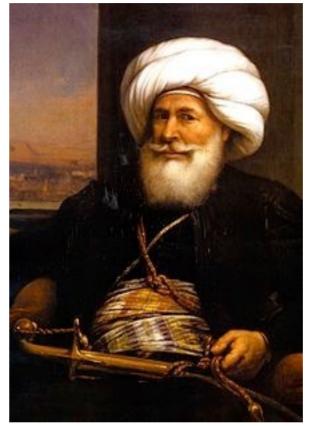


## **Historical Context**

The obelisk was a key architectural feature of Ancient Egypt dating from as early as the 4th dynasty (c. 2575-2465 BCE) and were generally placed in pairs at the entrance of temples dedicated to the sun god Re. Cut from a single piece of heavy stone, Egyptian obelisks were large monuments of a tapered triangular shape topped off with a gold or silver alloy. The four sides of an obelisk were covered with hieroglyphs that usually offered praise to the sun god Re or commemorated the Egyptian ruler who commissioned them. Beginning with Roman rule in 31 BCE many of Egypt's obelisks were transported throughout the empire to be set up in various cities. Because of this, the city of Rome now houses more obelisks than anywhere else in the world (including Egypt). Three such obelisks found their way to the metropolises of London, Paris, and New York in the nineteenth century. Known collectively as "Cleopatra's Needles" these obelisks were given to their new Western homes by the Khedives (or rulers of Egypt and Sudan)—Muhammed Ali Pasha, to London and Paris, and Ismail Pasha to New York.

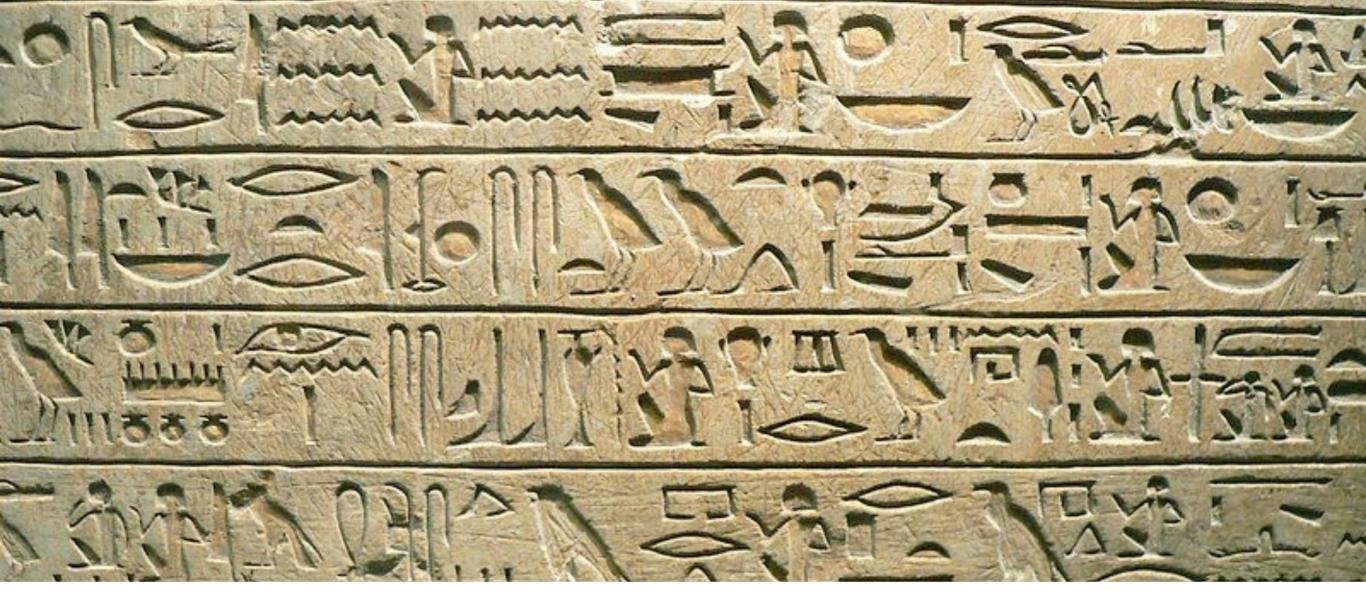


Khedive Muhammed Ali Pasha (1769-1849)





