



History Project Plans

THE HUMAN BODY

These project plans are designed to be used with the accompanying resource sheets. Please note: A CD does not accompany this project, all resources can be found below.

History Project 1: Terrible Tudors (Key Stage 2)

Aims of the lesson: To investigate what it was like to live in Tudor times and link this to healthy lifestyles and illnesses.

Activity: Ask the pupils what they know about Tudor times. Help them to locate the Tudor period on a timeline and discuss whether it is longer ago or more recent than other periods they have learned about. Using a range of evidence about the Tudor period, such as contemporary pictures of beggars, street scenes, jousting and other sporting scenes, memorials, family portraits, costumes, etc. ask the pupils: 'Which sources show rich people and which show poor people?' 'What is the evidence for this?' Next ask what the children think it would have been like to be ill in Tudor times. Tell them that physicians in Tudor times studied the writings of the Greek

doctor Galen and tried to help rich people with their health and well-being. They knew that a varied diet and adequate rest helped to keep people healthy and could help cure illness. Ask the pupils if these factors are still important nowadays. Then remind them that only the rich in Tudor times would have had access to doctors and medicines. If you were poor, you had nowhere to go for help. The **History Project 1** folder on the CD-ROM includes an information sheet about Tudor doctors, health and illnesses. This could be read as a whole class. Ask the class to make a comparison between Tudor health and medicine and modern-day health and medicine.

Plenary: As an extension to this activity, ask the class to find out about the Tudor diet. Was it healthy?

History Project 2: Marvellous mummies

Aims of the lesson: To investigate Egyptian mummies and understand how the Egyptians knew a lot about the human body.

Activity: The ancient Egyptians were advanced medical practitioners for their time. They were masters of human anatomy and healing, mostly due to their extensive mummification ceremonies. The

History Project 2 folder on the CD-ROM includes an information sheet on mummification and some staged illustrations showing the mummification process. It also has an information sheet on ancient Egyptian medicine and this should be reviewed with the class. Ask the class to compare ancient



Egyptian understanding of the human body to what we know today. The Egyptians also used a great many plants to treat illness and a list of these is in the **History Project 2** folder on the CD. Can the class discover any plants we use today in modern medicines? Finally, ask the pupils to discover how we know that the ancient Egyptians were medically advanced. There are lots of historical sources

available and the **History Project 2** folder includes some sources of information. Ask the pupils what these sources tell us. Can they find any others?

Plenary: As an extension to this activity, ask the class to investigate the Egyptian diet. Was it healthy? How do we know what the ancient Egyptians ate?



The Human Body

History Project 1: Terrible Tudors

Key Stage 2





Information sheet: Tudor health

Rich people in Tudor times had access to doctors who based their medicines and techniques on ancient Greek medicine and practices. The rich Tudors could also visit barber-surgeons who not only cut and shaved hair but also extracted teeth, treated battle wounds, set broken bones and amputated limbs. No painkillers were available for use and patients often died from the shock of treatment or from subsequent infection. 'Blood-letting' was commonly practised and leeches were commonly used to suck blood from patients, in an effort to draw out 'bad blood'.

Few people lived past the age of 40 and the only option that poor people usually had when they were ill was to visit someone known a 'wise woman'. These women mainly helped with childbirth and used herbal remedies to try to help with illnesses. Poor people could also go to the local Abbey to ask for help if they were ill or they could go to the Poor Houses. The Tudor Poor Laws meant that each parish had to have a poor house where people were looked after. Elderly people who were poor might be lucky enough to have a place in one of these places, which were also called Almshouses.

One of the biggest health threats in Tudor times was the plague. The Tudors did not realise that the plague was carried by rats running around in the rubbish they just left on the streets. If someone in a house was found to have the plague, they had to stay in their house for five weeks so that the plague could not be spread. This of course, did not stop the rats moving from house to house. Searchers were sent out into the town to find those who had the plague and those who had died, as many families tried to hide the fact that someone was ill.



The Human Body

History Project 2: Marvellous Mummies

Key Stage 2





Information sheet: Ancient Egyptian herbal remedies

- Honey, a natural antibiotic, was also widely used to dress wounds.
- Aloe Vera was used to treat worms, relieve headaches, soothe chest pains, burns, ulcers and for skin diseases.
- Frankincense was used to treat throat infections, stop bleeding, as well as treating asthma.
- Balsam Apple or 'Apple of Jerusalem' was used as a laxative.
- Garlic was believed to provide vitality and aid digestion.
- The Camphor tree was used to reduce fevers, soothe gums, and treat epilepsy.
- The Juniper tree was utilised to treat digestive ailments, and to soothe chest pains or stomach cramps.
- Mint was used to soothe flatulence, aid digestion, stop vomiting and as a breath freshener.
- Sandalwood was used to aid digestion, to stop diarrhoea and to treat gout.
- Sesame was used to soothe asthma.
- Poppy seeds were used to relieve insomnia and headaches, and as an anaesthetic.
- Thyme was also used as a pain reliever.



