Story Summaries



# Ipi’s story – An Ancient Egyptian Artisan Apprentice talks about his first job.

Ipi’s story begins with Ipi as an old man, talking with his apprentice in his workshop in the craftsman’s village of Deir El Medina in the Valley of the Kings. He recalls making his first ever Shabti when he was apprenticed as a child to his uncle, a master carpenter. It was in the days following the unexpected death of Pharaoh Seti 1st and the whole valley had been thrown into mayhem as the builders, painters, masons and carpenters rushed to complete the tomb.

Carried by Ipi’s memories, we travel back in time to the year 1279BCE. Young Ipi, a boy now, is in the workshop carving a shabti, one of a thousand similar figures needed for the Pharaoh’s tomb, when, with a slip of the hand he accidently knocks off the tip of its nose. The tip flies across the workshop and lands in the lap of Paneb, one of the other craftsmen, and the room erupts into laughter. Full of shame, Ipi flees, running out into the valley and up onto a high ridge, where he finds a hiding place in an empty hut belonging to the watchman Menes.

As Ipi sits alone, he reflects on how difficult he has found carving his first ever shabti. He recalls how he didn’t want to be a carpenter in the first place – he wanted to follow his father and brother Khufu to become a tomb painter. Instead, he was apprenticed to his uncle, and with little preparation left to get on with carving the shabti all by himself. He tries to comfort himself by remembering some of his more successful efforts, practicing carving a shabti spell on an old block of wood and memorising text from the Book of the Dead, he also reflects on how he got off to a good start with his shabti, carving its hands, tools and hieroglyphs reasonably well. He thinks about his uncle and how he’s so skilled that the faces he carves look like they will come to life. Then he remembers his own attempts to carve the nose, the tip flying through the air and laughter filling the room, and his feelings of embarrassment come flooding back.

It is then that Ipi hears his name being called from outside the hut, it is his uncle! He hides under the bench, but as his uncle opens the door he is spotted immediately. His uncle laughs as he tells him to come out and show him the shabti. Ipi reluctantly hands it over, telling his uncle how rubbish it is. His uncle tells him they will simply glue the nose tip back on with some resin. Ipi protests saying he wants it to be perfect, and uncle laughs again, telling him that he has the foreman breathing down his neck, and no time to waste on such small matters. He reassures Ipi that he will improve with each shabti he makes and sends him back to the workshop where another block of juniper wood is waiting for him to start carving his next shabti.

Ipi’s story ends back in the workshop with old Ipi and his apprentice once again – Ipi shares with the boy that he has now learnt that it was the imperfections of his first shabti that made it beautiful… just as will be the case for his young pupil when the time comes.

## Activity ideas

* 1. Create a character profile for Ipi, starting with what you have learnt from the audio story. You could think about his strengths, weaknesses and super powers, a bit like a Top Trumps card! What other detail could you add using your imagination, or further research and drama work you have already done?
  2. Based on Ipi’s review of his handiwork in the audio story, and the role play between Ipi and Khufu from the Using Drama for Learning section, write instructions for a new apprentice on how to carve a shabti figurine.
  3. Using the locations mentioned in the audio story, map the Valley of the Kings considering both the human and physical features e.g. what terrain does Ipi cross to get to Menes’ hut, what would be needed to supply Deir El Medina (the craftsman’s village), how might the materials required to build and decorate Pharaoh Seti’s tomb be transported into the valley?

## Vocabulary used in Ipi’s Story

Craftsman – a skilled worker who makes items that can be used both for decoration and to do a specific job

Carpenter – a person who makes wooden objects and structures

Tomb – a room or space underground for burying the dead

Chisel – a tool used for cutting or carving wood

Mallet – a large hammer

Hoe – a gardening tool with a thin metal blade used for digging

Hieroglyphs – Ancient Egyptian writing that uses pictures instead of words

Workshop – a room where objects are made

Foreman – a person in charge of a group of workers

Apprentice – a person learning a job from someone who is skilled in it, often for little money

# Amelia Edwards’ story – Amelia and Aquila both have an avid interest in ancient Egypt. But they don’t agree about what Amelia should be talking about and showing during her lecture to the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society.

It is the late 1880’s in Leeds, and Reverend Aquila Dodgson; Minister, keen Egyptologist and Secretary of the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society; walks through the streets on his way to the Philosophical Hall and Museum. En-route he pauses to admire the city’s municipal buildings, reflecting on how Leeds can be proud of its reputation as a city of learning and culture.

He arrives at the Hall and in the entrance spots a lady’s hat, cape and umbrella hanging on the coat stand…his guest, Miss Amelia Edwards, has arrived!

In a side room, Miss Edwards is addressing an envelope to Reverend Dodgson. She packs a notebook containing lecture notes for the address she is about to give to the members of the Society into her bag, along with a wrapped object. She checks her appearance in a mirror and then with note in hand, leaves the room.

In another side room Aquila is retying his cravat, when the note is slid under his door. Humming, he goes to retrieve it, slices it open with a letter knife and reads…he stops humming, his face falls. Hurrying now, he leaves the room.

