Monuments*. Thames & Hudson

→ Further grammatical structures are taken from:

Allen, J.P. 2000. *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*. Cambridge: CUP. 2nd ed. (you can also use 1st or 3rd ed.)

Essential

Allen, J.P. 2010. Language, Scripts, and Literacy. In: A.B. Lloyd (ed.). *A Companion to Ancient Egypt II*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 641-662.

Bard, K.A. 2015. Hieroglyphs, language, and pharaonic chronology. In: Bard, K.A. *An introduction to the archaeology of ancient Egypt*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 25-46.

Brewer, D.J.; Teeter, E. 2007. Language and writing. In: Brewer, D.J.; Teeter, E. *Egypt and the Egyptians*. Cambridge: CUP, 126-141.

Fischer, H.G. 1979. *Ancient Egyptian calligraphy: A beginner's guide to writing hieroglyphs*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Powell, B.B. 2012. *Writing: Theory and history of the technology of civilization*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wilson, P. 2003. *Hieroglyphs: A very short introduction*. Oxford: OIP.

Zinn, K. 2018. Literacy in Pharaonic Egypt: Orality and Literacy between Agency and Memory. In: A. Kolb (ed.). *Literacy in Ancient Everyday Life - Schriftlichkeit im antiken Alltag*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 67-98.

Essential Reading for some sessions

Bestock, L. 2013. Agency in death. In: J. Englehardt (ed). *Agency in ancient writing*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 95-111.

Faulkner. 1991. *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Oxford: Griffith Institute Ashmolean Museum.

Fischer, H.G. 1979. *Ancient Egyptian calligraphy: A beginner's guide to writing hieroglyphs*. New York: Metropolitan Museum.

Gardiner, A. 1957 (or any other edition). *Egyptian grammar: Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*. Oxford: Griffith Institute Ashmolean Museum (Gardiner Sign List on pp. 438-548)

Hoch, J.E. *Middle Egyptian grammar: Sign list*. Mississauga: Benben Publ.

Recommended

- Allen, J.P. 2015. *Middle Egyptian Literature: Eight literary works of the Middle Kingdom*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Allon, N.; Navrátilová, H. 2017. *Ancient Egyptian Scribes: A Cultural Exploration*. London/New York: Bloomsbury.
- Baines, J. 2007. *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt*, Oxford: OUP.
- Baines, J.; Eyre, C. 2007. Four notes on literacy. In: J. Baines, *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: OUP, 63-94.
- Barta, W. 1963. *Die altägyptische Opferliste von der Frühzeit bis zur griechisch – römischen Epoche*. Berlin: Hessing.
- Bussmann, Richard. 2017. *Complete Middle Egyptian: A New Method for Understanding Hieroglyphs: Reading Texts in Context* (Complete Language Courses). London : John Murray Pr.
- Champollion, J.-F. 2001. *Egyptian diaries: How one man solved the mysteries of the Nile*. London: Gibson Square Books.
- Englehardt, J. 2013. *Agency in ancient writing*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.
- Enmarch, R. 2010. Middle Kingdom Literature. In: A.B. Lloyd (ed.). *A Companion to Ancient Egypt II*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 663-684.
- Eyre, C. 2013. *The use of documents in pharaonic Egypt*, Oxford:OUP.
- Gnanadesikan, A.E. 2009. *The writing revolution: Cuneiform to the internet*. Chichester: Wiley (especially chapter 2).
- Lichtheim. M. 1975. *Ancient Egyptian Literature I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Pr. (compendium of texts)
- Mc Dowell, A.G. 1999. *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry lists and love songs*. Oxford: OUP. (compendium of texts)
- Ray, J. 2008. *The Rosetta Stone and the rebirth of ancient Egypt*. London: Profile Books.
- Regulski, I. 2015. The Origins and Early Development of Writing in Egypt, <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935413.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935413-e-61> (available online).
- Regulski, I. 2022. *Hieroglyphs: unlocking ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Pr.
- Robinson, A. 2006. *The last man who knew everything - Thomas Young: The anonymous polymath who proved Newton wrong, explained how we see, cured the sick, and deciphered the Rosetta Stone, among other feats of genius*. Oxford: One World Books.
- Solé, R.; Valbelle, D. 2001. *The Rosetta Stone: The story of the decoding of hieroglyphics*. London: Profile Books.
- Van Dyke, R.M.; Alcock, S.E. 2003. *Archaeologies of memory*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Zinn, K. 2012a. Education, Pharaonic Egypt. In: R. Bagnall et al. (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012, 2318–2323.
- Zinn, K. 2012b. Libraries, Pharaonic Egypt. In: R. Bagnall et al. (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012, 4061–4063.

Zinn, K. 2012c. Literacy, Pharaonic Egypt. In: R. Bagnall et al. (eds.) *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012, 4100–4104.

You could also look into

Collier, M.; B. Manley. 1998. *How to Read Egyptian: A Step-by-Step Guide to Teach Yourself*. London: The British Museum Pr.

Ong, W.J. 1982 (or any other edition). *Orality & literacy: The technologizing of the world*. London: Routledge.

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And... done!

