

Think Sphinx

In the Egyptian Art Galleries

What is a sphinx?

The typical ancient Egyptian sphinx is a creature with a lion's body and a human head. Usually sphinxes depict the king (pharaoh). A lion body could also be combined with the heads of other animals—for example the head of a ram or a falcon—to represent a god.

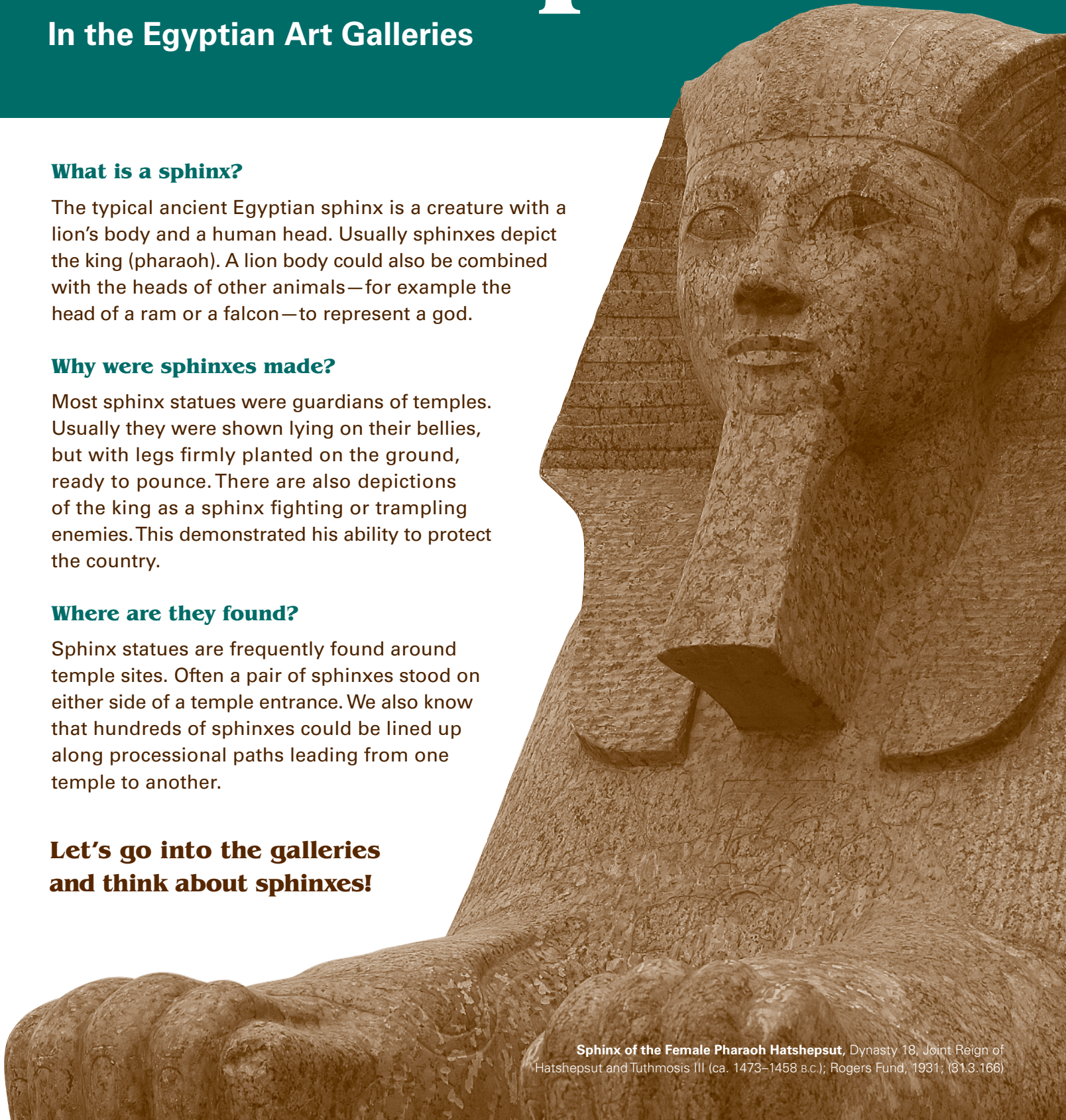
Why were sphinxes made?