Aquila and Amelia meet on the stairs and greet one another warmly; the Reverend welcomes Miss Edwards to the Hall and asks about her journey from Bristol, she in return thanks him for all the arrangements that have been put in place for her. She starts down the stairs as if to proceed to the planned reception with the Society’s members before the lecture, but is stalled by Aquila. He raises with her the subject of her imminent lecture, sharing that he was of the opinion that she was going to talk about the scientific work of the Society, particularly the investigations carried out on the mummy Nesyamun; work that was considered critical in raising the profile of Leeds. However, on reading her note, he discovers that there has been a change of plan. Amelia reminds him that the work he speaks of was carried out over 60 years ago and that the reputation of Leeds is now truly established. Aquila in turn, reminds her that they had already agreed upon the content of her lecture, and that members of the Society and the press are expecting her to talk on these aforementioned achievements. Moreover he adds, he is surprised to find that she intends to speak about small, domestic artefacts from his own private collection instead. She reassures him that she will speak only about those artefacts that she has gifted to him, so that there can be no accusation of self-promotion on his part, and that these items are significant in that they demonstrate the vital work of the Egyptian Exploration Fund. Amelia manages to steer past Aquila and continue on towards the lecture hall.

As they walk, Aquila continues to enquire about the items Amelia has selected to focus on in her lecture and is surprised when she tells him that it will be a shabti from the tomb of Pharaoh Seti 1st. He protests that such figures are common and adorn the homes of many tourists who have travelled to Egypt.

They arrive at the doors of the lecture hall where the members of the Society are waiting inside, Aquila moves to block Amelia’s entrance. He asks again why Amelia wants to talk about the shabti, and is shocked when she unwraps the object from her bag and reveals it to be the shabti, taken from his own personal collection. Amelia tells him that this small figure tells a story of tombs stripped of their gold by graverobbers, the plundering of ancient sites by so-called European adventurers and street traders selling artefacts as tourist trinkets with no care for their value or origins. She tells Aquila that the Egypt Exploration Fund will promote the cause of preservation and learning, protecting objects, such as the shabti, for future generations. She appeals to him to support the fund, and to encourage the members to also donate. She suggests that as a supporter, he may be able to join an expedition to Egypt to join archaeologist Flinders Petrie at the site of the Temple of Amarna.

Won over by this suggestion, Aquila opens the door and he and Amelia enter the lecture hall together.

## Vocabulary used in Amelia’s Story

Preservation – keeping something that is considered important, free from damage or decay

Scholarship – learning at a high level

Lecture – an educational talk to an audience

Excavation – digging, especially to remove something from the earth

Mantleshelf – a shelf above a fireplace, often used to display things in the home

Racketeer – a person who takes part in dishonest business

Minister – a Christian religious leader

Archaeologist – a person who studies things that people made, used and left behind to understand what people of the past were like and how they lived

# Shabti’s story – from workshop, to tomb, to grave robber, to market, to collector, to museum. Follow the story of the Shabti over thousands of years as it wakes to the sound of excited chatter, squealing and laughter.

It is modern day, and we are at the Leeds Discovery Centre. In a box, on a shelf, nestled amongst racks of other artefacts, a shabti is sleeping soundly.

A school party arrives led by a curator, and the shabti awakes…he is not happy! He knows the score, he will be taken out of his box, held up, inspected, and worst of all, discussed in a most impertinent manner However on this occasion the group moves on; they are not here to see him after all. In fact they are going to view some other shabtis over on rack seven!

He consoles himself by reflecting on how unique he is, despite being an apprentice piece, and how the curators who work here don’t have a clue. He is designed to answer the call of the Gods to work in the afterlife in place of the Pharaoh. That’s what his hieroglyphs say at least, but it’s not what he thinks! His motto is “leave me to sleep”; there were plenty of other shabtis in the tomb who could answer the call of the Gods in his place.

However it hasn’t quite worked out that way over the past few thousand years, and his mind wanders back to all the things that have interrupted his sleep over time. First there were the craftsmen who came a few years after the tomb was sealed looking for gold for Ramesses’ palaces. Then came the graverobbers, smashing their way in, looking for anything of value. They caused such destruction, throwing the shabti across the chamber, breaking his nose off for a second time, even setting some of the other shabtis alight to use as torches. Then after a snooze of perhaps a thousand years or so, there came the Italian explorer, Belzoni, clearing the tomb of everything he could lay his hands on, including the shabti, who was carried out into the light of day, passed from hand to hand, ending up being sold on the banks of the River Nile.

The shabti’s memories fade and we are back in the centre where he settles himself down for a doze once more. He is interrupted by the return of the curator, and this time she is with someone. They come over to his shelf, lift him out of his box and talk about how he is to be taken to the museum to go on display at an exhibition. He is overjoyed, perhaps these curators do know what they are talking about after all, he thinks. This is his moment, he has been called by the Gods…at last!

## Activity ideas

1. You are now a journalist who will cover the opening of a new exhibition at Leeds City Museum. On prominent display is a small wooden figurine – a shabti – an object that is often overlooked. What is it about this shabti that makes it so unique? As a journalist you are tasked with writing an (online) article about the shabti, that will be accompanied by images and will need an attention grabbing headline. You will have the chance to interview the curator, who is in charge of the exhibition, to find out a little more so you must carefully prepare your questions.
2. Your teacher will become the curator. The curator is very busy and only has a short amount of time to speak with journalists so make sure that every question counts!
3. Now write an award winning article for the opening of the exhibition.

