

Mystery Object – Egypt 1 – Canopic Jars



What are they made from?

These jars were commonly made from pottery or carved out of limestone. These ones are made from limestone.

What would have been put inside?

During the mummification process human organs were put inside for safekeeping as it was believed that they would be needed in the afterlife. There would have been 4 jars for the stomach, intestines, lungs and liver. There was no jar for the heart as it was believed to hold the memories, personality and knowledge of a person. It was left inside the body.

What do the carved heads represent?

Each jar was carved with the head of one of the sons of the god Horus. These gods were Hapi the baboon who protected the lungs, Qebehsenuf the falcon who guarded the intestines, Duamutef the jackal who guarded the stomach and Imsety the human who guarded the liver.

What are they?

These are canopic jars. They were used by the Ancient Egyptians as part of the mummification process. They stored and preserved the organs from a mummy for use in the afterlife.

Interesting fact: These canopic jars were collected by Marianne Brocklehurst on a trip to Egypt in the 19th Century. The heads have the names of the gods carved into them. The carvings on the jars don't make any sense. The lids and jars are made from different types of limestone. This raises questions about the age of the jars. There are a number of options and we don't yet know what the answer is. Sometimes *real*



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objects had nonsense inscriptions so they could be from Ancient Egypt. They could have been made in Ancient Egypt and had the inscriptions added at a later date by the person selling them to make them seem more valuable. The lids could be ancient with the jars more recent, or the other way around. This shows an exciting challenge that museum staff face when working out the history of an object. There are still lots of questions to be answered!