

# Connected Worlds

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## Writing Your Report

Reports are a distinctive form of structured academic writing which should follow specific conventions to produce a common format. The emphasis is on the underlying methodology, interpretative framework and the clear presentation, as much as the interpretation and analysis.

Careful planning will help you to write a clear, concise and effective report.

You should consider the report as a whole: what are you researching and what is the best way to present the data? Break down the task of writing the report into different sections and consider how much time you have to research and write the report.

Plan this process carefully and set yourself clear deadlines. You should draw up an outline structure for your report and devise a sensible time scale its completion by the deadline. The most time-consuming parts of this process will be the collection and selection of your data and the final presentation. You need to check and revise carefully before the final submission.



Glazed steatite scarab with a sphinx, an ankh sign and a winged snake inscribed on the base. Hala Sultan Tekke, Tomb V. British Museum (AN1020125001)

## Structuring Your Report

We would like you to organise your report using the following format:

- Title page
- Contents & outline
- Introduction
- Theoretical perspectives
- Presentation of data
- Interpretation and analysis
- Conclusions
- References
- Appendices & illustrations

We shall now look at each of these in turn:

### Title page

This should include the title of the report, your name, the module code and title and the date.

### Contents and Outline

You should list all the main sections of the report in sequence. You might want to include subheadings within the main sections indicated above.

### Introduction

This should give the context of your report and should set the parameters. You should use your introduction to set out your terms of reference: justify your choice of theoretical approach and how you intend to apply this to your data. You should state your aims and objectives clearly, define the limits of the report, outline the theoretical background and give a brief contextual background to the subject of your report.

### Theoretical Discussion

We are expecting you to explicitly use relevant archaeological and anthropological theories to explore a specific dataset. You need to engage with the theory (read the primary sources: eg. Mauss for gift exchange; Weiner for inalienable objects etc). Follow up the reading from the first week of term. You will not be able to effectively interpret the material without engaging with this theory – your report will simply be descriptive. It is not enough to state that you are using a specific theory: you need to explain this theory, why you think it is relevant and to demonstrate that you have read the relevant authors. Look at how other archaeologists have applied theory.

### Presentation of Data & Context of Research

You should clarify the context of research here: think about date, context, previous research – contextualise your own work.

You should present your dataset as simply and clearly as possible. The more complicated the information looks, the more difficult it will be to interpret. Think about data presentation: tables, graphs, pie charts and bar charts, diagrams and illustrations can all convey information more precisely and succinctly than you might describe it. Remember you are dealing with objects and the material or representational world of the ancient Mediterranean. Make sure you have looked at the objects being analysed – if possible try to visit the BM or Ashmolean to view some of these things first hand – or use their excellent websites. Remember the physicality and materiality of what you are analysing.

## **Interpretation and analysis**

This is the main focus of your report. We expect you to discuss, analyse and interpret the data with explicit reference to the theoretical discussion. You should explain the significance of objects and what these might tell us about the people who crafted, used and exchanged these objects. What relationships are being expressed through these objects? This is the fun part where you can develop your own theories and ideas.

## **Conclusions**

Keep this brief. This is where you clearly state what your key findings are. It should be expressed clearly and succinctly. Do not use this to introduce new information.

## **Illustrations:**

You can include these in-text or in appendices/tables at the end of your report. We have no preference.

### **Checklist:**

- Are all illustrations and diagrams etc clearly labelled? Have you clearly indicated the source of illustrations (the web is fine so long as this is cited)?
- Are your titles and headings precise and clear
- Are axes of graphs labelled clearly?
- Is the information presented in graphs and tables meaningful?

## **References**

This is an academic piece of work and should be grounded in the academic literature. The Web (academic museum sites) are all right for sourcing data & illustrations but are not sufficient for analysis and interpretation. Remember, failure to cite the words AND ideas of other scholars will be considered as unfair practice: if in doubt give a reference. Keep quotations to a minimum: use for emphasis – we want to read your own ideas in your words and to know that you have understood the arguments of other scholars.

Please follow the guidelines presented in the Archaeology & Anthropology Referencing handbook.

Good luck and enjoy!