## Vocabulary used in the Shabti’s Story

Mass-produced – something made in large quantities

Motto – a short sentence summing up someone’s beliefs

Exhibition – a display of things that are of interest to the public

Faience – a type of glass-like material used to make objects, the word means ‘dazzling’ or ‘shining’

Curator – people who look after collections of objects and artworks at museums, galleries and libraries

Humidity – the amount of water in the air

Magnification – making something look bigger than it really is

# Jess Harrison’s story – Jess is a curator at Leeds Discovery Museum. Her favourite object is the Shabti of Seti I. Jess receives a mysterious and exciting email offering some Egyptian objects to the Museum. What will she discover and how will she respond?

It is modern day and we see Jess cycling on her way to work. She is asking for our help and begins to recount the circumstances leading to her request.

As she walks into the building, she tells us that it has been a year since she got her dream job as a curator at the Discovery Centre. She walks down the corridor, looking at the display cases and remembering her childhood experiences of visiting museums. She describes the craft sessions she and her brother did, the picnics they ate, how her mum was calm and happy and how she used to make her own museums once she got back home.

As she walks towards the main store, her phone pings in her pocket signaling that an email has been received; she ignores it and carries on into the store to say ‘Good Morning’ to Mok, the skeleton of a western lowland gorilla. Her phone pings again, and slightly annoyed at the interruption, she heads to her office to check her emails.

Taking off her cycling gear, she scans her emails, before sitting to read one from Mrs Susan Bletherswick. She is contacting Jess about three artefacts she has found in her loft that she thinks might have belonged to Reverend Aquila Dodgson – a mummy’s hand, a grave mask and a cuneiform letter. Attached to the email are photographs of the three objects and old handwritten labels to accompany the mummy’s hand and cuneiform letter, both mentioning the names Flinders Petrie, Tel-El-Amarna, and the date 1892. Mrs Bletherswick wants to know whether the objects might be of interest to the museum.

Jess is intrigued; she jumps up from her desk and heads back into the store, all the while reflecting on what she knows of Aquila Dodgson. She recalls him taking a trip with his wife to meet up with Flinders Petrie in Amarna in 1891, and how he had brought back artefacts for his private collection, some of which were donated to the museum by his son, Walter, and more bought at a later date, including one of her favourite objects in the centre, a shabti.

She arrives at the aisle where the shabti is stored, locates it and takes it out of its box. Using a magnifying glass, she looks at its label and asks whether the handwriting matches the other labels photographed by Mrs Bletherswick. Jess is convinced that it does, and starts to believe that the three artefacts really could be from Aquila Dodgson’s personal collection.

Jess then walks around the store looking at the thousands of artefacts housed there, reflecting on what she should do in response to Mrs Bletherswick’s offer. She thinks about how the museum has to know the provenance of any item before it can be accepted into the collections, and that a strong connection to Leeds might make an object of greater interest, but then she questions whether an object, such as the cuneiform letter, might have more meaning for the people in its country of origin. She rules out accepting the mummy’s hand, as it illegal to take human remains, but remains undecided about the grave mask. She shares her admiration for the Egyptians and their achievements but worries that the mask could be stolen property and thinks about how the idea of a stolen artefact is not straightforward anyway. She questions how you can decide who owns anything that‘s been buried for thousands of years, and deliberates on where such treasures should be held. By this time her thoughts have run their course, she has walked a complete circuit of the store and is standing back by Mok.

She returns to her computer and starts to type her reply to Mrs Bletherswick.

Finally she pauses with her fingers on the keyboard to ask what she should write.

## Activity ideas

1. Write Jess’s reply to Mrs Bletherswick. This can be done either individually or in a group.
2. When you have drafted your final version read it out to the rest of the class.
3. Create a character profile for Jess, starting with what you have learnt from the film. What other detail could you add using your imagination, further research and drama work you may have been doing?

## Discussion ideas

1. What are your best memories of visiting a museum? What did you do? What did you think? How did you feel?
2. How do we decide who owns anything that’s been buried for thousands of years anyway? Is it the archaeologist who finds it – or the person who’s paying the archaeologist to dig? Is it the person who owns the land, or the whole country where the dig takes place? Or simply the person who can offer the most money for it?
3. Genuine or Fake – how can we tell whether a museum object is real or not?

## Vocabulary used in Jess’s Story

Cuneiform – a form of ancient writing

Linen – a smooth strong cloth made from the flax plant

Hoax – a trick in which someone tells a lie

Artefact – an object made by humans that can give us information about life in the past

Collections – a group of objects brought together to be seen, studied or kept together

Provenance – the history of something, where it is from and who has owned it

Evidence – facts and information to prove that something is true or false

Geometry – a kind of mathematics that deals with shapes and figures

Plough – a farming machine that prepare the soil for planting seeds

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceText

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceText

Description automatically generated