Name: _____

Date: _____

Isis, Osiris and the Egyptian Afterlife

The people of ancient Egypt did not have scientific explanations for natural phenomena. They believed sunshine and the Nile River were gifts from their many gods. These beliefs about ancient Egyptian religion and the afterlife changed over time, but many of their legends influenced Egyptian culture for thousands of years.

Ra and the Power of the Sun

The ancient Egyptians believed Ra was the sun god who came to earth as the first ruler of Egypt. Egypt became very wealthy during Ra's rule, but the people grew lazy, it was said, and neglected to honor the sun god.

Ra used his magic to create a bloodthirsty lioness god named Sekhmet. Sekhmet reminded the Egyptian people of the power of Ra by terrorizing the Nile River Valley. When the Egyptian people showed their appreciation, Ra tamed Sekhmet and turned her into Hathor, the goddess of love.

This lesson tells us that the Egyptians valued and feared the sun. The sun made it possible for Egyptian crops to grow, but the sun could also turn good farmland into desert.

Isis, Osiris, and Seth

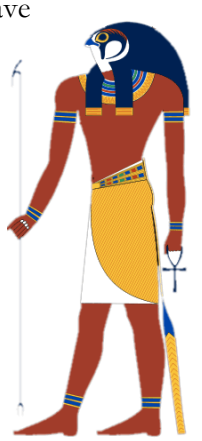
Ra's many children included Osiris and Isis, the brother and sister who ruled the Nile River Valley after they taught the Egyptians to farm and domesticate animals. The Egyptian people praised Osiris and Isis for the many gifts they gave to Egyptian civilization.

Seth was the jealous brother of Osiris and Isis and the god of storms. Seth invited all the gods to a great party. Near the end of the feast, Seth brought in a beautiful cedar chest.

"I will give this chest to whosoever fits in it exactly!" The gods tried to fit into the box, but each was either too big or too small. Seth had carefully measured his brother and specially built the chest so that only he would fit inside it. Osiris was the last of the guests to lie down in the chamber.

"I am the exact fit, so the chest is mine," cried Osiris as he climbed into the container.

"It is your chest, and it is where you will be forever," replied Seth as he sealed the lid and cast the chest and Osiris into the Nile. Isis recovered her brother's body and returned it to Egypt. When Seth discovered what Isis had done, he ripped open the chest, tore the body of Osiris into fourteen pieces, and scattered the pieces along the whole length of the Nile.



Horus is often depicted as having the body of a man and the head of a falcon.

The Afterlife and the Underworld

The people of ancient Egypt believed that when their gods left this world they could live in an afterlife. The afterlife was a perfect version of ancient Egypt. But the gods first had to pass through the underworld to get to the afterlife.

The underworld was a strange and dangerous place filled with fantastic, fearsome creatures. Traveling through the underworld required the Egyptian gods to be very clever as they completed many tasks. The Egyptians believed that their gods could not reach the afterlife unless their bodies remained in one piece in Egypt. Isis knew the body of Osiris had to be intact and buried in Egyptian sand, so when she found the pieces of her brother, she buried Osiris in a secret place where Seth could not find him.

Horus Battles Seth

Horus was the son of Isis and the god of the sky. Horus took the form of a falcon and brought the sun each day as he flew across the sky. The eyes of Horus were said to be the sun and the moon, but the moon was not as bright because Seth damaged it in a great battle. Horus subdued Seth, but he was never able to kill his uncle. This legend of Horus and Seth helps to explain why the Egyptians believed that they could never completely defeat evil and chaos.

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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Name: _____

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Fill in the Blanks

The people of ancient Egypt believed in many g_____ and g__d__e__s__s. They believed that Ra, their god of the s____, came to e__r__h as the first r__l__r of Egypt. When the Egyptian people began to disregard Ra, the sun god unleashed a terrible l__o__e__s god named S__k__m__t on the people, but when the Egyptians showed their *a__p__e__i__t__on to Ra, the sun god used his m__g__c to turn Sekmet into H__t__or, the goddess of l_____.

Osiris, Isis and Seth were c__i__d__en of Ra. Seth tricked O__i__is into climbing into a giant c_____ and then threw the chest into the N_____. Isis *r__t__i__v__d the chest, so the enraged Seth tore his brother's body into f__u__t__en pieces. Isis recovered the pieces of Osiris' body because the E__y__t__a__s believed their gods had to be b__r__ed in one piece in order to travel to the a__t__r__i__e.

Seth was finally defeated in a great battle H__r__s. Horus was Seth's *n__p__ew and the god of the s____. The legends say that Horus would take the form of a f__l__on and fly across the sky each day. The eyes of Horus were the s____ and the m_____, but the moon was not as bright as the sun because it had been damaged in Horus' battle with S_____.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. Why do you think Ra was one of the most important of the Egyptian gods?

2. Why was it necessary for Isis to find and rebuild the body of Osiris?

3. How was the underworld different from the afterlife?

4. According to Egyptian mythology, why were the Egyptians never able to defeat evil and chaos?

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