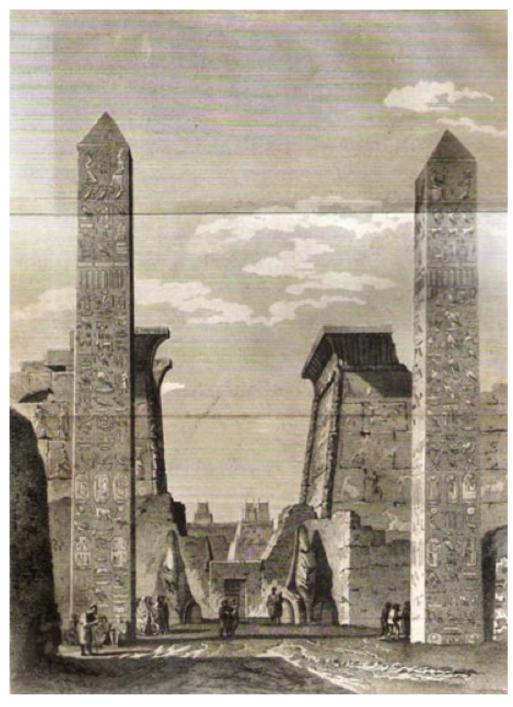
Khedive Ismail Pasha (1830-1895)



Essential Question: Who owns-or who has the right to-cultural property?

#### **Extension Activities for Students**

- 1. Compare the two European viewpoints show-cased below.
- 2. Pretend you are an Egyptian in . write a letter to one of the Europeans in response to their writings (do you agree with what they said? Why or why not? Do you think the obelisks should be returned to Egypt? Why or why not?)
- 3. Mock debate (Obelisks should return to Egypt v. Obelisks should stay where they are)
- 4. Research a similar, current controversy and start a twitter hashtag
- 5. Research a similar, current controversy and create a "wanted" poster for the artifact in question.



Engraving representing the two obelisks in front of the temple of Luxor (one of which today is located in the Plaza de la Concorde in Paris).



Use the scroll bar on the left to read the questions.

- 1. Compare the engraving with the modern photograph of the obelisks in front of the Luxor Temple.
- 2. Write down the differences between the two that you notice. Based on your observations, what do you think the purpose of the obelisks were?



Temple of Luxor today.

"I informed his Highness the people of the United States desired one of the ancient obelisks of Egypt, and that a wealthy gentleman of New York had offered to defray the expenses of its transportation and of its erection in that city. I mentioned the obelisk of Paris and that of London and the natural desire of our people to also have one in their metropolis. I explained, in the course of the conversation, that our nation was so young and all its works of so recent a date that one of the ancient monuments of Egypt would be much more highly prized in the United States than in England or France. I called attention to the obelisk at Alexandria as the most accessible for shipment, but added that, if his Highness concluded to favor us with such a gift, we should be much pleased with any his Highness might select.

I found the subject entirely new to the Khedive. He seemed, at first, to be surprised at the proposal. However, after various questions and observations, he said that, while it would be a great pleasure for him to be able to accede to my wishes, or to do anything in his power to gratify the people of the United States, the matter would have to be seriously considered. As to the obelisk at Alexandria, he did not think it best to even mention it, since the people of that city would be opposed to its removal.

. . .

Brugsch Bey [the private secretary to the Khedive] and myself happened to meet and, after the exchange of a few words, he said in a rather reproachful tone, 'I learn you are trying to obtain an obelisk to take to New York.'

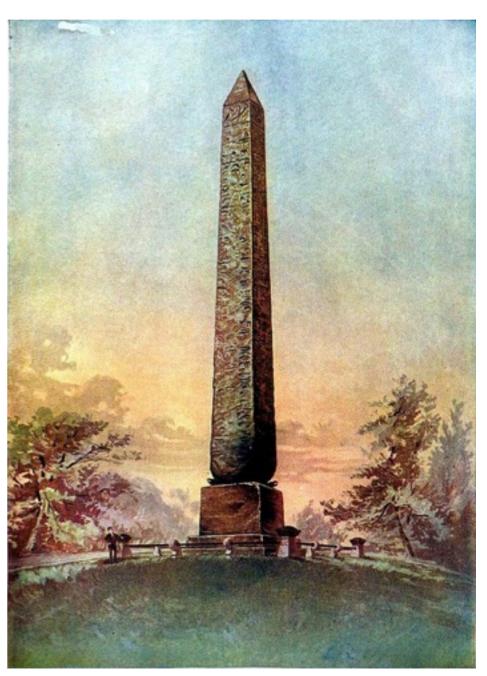
I replied, 'Why not, they have one in Paris, and one in London and the people of New York wish one also.'

. . .

Not desiring to enter into any discussion on the subject, I replied in a conciliatory manner, saying that it was of no great importance, that there were a number of obelisks in Egypt, and that the removal of one would not make much difference. He assured me that I would encounter a great deal of antagonism. This was the beginning of an opposition that was to delay for more than a year the completion of the gift which his Highness had deliberately determined upon."



