

DISCUSSION GUIDE

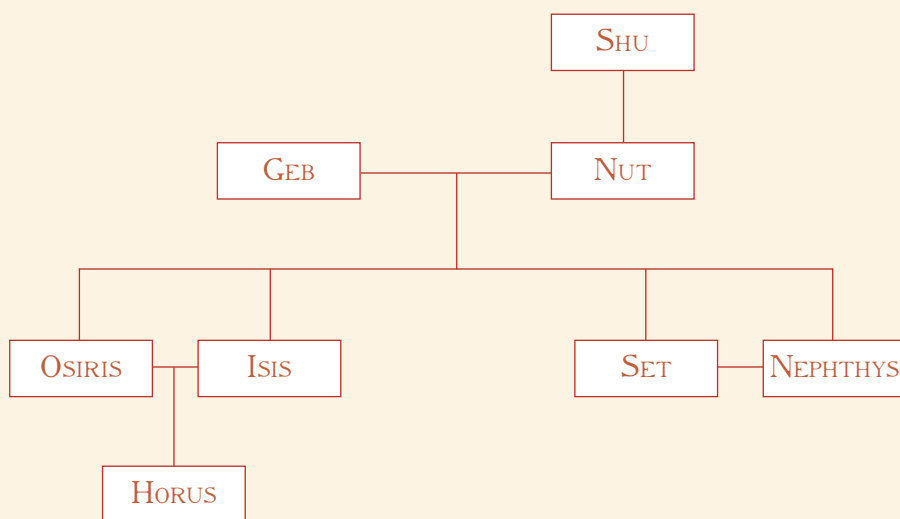
Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

ABOUT THE BOOK

After their father's "research experiment" at the British Museum unleashes the Egyptian god Set, Carter and Sadie Kane embark on a dangerous journey across the globe—a quest that brings them ever closer to the truth about their family, and their links to a secret order that has existed since the time of the pharaohs.

FAMILY TREE

LINEAGE OF THE GODS



The Red Pyramid immerses readers in the world of Egyptian mythology. Below are some of the key mythological characters referenced in the novel.

GODS AND GODDESSES

ANUBIS: God of funerals and death. He is often seen painted on the walls of tombs, as he was thought to protect the dead. He is shown as a jackal or wild dog.

BAST: Goddess of cats, women, and children. She can be both gentle and fierce. Shown as a cat-headed woman. Welcomed in Egyptian dwellings as the goddess of hearth and home.

HORUS: God of the sky. He is one of the most important gods in the Egyptian pantheon. Son of Osiris and Isis. Horus lost an eye while fighting Set after Set killed his father. He's known as the Falcon God and is believed to have given power to each pharaoh.

ISIS: Goddess of motherhood and love. She is the wife and sister of Osiris and mother of Horus. She recovered Osiris's body and brought him back to life after he was killed by Set.

OSIRIS: God of the dead. He is husband to Isis and father to Horus. The best known deity of the Egyptian gods. Firstborn child of the earth god Geb and his wife Nut, the sky goddess. Given earthly rule by his father, Osiris brought agriculture and wine making to the people of Earth. Because of the jealousy of his brother, Set, Osiris is killed for his throne. He is portrayed as a bearded man wrapped like a mummy wearing an atef crown—a tall crown with a feather on each side. His hands protrude from his white mummy bandages and hold the crook and the flail, two symbols of power in ancient Egypt. His flesh is colored green when he is associated with vegetation and regeneration, black when he is associated with the Nile silt or the Underworld.

NEPHTHYS: She is the daughter of Geb and Nut; the sister of Osiris, and Isis, and Set; the wife of Set; and the mother of Anpu, or Anubis, either by Osiris or Set. Nephthys was regarded as the female counterpart of Set, and she was always associated with him; nevertheless she always appears as the faithful sister and friend of Isis, and helped the widowed goddess to collect the scattered limbs of Osiris and to reconstitute his body.

NUT: The sky goddess. She is wife of the Earth god Geb and mother to Osiris, Isis, Horus, Set, and Nephthys.

RA: God of Creation. Believed to have created the world. Depicted as a falcon with the sun on his head.

SEKHMET: Goddess of medicine and war. Lionheaded goddess.

SERQET: Scorpion goddess and servant of Set.

SET: God of evil, chaos, and darkness. Son of Geb and Nut, husband and brother to Nephthys, and brother to Osiris and Isis. He murdered his brother Osiris out of jealousy and scattered pieces of his body, and plucked out the eye of Horus. Associated with the color red.

SHU: God of winds and father of Nut, the sky goddess. Under the edicts of Ra and Ma'at, Shu keeps Nut and Geb eternally separated.

THOTH: God of wisdom and writing. He had two forms, the ibis bird and the baboon. Thoth helped Isis bring Osiris back from the dead.

