

## ***Coffin of Cleopatra*** **The British Museum**

From Qurna, Thebes, Egypt  
Roman period, early 2nd century AD



This coffin is one of a group belonging to three generations of the family of Soter at Thebes, all of whom lived between AD 109 and 146. An inscription on the coffin tells us that this young woman, called Cleopatra, was just over 17 when she died. This age has been confirmed by recent CT scans of her mummy.

Cleopatra's coffin is rectangular, with a vaulted lid and corner posts, a form that was first seen in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (about 747-656 BC). The lid is decorated with two rows of deities within shrines, separated by a column of inscription. At the end of the rows of deities are scenes of the weighing of the heart and adoration of Osiris from the *Book of the Dead*.

The lower part of the coffin shows a procession of gods and goddesses, who accompany the boat in which the sun god traverses the sky. The celestial imagery continues on the interior. The goddess Nut, dressed in contemporary costume, stretches the length of the coffin, her fingers and toes touching the ends, as the ancient Egyptians believed that they touched the horizons. Beside Nut are signs of the zodiac, including the Piscean fishes and the Gemini twins.

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