

HUMANITIES WRITING COMPETITION INFORMATION 2026-7

1. LR 662

Object name: Crocodile mummy

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=663



Material: linen cloth, animal remains

Length: 27.5 cm

Place: Egypt

Date: Ptolemaic, about 330 BC

Acquisition source: not recorded

In ancient Egypt, crocodiles were associated with the Sobek, the god of the River Nile, and large numbers of them were deliberately raised, killed and mummified as offerings to the divinity.

2. LR 794

Object name: Tanagra child figurine

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=796



Material: terracotta

Height: 8.4 cm

Place: Boeotia, Greece

Date: 300–200 BC

Acquisition source: Hon. Evelyn Saumarez, 1902

‘Tanagra’ figures, dating from the third century BCE, are named after the town in Greece where they were first found in large quantities, most often in tombs. They are small terracotta human figures made in hollow moulds, painted after firing. Although they follow an older tradition of terracotta figures used as cult images or votive objects, they may have been used simply as ornaments. Most are graceful figures of young women or athletes. But what may have been the purpose of this miniature figure of a child in a conical cap (pilos), huddled and almost completely hidden under a cloak? Is the figure playful or sad?

3. LR 147

Object name: Falcon amulet

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=147



Material: steatite (soapstone)

Height: 2.5 cm

Place: Egypt

Date: BC 664–525

Acquisition source: Gwendolen Crewdson, 1918–19

A finely carved falcon with a loop on the back allowing it to be hung on a necklace or bracelet. The falcon represented various deities in ancient Egypt, particularly the sky-god Horus, and to wear an amulet representing the god would bring his favour and protection.

4. LR 825

Object name: Lekythos (storage container)

https://lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/object-record.php?get_object_record=827



Material: pottery

Height: 17 cm

Place: Attica, Greece

Date: 500–400 BC

Acquisition source: unknown

A lekythos was a slender one-handled ceramic vessel used for storing oil, especially for use in funeral rituals, and they are often found in tombs. Many are elaborately decorated, but this one is plain 'white-ground' (i.e. painted with a white slip), with traces of red and black paint on the base. On one side has been scratched a graffito 'stick figure' of a person wearing a head-dress. There is a similar, unfinished stick figure on the opposite side. These may be modern.

5. (No catalogue number)

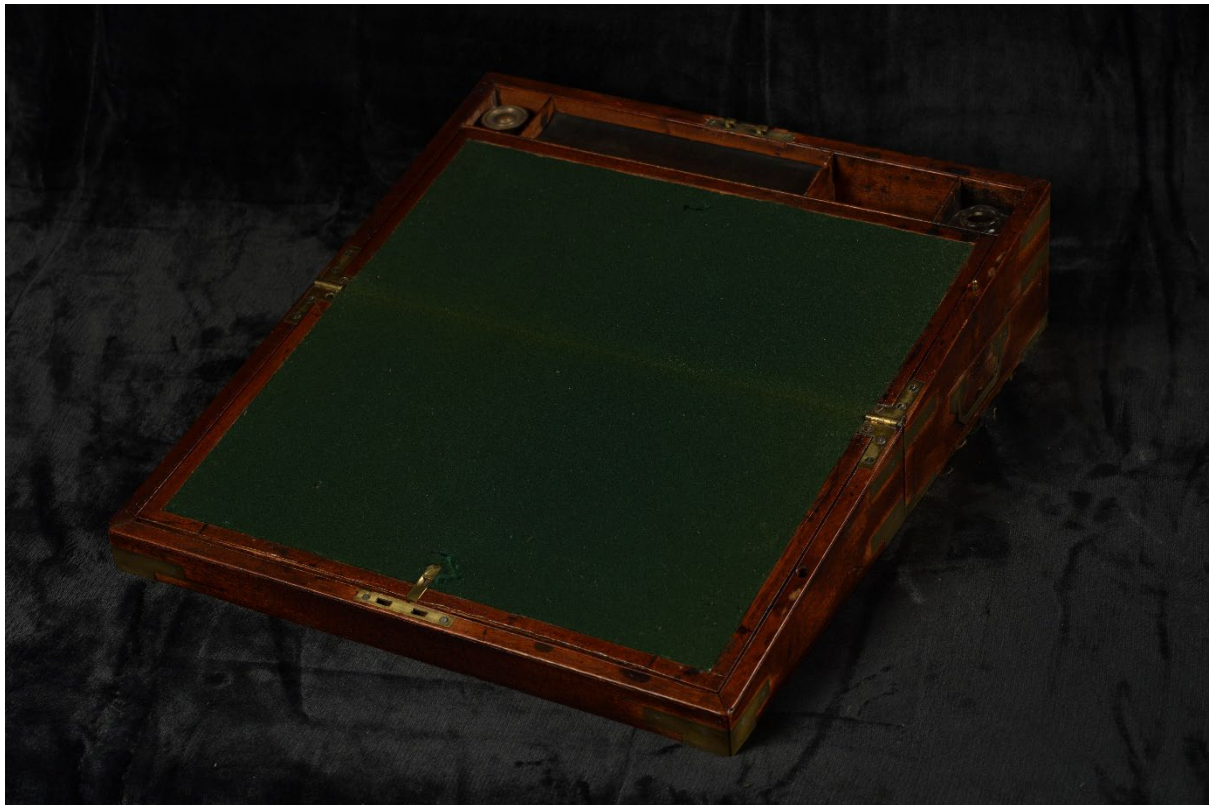
Object name: Writing desk

Materials: wood, baize

Dimensions: 45 × 35 cm

Place: Britain?

Date: unknown – circa 1800?



This portable wooden writing-desk is thought to have belonged to one of the founders of Girton College, Emily Davies (1830–1921). It had apparently belonged to at least one generation of Emily’s family before her, and Emily ‘used it all her life’, according to the friend who eventually gave it to the College in 1936. It stands in the Lawrence Room as a memento of Emily Davies’s long life of activism on behalf of women’s suffrage and education.

Some themes:

- Continuity and change in ancient Egypt
- Divine animals
- The sacred and the everyday
- Representations of childhood
- Problems of authenticity and provenance in museum collections
- Memorials and mementoes
- Anything else an object suggests to you!

Some starting points for research:

Check out our social media and website, where we will be discussing each object - @girtonoutreach on Instagram and @girtoncollege on TikTok!

Tanagras:

Alexandra L. Heller, 'The representation of children in Hellenistic sculpture : continuity or change?' Northern Illinois University, 2018. Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations. 6216.

<https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7215&context=allgraduate-thesesdissertations>

<https://www.carleton.edu/ocs/greece/news/week-9-ellie-simon/>

[HWC_202627_Tanagra_Figurines.pdf](#)

Egyptian objects:

New York Metropolitan Museum of Art website:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/570752>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/egypt-in-the-late-period-ca-712-332-b-c>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/egypt-in-the-ptolemaic-period>

Lekythos:

<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/pottery/shapes/lekythos.htm>

[HWC_202627_Lekythos.pdf](#)

Writing desk:

[HWC_202627_Writing_Desk.pdf](#)

<https://hudsonvalley.org/article/the-situation-of-her-writing-desk/>