OTHER KEY FIGURES AND PLACES

DUAT: One of the ancient names for the afterworld, the dark realm of death in Egyptian mythology, situated west of the Nile (in later times considered to be beneath the earth). The sun passes through this place on its return journey from west to east. This underworld is represented by the hieroglyph for a star. It is here that souls are judged by Osiris.

MAGICIANS: There were two kinds of magicians in ancient Egypt. The first were trained priest-magicians who served in large temples and were part of the religious hierarchy. They were looked upon with wonder by the common people. These magicians had a special place in the temple—they worked in the House of Life. The second type of magicians were “lay” magicians. These men and woman practiced magic but were not attached to any temple.

PER ANKH/HOUSE OF LIFE: A small temple or building where records were kept about medicine, astronomy, geography, law, mathematics, and interpretation of dreams. Here magicians studied magical texts and other sciences, serving as custodians of all the knowledge of the temple and guarding their secrets carefully. Much like a modern day library, these temples served as centers for education.

MONSTERS, UNUSUAL CREATURES, AND DEVICES

APOPHIS: Giant serpent whose evil intention is to destroy creation.

FACE OF HORROR: Set's minion, who bears the hideous face of a decaying corpse and the feet of a rooster.

MAGIC WANDS: These devices are called *apotropaic*, meaning “to escape bad luck.” Magic wands are meant to turn away or avert evil spirits. Most often carved of ivory and inscribed with magical figures to protect their owners, wands were often used for drawing magical circles on the ground to create a “safe spot” that would repel evil spirits.

ROSETTA STONE: A large inscribed stone discovered during Napoléon Bonaparte's Egyptian Campaign (1798–1799). The stone enabled early linguists to translate and read the myths of ancient Egypt. The large black stone has three different scripts, including hieroglyphs, demotic (a late form of Egyptian writing), and Greek. The stone contained the same message written in Greek and the two Egyptian scripts and allowed scientists to decode the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic language.

SERPOPARDS: Referred to as “longnecks,” these creatures bear both reptile's and leopard's features.

SHABTI: These are magical clay figures. Shabti is the Egyptian word for “answerer.”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Carter begins the tale by stating, “If you’re hearing this story, you’re already in danger. Sadie and I might be your only chance.” How does this dramatic opening shape the mood of the novel?
- 2 Though Carter is only two years older than Sadie, she often teases him for acting like an old man. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
- 3 Given their long-term separation, what are some of the challenges for Carter and Sadie in regard to their relationship as brother and sister? What do you predict will be the most difficult elements to overcome?
- 4 Throughout the novel, Carter and Sadie take turns recording their story to leave for the others like them. Is hearing both perspectives of the story a benefit? Why or why not?



- 5 Why does Julius Kane train Carter to keep all of his possessions “in a single suitcase that fits in an airplane’s overhead compartment”? In what ways does this make Carter better prepared to embark on this adventure?
- 6 The author uses some unusual titles to introduce the chapters. Which of them is your favorite? For what reason?
- 7 In what ways do the physical differences in their appearances make things challenging for Carter and Sadie as siblings?
- 8 When learning that their mother died at Cleopatra’s Needle, Sadie’s frustration with her father mounts. Is she right to feel this way? Why might Julius have withheld this information? Was he right to do so?
- 9 Both Carter and Sadie wear Egyptian amulets given to them by their father. What does Julius hope will be accomplished by his children bearing these symbolic gifts? Do you have a possession that makes you feel particularly safe or lucky? If so, why?
- 10 While holding his father’s possessions, Sadie asks Carter, “What’s in his workbag?” After sharing that he doesn’t know because Julius instructed him not to look, Sadie retorts by exclaiming, “And you never did? God, that is so like you, Carter. You’re hopeless.” Why is Sadie so frustrated with Carter’s choices? Do you agree with his decision to respect his father’s instructions? Why or why not?
- 11 Throughout the course of the novel, Carter and Sadie learn that the world as they know it will never be the same. In what ways will it be better or worse for them? Have you had an experience that reshaped your life? In what ways have you changed due to this incident?
- 12 Explain the role of “The House of Life.” Why is it so determined to prevent Carter and Sadie from unleashing the power of the gods to stop Set and save their father?

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING	STATEMENTS
		It is acceptable to keep secrets from family members if it protects them.
		There are consequences for every action an individual takes.
		No matter the situation, you should always trust your family.
		If you know yourself well enough, you cannot be influenced by others.
		It is best to trust in the wisdom of those older or more experienced than you.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements with which they agree, and a “0” next to those with which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree indicate it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

LANGUAGE ARTS CONNECTIONS

Considering Character—Create an “I AM” Poem or a Biopoem

PURPOSE/DIRECTIONS: The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or, alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint or Movie Maker.