Information sheet: Ancient Egyptian medicine

The Egyptians had a basic knowledge of organ functions within the human body (save for the brain and heart, which they thought had opposite functions). This knowledge of anatomy, as well as the later crossover of knowledge between the Egyptians and the Greeks and other culture areas, led to an extensive knowledge of the functioning of the organs, and branched into many other medical practices.

The practices of Egyptian medical practitioners ranged from embalming to faith healing to surgery and autopsy. The use of autopsy came through the extensive embalming practices of the Egyptians, as it was not unlikely for an embalmer to examine the body for a cause of the illness which caused death. The use of surgery also evolved from a knowledge of the basic anatomy and embalming practices of the Egyptians. From such careful observations made by the early medical practitioners of Egypt, healing practices began to centre upon both the religious rituals and the lives of the ancient Egyptians.

The prescription for a healthy life (which was almost always given by a member of the priestly caste) meant that individuals undertook the stringent and regular purification rituals (which included much bathing and often shaving one's head and body hair) and maintained their dietary restrictions against raw fish and other animals considered unclean to eat. Also, and in addition to a purified lifestyle, it was not uncommon for the Egyptians to undergo dream analysis to find a cure or cause for illness, or to ask for a priest to aid them with magic.

Though Egyptian medical practices could by no means rival those of present-day doctors, Egyptian healers engaged in surgery, in prescribing medicines and many other healing practices still found today. Among the curatives used by the Egyptians were all types of plant (herbs and other plants), animal (nearly all parts) and mineral compounds. The use of these compounds led to an extensive compendium of curative recipes, some still available today. For example, yeast was recognised for its healing qualities and was applied to leg ulcers and swellings. Yeasts were also taken internally for digestive disorders and were an effective cure for ulcers.



Information sheet: Mummification

The method of embalming (or treating the dead body) that the ancient Egyptians used is called **mummification**. Using special processes, the Egyptians removed all moisture from the body, leaving only a dried form that would not easily decay. It was important in their religion to preserve the dead body in as life-like a manner as possible. So successful were they that today we can view the mummified body of an Egyptian and have a good idea of what he or she looked like in life, 3,000 years ago.

The mummification process took 70 days. Special priests worked as embalmers, treating and wrapping the body. Beyond knowing the correct rituals and prayers to be performed at various stages, the priests also needed a detailed knowledge of human anatomy.

The first step in the process was the removal of all internal parts that might decay rapidly. The brain was removed by carefully inserting special hooked instruments up through the nostrils in order to pull out bits of brain tissue. The embalmers then removed the organs of the abdomen and chest through a cut usually made on the left side of the abdomen. They left only the heart in place, as they believed it to be the centre of a person's being and intelligence. The other organs were preserved separately, with the stomach, liver, lungs, and intestines placed in special boxes or jars which are today called canopic jars. These were buried with the mummy.

The embalmers next removed all moisture from the body. This they did by covering the body with a type of salt called natron and by placing additional salt packets inside the body. When the body had dried out completely, embalmers removed the internal packets and lightly washed the natron off the body.

Next the wrapping began. Each mummy needed hundreds of yards of linen. The priests carefully wound the long strips of linen around the body, sometimes even wrapping each finger and toe separately before wrapping the entire hand or foot. In order to protect the dead from mishap, tokens called amulets were placed among the wrappings and prayers and magical words were written on some of the linen strips.

Often the priests placed a mask of the person's face between the layers of head bandages. At several stages the form was coated with warm resin and the wrapping resumed once again. At last the priests wrapped the final cloth or shroud in place and secured it with linen strips. The mummy was complete.

After death, the pharaohs of Egypt usually were mummified and buried in elaborate tombs. Members of the nobility and officials also often received the same treatment, and occasionally common people. However, the process was an expensive one, beyond the means of most people.



Information sheet: Sources of information

An ancient Egyptian poem:

**It is seven days from yesterday since I saw my love,
And sickness has crept over me,
My limbs have become heavy,
I cannot feel my own body.
If the master-physicians come to me,
I gain no comfort from their remedies.
And the priest-magicians have no cures,
My sickness is not diagnosed.
My love is better by far for me than my remedies.
She is more important to me than all the books of medicine.**

An Ancient Egyptian love poem written in about 1500 BC.

Archaeological digs have also found evidence of men called physicians. The hieroglyphics on the door to the tomb of Irj described him as a physician at the court of the pharaohs. Irj lived about 1500 BC. He was described as a:

'...palace doctor, superintendent of the court physicians, palace eye physician, palace physician of the belly and one who understands the internal fluids and who is guardian of the anus.'

The Ancient Egyptians wrote down their knowledge and this is found on what is known as the Papyrus Ebers:

'46 vessels go from the heart to every limb, if a doctor places his hand or fingers on the back of the head, hands, stomach, arms or feet then he hears the heart. The heart speaks out of every limb.'

The document actually gives names to organs such as the spleen, the heart, the anus, the lungs, etc. so they must have known that these exist. One Egyptian document, the Edwin Smith Papyrus, has a detailed description of the brain in it, so this organ was also well researched by the standards of the time.

Egyptian mummy

