

The Book of the Dead



ABOUT THE READING Dating to 1240 BC, *The Book of the Dead* refers to a collection of spells that were placed in tombs to protect and help a person who has died. The text was copied onto sheets of papyrus and included colorful illustrations. This excerpt is taken from a chapter known as the Declaration of Innocence. According to its introduction, it is “what should be said when arriving at the Hall of Justice, of Two Truths, purging N [the deceased] of all the forbidden things he has done, and seeing the faces of all the Gods.”

VOCABULARY

repelled resisted
impoverished bankrupted
detest hate
slandered insulted
diminished reduced
debased dishonored



As you read the passage below, look for clues about the values that were important to ancient Egyptians.

Hail to you, great God, Lord of Justice! I have come to you, my lord, that you may bring me so that I may see your beauty, for I know you and I know your name, and I know the names of the forty-two gods of those who are with you in this Hall of Justice. . . . Behold I have come to you, I have brought you truth, I have **repelled** falsehood for you.

I have not done falsehood against men, I have not **impoverished** my associates, I have done no wrong in the Place of Truth, I have not learnt that which is not, I have done no evil, I have not daily made labor in excess of what was to be done for me, my name has not reached the offices of those who control slaves, I have not deprived the orphan of his property, I have not done what the gods **detest**, I have not **slandered** a servant to his master, I have

Ancient Egyptians believed in and worshipped many gods.

From “The Declaration of Innocence - Chapter 125” from The Papyrus of Ani from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, translated by Thomas George Allen & Raymond O. Faulkner.

not caused pain, I have not made hungry, I have not made to weep, I have not killed, I have not turned anyone over to a killer, I have not caused anyone's suffering, I have not **diminished** the food-offerings in the temples, I have not **debased** the offering cakes of the gods.

. . . I am Pure. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Idea What does the person want the gods to know about the life he has led?

2. Critical Thinking: Drawing Conclusions Why do you think an ancient Egyptian who had died would want the Egyptian gods to believe he is “pure”?

ACTIVITY

The texts of *The Book of the Dead* also included illustrations depicting scenes of a person's journey in the afterlife. Use the Internet to search for examples of the illustrations used to accompany these texts. Then create an illustration depicting the text you have just read.