Ancient Egyptian Amulets

Magic and religion were part of everyday life in Ancient Egypt. The Egyptians had objects and jewellery they believed had powers. Today we call these magical objects amulets.

There were different types of amulets. Some were thought to be protective, and others were thought to have healing powers. Amulets were also used in mummification to help the person make the journey to the Netherworld. Whatever problems an ancient Egyptian faced, there would be an amulet to help.

Amulets used to protect the dead are called Funerary Amulets. They were often placed inside the bandages of the mummy or placed in the tomb.

Let's have a look at some common amulets...

**Bastet**

Bastet was one of the most loved Goddesses in Egypt. Cats became sacred to the Egyptians because of her and were sometimes mummified. She was the Goddess of women, pregnancy and the home. Egyptians who wanted to have children would leave offerings or wear an amulet of Bastet. The Egyptians also believed an amulet of Bastet could protect them from illnesses and evil spirits. A festival was held in honour of Bastet every year.

**Ankh**

The Ankh was a hieroglyph that represented life. When placed on a mummy it was believed to give the gift of eternal life to the dead. Ankhs were often shown in the hands of Gods and Goddesses who had the power to give life.
The Djed pillar represented the backbone of Osiris, King of the Netherworld. It would be placed on the mummy to strengthen the spine and help them stand up when they were reborn. The amulet could also be worn by living people. A hieroglyph in the form of Djed meant stability. Sometimes the djed and ankh amulets were combined, as you can see on the right.

Bes
Bes protected pregnant women, babies and families. Many Egyptians would have a statue of Bes in their home. They believed that Bes watched over children and entertained them with dancing and music. If a baby smiled or giggled for no reason they thought that Bes must be nearby. He also protected the home from dangerous animals like snakes and scorpions, and if he was placed by a bed he could stop bad dreams. He is usually shown as a dwarf wearing a lion skin.

Scarab
Scarabs were dung beetles. Ancient Egyptians believed that funerary scarabs would protect the dead from danger in the Netherworld. They were placed over the mummy’s heart with a spell to stop the heart from telling lies. They believed that your heart was judged by the Gods before you could enter the Netherworld. The dung beetle was seen as a symbol of rebirth because the Egyptians were reminded of the God Khepri rolling the sun across the sky when they saw the beetles rolling balls of dung.

Try at Home
Make your own amulets...
Use salt dough, play dough, clay, or even icing! Have a go at making your own Egyptian amulets. You could be inspired by one of the amulets you have read about or you might even want to design your own.

Find out more...
You could research the words in bold to find out more about Egyptian beliefs. There are many more amulets to research too...try looking up wadjet eyes or tawret hippos.