This relief of a lion attacking a bull comes from a staircase in the city of Persepolis, the royal center of the Persian Achaemenid Empire. The two powerful creatures represent the strength and importance of the empire. Images of lions and bulls in combat may have also symbolized the sun and moon transitioning from night to day.
Create an Egyptian-Style Headrest

Instead of using pillows, ancient Egyptians used headrests when sleeping. While these may look uncomfortable to us today, they were very practical in ancient Egypt, keeping the sleeping person’s head cool and off of the ground, away from bugs and pests.

To ancient Egyptians, headrests had the added advantage of being symbolically important too. The image of a head resting on a headrest reminded ancient Egyptians of the sun rising between hills on a horizon, a powerful symbol of rebirth. The headrest was such an important symbol that amulets were made in the shapes of headrests and placed beneath the necks of mummies to help ensure a successful journey to the afterlife.

Take a look at these headrest examples. Headrests came in many shapes and styles, and the height of the headrest was probably customized to the user to make it comfortable to sleep on.

What shape would you want your headrest to be? Would you decorate it? Use the directions on the next page to create your own ancient-Egyptian-inspired headrest!

Bottom three images courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Build Your Own Egyptian Headrest

You will need:

- Toilet paper roll or half of a paper towel roll
- Cardboard
- Neckpiece and base stencils (included at the end of this document)
- Scissors
- Clear tape
- Pencil
- Colored pencils/markers/paint for decoration

Instructions:

1. Print out neckpiece stencil or create your own by cutting out a long oval about 9 inches long and 3.5 inches wide.
2. Using a pencil, trace the stencil on top of the cardboard.
3. Repeat the process for the base. Your neckpiece and base should be about the same length.
4. Once all of your pieces are cut out, decorate them with your favorite Egyptian designs!
5. After you are finished decorating, stand your roll up in the center of your base.
6. Use clear tape to tape the roll to the base.
7. Now take your neckpiece and gently bend the edges up to make it curved. (Tip: You can try gently forming it against a pitcher or another curved object that you may have in your house.)
8. Center the neckpiece over the top of your roll.
9. Use the clear tape again to securely attach the neckpiece to the toilet paper roll.

Test out your headrest. Now you can see what it felt like to sleep like an Egyptian!

For this example, Ol Egyptologist Catie Witt wrote her name in hieroglyphs and decorated the base with the face of Bes, an Egyptian god who protected homes.
Neckpiece Stencil