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)

I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)

I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)

I see (an imaginary sight the character might see)

I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (something that really bothers the character)

I cry (something that makes the character very sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)

I say (something that the character believes in)

I dream (something the character might actually dream about)

I try (something the character really makes an effort to do)

I hope (something the character actually hopes for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

BIPOEM

Line 1: First name _____

Line 2: Three traits that describe the character _____

Line 3: Relative of _____

Line 4: Lover of _____ (three things)

Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)

Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)

Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)

Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)

Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three things)

Line 10: Resident of _____

Line 11: Last name _____

ESSENTIAL QUOTES ANALYSIS

Students will reflect on some of the book's salient ideas—points the author seems to be making that might get to the heart of the book's intended meaning for readers. Select four quotes from throughout *The Red Pyramid* that seem to signify main ideas or “life lessons” the author is trying to express to readers. The quotes might be spoken by characters or could be part of the narration (remember to include page numbers). Next, explain why each quote seems to be so significant. How does it contribute to the book's “message” or deeper meaning? Be sure to consider how the quotes have meaning *beyond* the characters and situations of the book. They have universal application to readers' lives as well. When selecting your top four “essential quotes,” look for examples that have relevance to your own and others' lives, as though the author is speaking directly to you through the experiences and situations in the novel.

ESSENTIAL QUOTES

FROM *THE RED PYRAMID*

QUOTE	PAGE #	RELEVANCE IN NOVEL	"MESSAGE" TO READERS (UNIVERSAL APPLICATION)

MATH AND SCIENCE CONNECTIONS

- 1 In addition to a wide variety of inventions and global contributions, Ancient Egyptians excelled at applied mathematics. As a class, consider Horus eye fractions and the seven-symbol decimal system and how these systems affect modern math. Using library and Internet resources, have students consider other ways that the Ancient Egyptians contributed to the discipline of mathematics. Have students elect one of the following artifacts to research:

- The Akhmim wooden tablet
- The Egyptian mathematical leather roll
- The Kahun papyrus
- The Rhind mathematical papyrus

Consider: How has this object contributed to our understanding of mathematics during this time period? How did these advances serve the Egyptian people, and in what ways have Western mathematical practices been influenced by these contributions? Have students prepare a report of their findings.

- 2 Ancient Egyptians are credited for the formal mummification process, but mummification has been practiced throughout the world. Have students research the following:

- What is a mummy?
- Where have mummies been found?
- What are examples of different types of mummies?
- Why were people mummified? Was this always done on purpose?
If so, what was the intention?

Next, explore the mummification process. Consider the following things that can preserve a body—embalming; ice; peat bogs; dry desert climates with little moisture. Divide the class in groups and have each group research a well-known mummy. After gathering their findings, have them create a digital presentation and share it with the class.

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTIONS

Ancient Egypt is one of the most fascinating civilizations in world history. The lifestyle, architecture, and written language were all reflections of the power of the pharaohs and the tremendous influence of the gods worshipped by the Egyptian people. In order to better understand the references to this historical period in *The Red Pyramid*, an examination of the period itself and the daily life of the Ancient Egyptians is needed. According to interest, have students select one of the following aspects of Ancient Egypt to research. Topics to be considered include:

- Political and economic activity (gifts of the Nile, the Three Kingdoms, famous pharaohs, military activity, interaction with neighboring kingdoms)
- Daily life (class roles, gender roles, life for children, homes, schools, and temples)
- Culture (dress and makeup/jewelry, festivals and holidays, cuisine)
- Religion (deities, priests, beliefs and ceremonies, funerals, the afterlife)
- Intellectual achievements (hieroglyphics and language, the Rosetta Stone, pyramids, the Sphinx, obelisks, temples, cities, palaces, astronomy, science and mathematics, etc.)

Have students use the knowledge learned to create a Glogster digital poster at www.glogster.com. After creation, have students display share the unique features of their posters with the class.



THE ARTS CONNECTIONS

- 1 Hieroglyphics were used by the Ancient Egyptians as a means of communication and expression. After providing students with a hieroglyphics chart, have them practice writing in this artistic style or alternatively, have students visit the Discovery Channel's Hieroglyphic Generator at:
<http://kids.discovery.com/fansites/tutenstein/interactive/hierogenerator.html>. After some practice, have students design a banner with a popular slogan or catchphrase using hieroglyphs. Upon completion, display student creations throughout the classroom.
- 2 The legacy of Ancient Egypt includes the monuments erected during this time period. Have students research one of the great monuments (the Sphinx, the Pyramids at Giza, and the Temples at Luxor, for example) in regard to the conservation efforts being made to preserve these treasures. Have students consider the following:
 - What are the current structural conditions of these monuments?
 - What specific conservation efforts are being made or have been made in recent history?
 - Who are the invested parties in these endeavors and what is the prognosis for these efforts?
 - Have students use Animoto or another digital movie maker to create a video of their research findings to share with the class.
- 3 Papyrus is a thick, paperlike material produced from the pith of the papyrus plant. This plant was once abundant in the Nile delta of Egypt. In addition to being used to create scrolls, papyrus was also used for boats, mats, ropes, baskets, sandals, and other common products. Using guidelines found on the Internet, have students create a papyrus parchment or basket. Display all creations and consider hosting an art gallery event, inviting families to come view the students work.



