



# Hunefer and his Book of the Dead | The Complete Book of the Dead of Hunefer

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Media type:

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Two books about a book ? the Papyrus of Hunefer ? one of the most popular and beautiful items on display in the British Museum's Egyptian collection. Hunefer, whose name means Mr Happy Day, was an official of high rank living in Luxor over 3,000 years ago, who commissioned the papyrus in an attempt to secure his safe transition to eternal life. The papyrus, or Book of the Dead, is in fact a book of spells buried with him that he hoped would transform him into a spirit who could emerge from the tomb into the daylight like the rising sun. There are spells for escaping from demons, for turning into a snake or a heron, for not having your head cut off or for allowing you to drink water. Richard Parkinson, curator of Egyptian antiquities at the BM, proves an excellent guide, explaining how to read the papyrus and to decipher the hieroglyphs, pointing out fascinating details, tenderness between husband and wife, poetry and mystery, and clearly he has a passion for his subject. A simple uncluttered layout gives details from the papyrus, with photographs of other Egyptian artefacts. The companion booklet reproduces the entire length of the papyrus (in reality 5.5m long), which now only exists in the Museum as eight separate sections. A short introductory text accompanies the pull-out scroll. Together the pair make an inspired guide for children studying Ancient Egyptian beliefs about life, religion and death, ideal in preparation for a visit to the Museum. I am now heading straight to Great Russell Street to look at it with fresh eyes!

Running Order:

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