1. According to Farman (the United States Ambassador to Egypt from 1876-1881), why does the city of New York want an ancient Egyptian obelisk?



The so-called "Cleopatra's Needle" in Central Park, New York



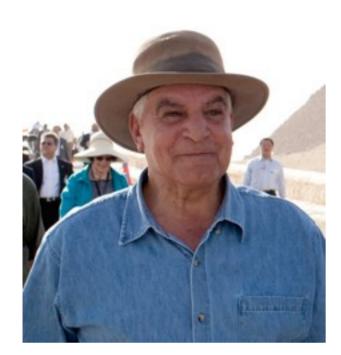
1. Henry H. Gorringe was a United States naval officer, famous for successfully transporting "Cleopatra's Needle" from Alexandria to New York City. According to Gorringe, why did the Egyptian Khedive decide to give an obelisk to America (and specifically the city of New York)?



"Cleopatra's Needle" in situ in Alexandria, Egypt, 1879.

"The gradual subsidence of the land in this part of North Africa [in the city of Alexandria] has caused the sea to approach nearer to the site of the obelisk, until it was about eighty feet from the base, and its level about the nearer to the site of the obelisk, until it was about eighty feet from the base, and its level about the same as that of the lower step. The constant washings of the surf had begun to affect the foundation, and for the last fifteen years the obelisk has been gradually inclining more and more toward the sea. In a few years it must have fallen, and almost certainly have been broken by the fall. But a more ignoble fate threatened it, in the proposition of some of the foreign residents of Alexandria to erect an apartment-house on the adjacent ground around the obelisk, which was to adorn the court-yard.

Originally designed to symbolize the highest attribute of nature, the re-creative power; forming an essential feature of one of the most famous temples ever created by man, in which Moses was educated and of which he became a highpriest; the votive offering of one of the most celebrated Pharaohs, and bearing the records of another equally celebrated, the obelisk had become a Roman trophy to commemorate the subjugation of Egypt, and was threatened either with destruction by neglect, or preservation as a means of advertising a hotel or apartment-house. His Highness, Ismail, the Khedive, who realized the importance of preserving so valuable and interesting a relic and record of the past, and his own inability to do so, merits the thanks not only of the nation to whom he entrusted its preservation, but of all those of every nation who appreciate the necessity of preserving such monuments as long as they will resist the ravages of time. Some objection has been made to removing it from its 'antique surroundings.' The most prominent surroundings in Alexandria were a railway depot, a new apartment-house, and an Arab fort."



Dr. Zahi Hawass. Click on the headline to the right to the article.

# NEW POST How Cleopatra's Needle got to Central Park

By Kate Briquelet



- 1. According to this article, why was the obelisk originally given to the city of New York?
- 2. Compare the criticisms of Dr. Hawass with the excerpt from Gorringe. How are their concerns alike and different?

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Reflecting on the Document Based Lesson Design Process

The process of designing a document based lesson was quite lengthy and involved. It required finding not only relevant documents and primary sources but ones that were both rich enough yet easily accessible for students to engage with on a deep level.

In my case I found this objective fairly challenging as I was looking to create a lesson to fit within a unit about ancient Egypt. Given that the subject for my lesson was from such antiquity I found it fairly difficult to find primary sources and other documents that would fit the aforementioned stipulations. However once I was able to identify my documents the actual



This eBook is a collaborative project of Peter Pappas and his Fall 2015 Social Studies Methods Class

School of Education ~ University of Portland, Portland Ore.

Graduate and undergraduate level pre-service teachers were assigned the task of developing an engaging research question, researching supportive documents and curating them into a DBQ suitable for middle or high school students.

For more on this class, visit the course blog <u>EdMethods</u> For more on this book project and work flow tap <u>here</u>.

### Chapters in chronological order

- Finding Egyptian Needles in Western Haystacks by Heidi Kershner
- 2. Pompeii by Caleb Wilson
- 3. Samurai: Sources of Warrior Identity in Medieval Japan by Ben Heebner
- 4. The Declaration of Independence by David Deis
- 5. Reconstruction in Political Cartoons by EmmaLee Kuhlmann
- 6. Regulation Through the Years by Chenoa Musillo Olson / Sarah Wieking
- 7. Battle of the Somme by John Hunt

- 8. The Lynching of Leo Frank by Jeff Smith
- 9. The Waco Horror by Alekz Wray
- 10. The Harlem Renaissance by Monica Portugal
- 11. A Date of Infamy by Mollie Carter
- 12. Anti-Vietnam War Imagery by Felicia Teba
- 13. Examining the Ongoing Evolution of American Government by Eric Cole

Peter Pappas, editor
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Cover image: Door knocker

Amsterdam NL Photograph by Peter Pappas