

Pyramids

The pyramids were the tombs that were built for the Pharaohs – the kings. The size of the pyramid was built to show the importance of the person who was buried in it. The ancient Egyptians believed that if a person was mummified that they would live forever, so they built these tombs to keep their bodies.

The most famous pyramid is the Great Pyramid (right), built for Pharaoh Khufu. When it was built it was over 140 metres high and took 20 years to build. It stands alongside many other smaller ones. The Great Pyramid has a rough rocky surface because the outer layer of rock has worn down. When the pyramid was originally built, it would have had an outer layer of stone with a smooth appearance.

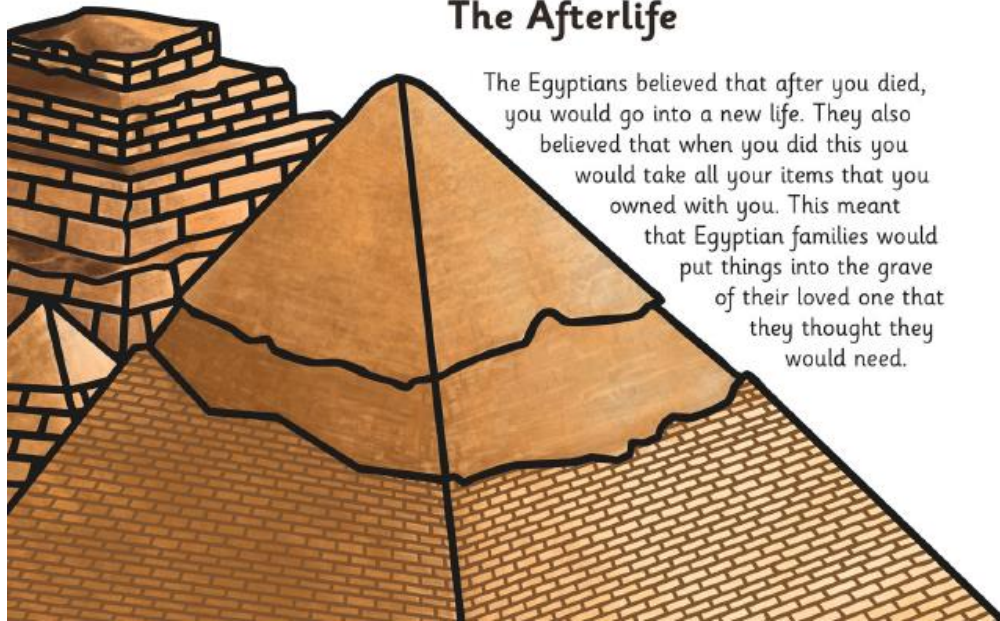
Inside the pyramid there are a lot of hieroglyphics which tell the story of the pharaoh that was buried there. These were used to tell the achievements and adventures of the Pharaoh. These hieroglyphics are why we know so much about the ancient Egyptian civilisation and the people who ruled it.

There are over 130 pyramids that have been found in Egypt, the earliest being the Pyramid of Djoser which was built around 2650BC. The last pyramids were finished around 1800 BC.



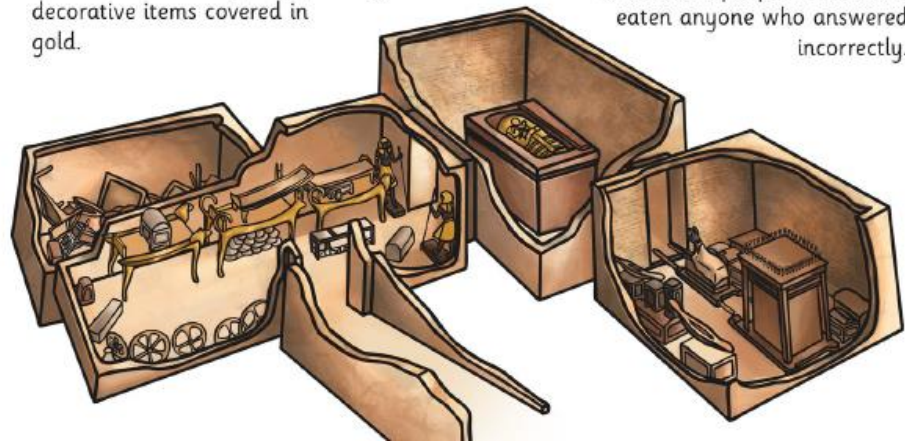
The Afterlife

The Egyptians believed that after you died, you would go into a new life. They also believed that when you did this you would take all your items that you owned with you. This meant that Egyptian families would put things into the grave of their loved one that they thought they would need.



The Tomb

The inside of an Egyptian tomb looked something like the example below. The body of the pharaoh was placed in a sarcophagus (a large stone coffin) which was then surrounded by other chambers, filled with items that they thought they would need in the afterlife, mostly decorative items covered in gold.



The Sphinx

The sphinx (above) had the body of a lion and the head of a pharaoh and sometimes the wings of a large bird. It was a mythical creature which was meant to guard the pyramid from harm. In myth, the sphinx is said to have asked people riddles and eaten anyone who answered incorrectly.