Most sphinx statues were guardians of temples. Usually they were shown lying on their bellies, but with legs firmly planted on the ground, ready to pounce. There are also depictions of the king as a sphinx fighting or trampling enemies. This demonstrated his ability to protect the country.

Where are they found?

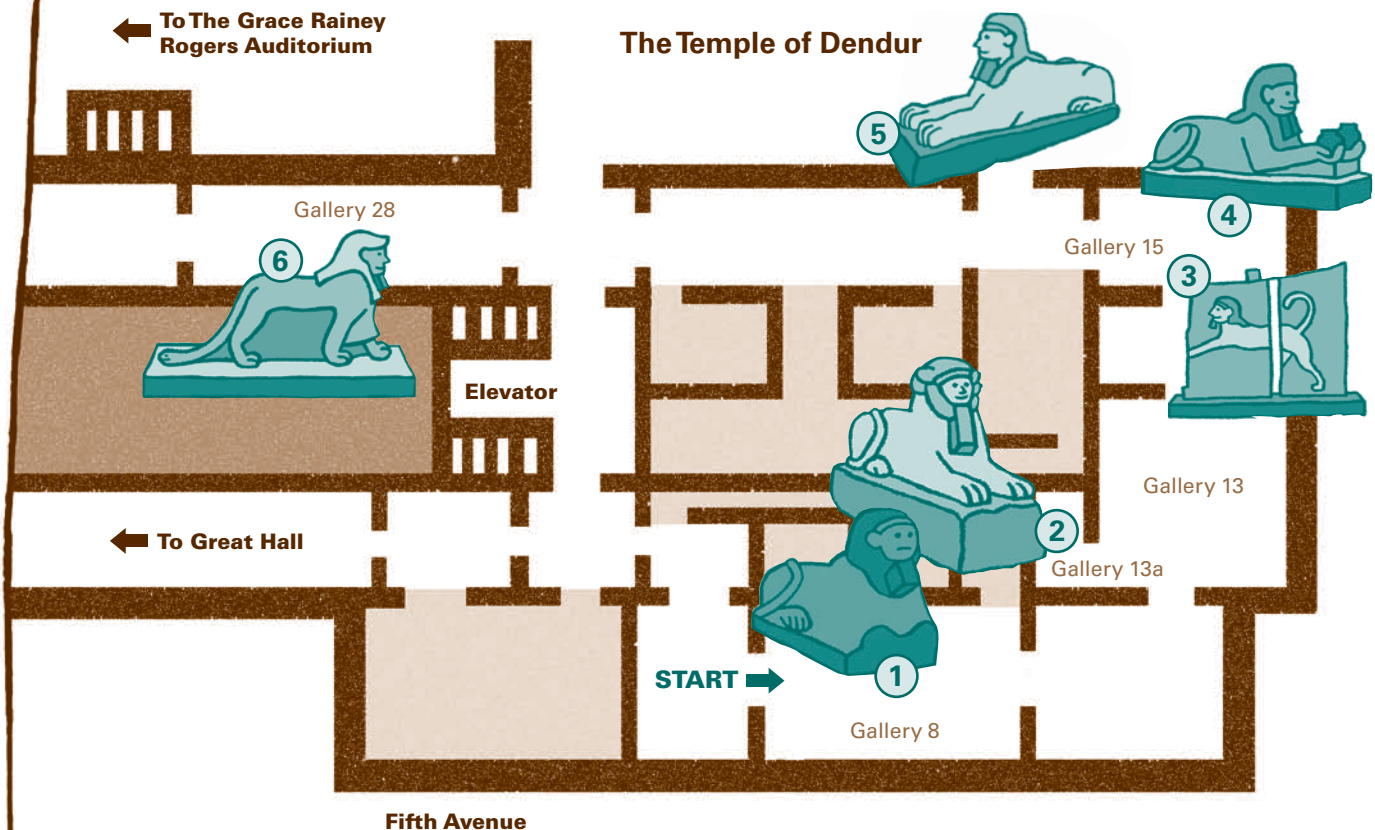
Sphinx statues are frequently found around temple sites. Often a pair of sphinxes stood on either side of a temple entrance. We also know that hundreds of sphinxes could be lined up along processional paths leading from one temple to another.