THE RED PYRAMID POST-READING ACTIVITY

PURPOSE: Students make connections between characters or events in *The Red Pyramid* with people and events in their lives. After reading *The Red Pyramid*, ask students to complete the chart considering the ways in which the story relates to their life and the world at large.

As I read <i>The Red Pyramid</i> , I observed...	As I read <i>The Red Pyramid</i> , I wondered...
Sensory descriptions in <i>The Red Pyramid</i> (smell, hear, touch, sight, taste) included...	Some of the things I realized while reading <i>The Red Pyramid</i> were...

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ABOUT EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY AND ANCIENT EGYPT

- Remler, Pat. *Egyptian Mythology A to Z*. New York: Facts on File, 2006.
- *UXL Encyclopedia of World Mythology*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009.
- <http://news.egyptianmyths.net>
- <http://www.egyptsearch.com>
- <http://www.british-museum.ac.uk/index.html>
- http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hi/te_index.asp?i=14
- http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/YOUTH_RESOURCES.HTML

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RICK RIORDAN spent fifteen years as a classroom teacher in public and private schools in California and Texas. In 1997, he began publishing mystery novels for adults. His popular *Tres Navarre* series for won the top three national awards in the mystery genre—the Edgar, the Anthony, and the Shamus. His best-selling series, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, started as a bedtime story for his son. Rick Riordan now writes full time. He lives in San Antonio with his wife and two sons.



Matty Umans

Q&A WITH RICK RIORDAN

- 1 After mining the riches of the Greek myths for the Percy Jackson series, what inspired you to explore Egyptian mythology next?**

As I toured the country, many young fans kept asking if I would ever do another series with a different mythology. In my own classroom, the only unit more popular than Greece and Rome was Ancient Egypt. It's such a fascinating topic, I thought it would be great to bring those old stories into the modern world and give Egypt a "Percy Jackson" type of spin.

- 2 In what ways is this series different from your previous work?**

The main characters are quite different. Carter and Sadie are brother and sister. They take turn narrating the book. It was challenging and rewarding to tell the story from two different points of view. Carter started as my touchstone, since he's a lot like me when I was a kid, but I quickly became very fond of Sadie. She is such a funny, outspoken character. She really developed a life of her own!

The setting is also more international than the Percy books. The Kanes travel all over the place, from London to Cairo to Paris and all across the U.S.

And of course, Egyptian mythology is quite different than Greek mythology. One of my challenges was to take a complex set of stories that developed over five thousand years and make it clear, sensible, and funny for modern kids.

3 **What were some of the most interesting things you discovered while conducting research for *The Red Pyramid*?**

The House of Life was my favorite discovery. I can't believe no one had written about this before. Each Egyptian temple had a branch of priests who were magicians—the House of Life. Egyptian magic was famed throughout the ancient world. You see this in the Old Testament, when Moses battles Pharaoh's magicians. The fact that he could beat them was the ultimate test. Everyone in Moses's time would've understood that Egyptian magicians were the absolute best. I explored exactly how Egyptian magic worked. We have a lot of relics, spell books, and stories from thousands of years ago. I decided that the House of Life might still exist in secret, training magicians in the ancient ways. Bringing that to life was so much fun.

4 **Like your *Percy Jackson* series, *The Red Pyramid* employs savvy teens who must learn to navigate the world independently, without much help from adults. Was that a conscious decision on your part or did it happen organically as the story unfolded?**

I think kids always wonder what it would be like to be independent and in charge of their own destinies. That's why children's fiction is full of orphans, or kids whose parents are absent for one reason or another. It adds to the excitement and the peril. You see this in everything from *Treasure Island* to *The Boxcar Children*. I didn't consciously orchestrate this in *The Red Pyramid*, but I do think it's an important element of the adventure.



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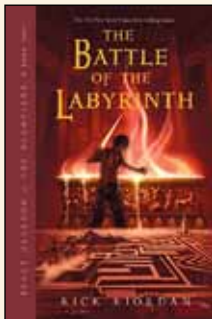
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This guide was created by Rose Brock, a school librarian and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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