Egyptian Hieroglyphs



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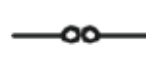
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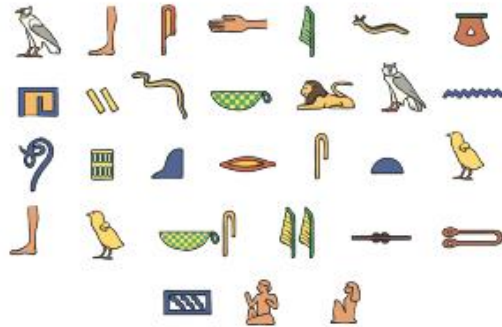
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6000 BC



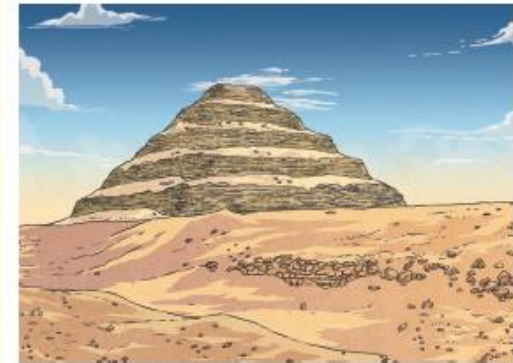
The first permanent settlers lived in the Nile Valley.

3200 BC



Hieroglyphs are used to keep trade records.

2630 BC



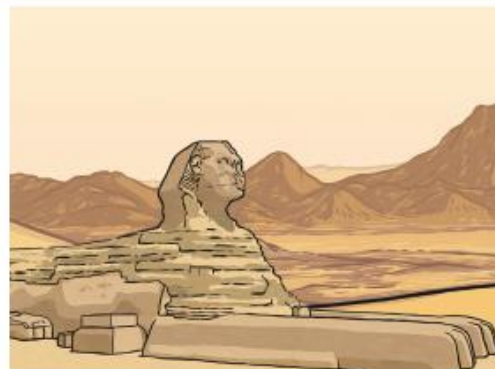
The first pyramid is built.

2550 BC



Construction on the Pyramids of Giza begins. The three pyramids are built for the pharaohs Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure.

2558-2532 BC



The Great Sphinx was constructed during this time period.

2000 BC



First plows are attached to oxen.

1539 BC



The Valley of the Kings begins.
The pharaohs are buried there
with their treasures.

1332 BC



The ten-year rule of
Tutankhamun begins.

51 BC



Cleopatra's reign begins.

GODS AND GODDESSES

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION

There were more than 2000 gods in ancient Egypt. Most took human form but some had the heads of animals. Here is a selection of the more important gods that Egyptians would have worshipped.

1. **Ra:** Ra was god of the Sun and the lord of the gods. He is shown to have the body of a human and the head of a falcon. Above his head sits a sun disc with a sacred cobra twisted round it. It is said that Ra sailed the heavens in a boat called 'Barque of Millions of Years'. At the end of every day many thought Ra had died as he sailed through the night in the Underworld leaving the Moon to light the night sky until he was born again at dawn.

2. **Amun:** Amun was an important god because it is said that he created all things. However, there are not many stories or pictures of him as he was invisible. Many of the pictures of him come from when he mixes with another god like Ra, when he becomes Amun-Ra. Amun is usually in human form but sometimes has a ram's head.

3. **Horus:** Horus has the head a hawk which makes him look similar to Ra but Horus has a crown made to look like the two parts of Egypt, the red and the white to show that he ruled all of the land. Horus was the god of the sky and it was believed that the pharaohs were a living version of Horus making them godlike.

4. **Thoth:** Thoth was the god of wisdom, writing, time and the moon. The ancient Egyptians believed that Thoth created hieroglyphics and kept a record of all knowledge. He has the head of an ibis bird, a long beaked bird common in Egypt.

5. **Ma'at:** Ma'at was the goddess of truth, justice and harmony and the wife of Thoth. A pharaoh had to promise to follow Ma'at and be a fair and honest leader.

6. **Isis:** Isis is the mother of Horus and the queen of the goddesses. Sometimes she is shown to have a throne on her head and other times she has a sun disk similar to Hathor.

7. **Osiris:** Osiris is the god of the dead and husband of Isis. He is shown wearing the white linen wrapping from a mummy. He wears a white crown with large feathers. Although he was the god of the Underworld, Egyptians still liked him for helping people pass on to the next life.

8. **Hathor:** Hathor was the goddess of love, music and dance. She looked after all women in life and death. Hathor sometimes took the form of a cow with a sun disk above her head.

9. **Anubis:** Anubis was the god of embalming, the mummification ritual. It is believed he made the first mummy, Osiris. Anubis was the guide of the dead, he helped them pass to the next life. It was said that Anubis would wait for you in the hall of the dead to weigh your heart. If your heart was lighter than Ma'at's feather, you would live forever. If it was heavier, your heart would be eaten by the demon Ammit. Anubis had the head of a jackal.

10. **Sekhmet:** Sekhmet was goddess of war, fire and medicine. She has a head of a lion, the best hunter known to the Egyptians and her breath is said to have created the desert.