**Let's go into the galleries
and think about sphinxes!**



Search for Sphinxes

Use this map of the Egyptian galleries to locate each sphinx. All of them have a lion's body and a human head. **Tip:** There are many sphinxes in these galleries. Look carefully to make sure you've found the right one!



1 Sphinx of Pharaoh Senwosret III

Dynasty 12 (ca. 1878–1840 B.C.)
Gift of Edward S. Harkness,
1917 (17.9.2)

2 Small Sphinx of the Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut

Dynasty 18, Joint Reign of
Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III
(ca. 1473–1458 B.C.)
Rogers Fund, 1931 (31.3.94)

3 Chair Panel of Pharaoh Thutmose IV

Dynasty 18, Reign of Tuthmosis IV
(ca. 1400–1390 B.C.)
Theodore M. Davis Collection,
Bequest of Theodore M. Davis,
1915 (30.8.45a–c)

4 Sphinx of Pharaoh Amenhotep III Holding Offerings

Dynasty 18, Reign of Amenhotep III
(ca. 1390–1352 B.C.)
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace-
Gift, 1972 (1972.125)

5 Sphinx of the Female Pharaoh Hatshepsut

Dynasty 18, Joint Reign of
Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III
(ca. 1473–1458 B.C.)
Rogers Fund, 1931 (31.3.166)

6 The Protective God Tutu as a Small Sphinx

Ptolemaic Period (305–30 B.C.)
Theodore M. Davis Collection,
Bequest of Theodore M. Davis,
1915 (30.8.71)

When you find a sphinx, look at it closely so you can answer the questions about it in the chart. You will find the answer choices in the list below. Write the letter of the answer in the chart. Some answers can be used more than once.

Position

- A. Lying down
- B. Standing
- C. Fighting

Ears

- D. Human
- E. Lion

Head Covering

- F. Royal head cloth (tied at back)
- G. Three-part wig (not tied at back)
- H. Lion's mane

End of Legs
(front and back)

- I. Lion's paws
- J. Human hands
- K. Nothing—missing paws/hands

Tail

- L. Lion (round end)
- M. Bull (long, rectangular end)
- N. Ends in serpent's head

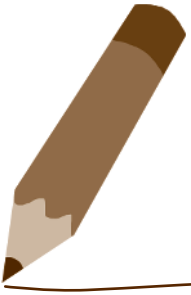
Material

- O. Red granite (pink stone)
- P. Gneiss (black and white stone)
- Q. Blue faience
- R. Limestone (cream stone)
- S. Cedar wood

Thinking Sphinx

	1	2	3	4	5	6
In what position is this sphinx?	A					
What kind of ears does it have?						
What covers its head?						
What are at the ends of its front legs?						
What are at the ends of its back legs?						
What kind of tail does it have?						
What material is it made of?						

Bonus question: Only one of the sphinxes wears bracelets. If you have time, return to Start and find that sphinx. Write its number here: _____



Time to Draw!

An Egyptian sphinx combines animal and human features to show different sides of a powerful ruler. In the space below, put together different animal parts to make a creature that shows who you are. Would you have the wings of a bird, the tail of a monkey, the trunk of an elephant? What pose or clothing might also help others to understand your special powers?



Education
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028-0198
www.metmuseum.org

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