

Name _____
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Quick History Handout

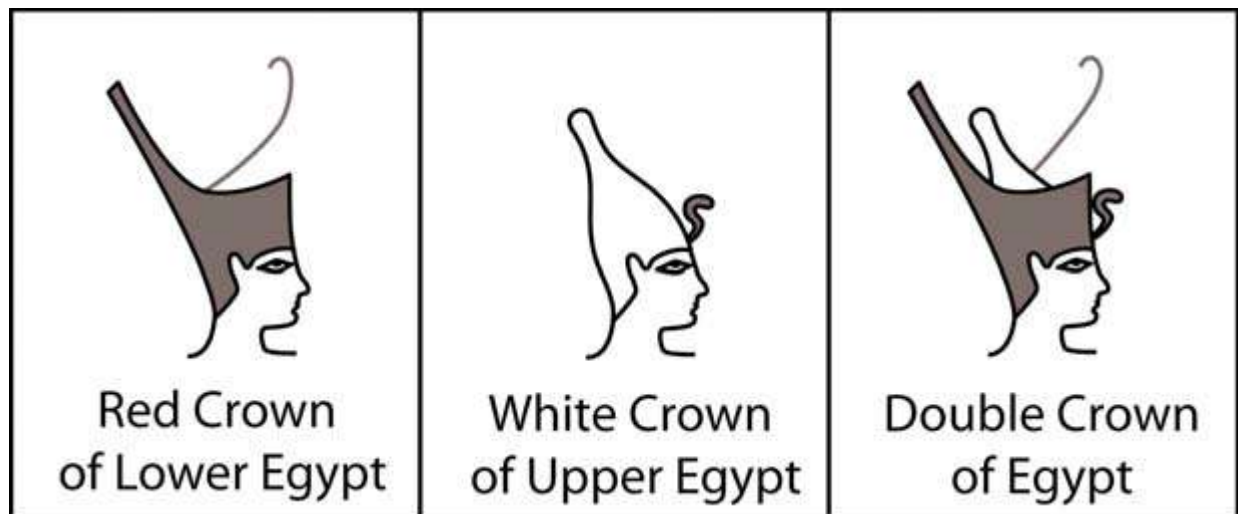
A Quick History of Ancient Egypt

Around 5000 BCE (7000 years ago) people began to settle down along the Nile River. They were delighted to find this wonderful place in which to live. The Nile provided food and water. There were natural barriers of deserts, mountains, and seas to protect them. The people who settled along the Nile did not go exploring, looking for other people to meet or other places to live. They had everything they needed and stayed near home.

They were talented, clever people. They grew barley and stored it in silos. They wove baskets from the papyrus plant, the reeds that grew wildly along the riverbank. They knew how to sew and cook and bake. They made bread from barley. They built boats so they could fish. They grazed cattle, goats, sheep and pigs. They kept geese and ducks for their eggs and meat. They made combs, beads, bracelets, spears and arrows, and earthenware pots and vases. They painted their eyes with a paste they made from green malachite, which is a semi-precious stone. By 4000 BCE, they had learned how to use copper to make gorgeous jewelry and sharp weapons.

UPPER & LOWER EGYPT: In time, the people who lived along the Nile River banded together into two main groups. One group lived in Lower Egypt, in the delta region of the Nile, where the Nile flows into the Mediterranean Sea. These people were mild and easygoing. Their sign was a red crown. The people of Upper Egypt, further down the Nile, on higher ground, were more rugged and stern. Their sign was a white crown.

THE DOUBLE CROWN: Around 3100 BCE (over 5000 years ago), King Menes (also known as King Narmer) united these two countries. King Menes was the first pharaoh, which is what the ancient Egyptians called their kings. King Menes built a new capital on the dividing line between Lower and Upper Egypt. He called his capital city Memphis. King Menes was a very smart king. He knew the people needed to learn to think of themselves as one country. To help them, he created a new sign, a sign that represented both countries—a white and red crown—the double crown. Even though they were now one country, Lower and Upper Egypt were always referred to as the Two Lands of Egypt.



ACHIEVEMENTS: The people of the double crown, the ancient Egyptians, were just as smart as their ancestors. They invented a sort of paper made from the papyrus plant, the reed that grew along the riverbank, the same reed they used to weave baskets. They created a system of writing called hieroglyphics. They formed a government of kings (called pharaohs). They built huge temples and wonderful towns and homes. They set up trade routes with the countries around them. They worshiped over 2000 gods and goddesses. They were calm and wise, and cheerful and busy, with a great sense of fun. They loved children. They loved to play. And they loved their good life on the riverbanks of the Nile.

THE THREE KINGDOMS: The ancient Egyptian timeline is divided into three big blocks of time—The Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom. Each Kingdom lasted hundreds of years.

The Old Kingdom: *The Pyramid Age.* This period lasted about 500 years. It ran from about 2700 BCE until 2200 BCE. During this kingdom:

1. Pharaohs had absolute power and were considered gods on earth
2. Central government needed to be supported with many district governors.
3. King Menes (Narmer) united Upper and Lower Egypt.
4. First stone pyramid built (around 2700 BCE); pyramids at Giza built soon after

The Middle Kingdom: *The Golden Age.* This period lasted about 300 years. It ran from about 2100 until 1800. During this kingdom:

1. Pharaohs should be “good kings.” This was the age of wise and gifted rulers.
2. Egypt needed a strong defense. Trade had introduced the Egyptians to people in bordering countries. Some of those countries wanted to rule Egypt. To defend themselves, the ancient Egyptians built strong armies and fortresses.

3. In spite of the problems this time period faced from warring neighbors, this was considered the Golden Age of the arts. Literature and craftsmen flourished.

The New Kingdom: *The Empire*. This period lasted about 500 years. It ran from about 1500 BCE to about 1000 BCE. During this kingdom:

1. Pharaohs should be all powerful. They had great kings and queens.
2. Women have rights. Women achieved high status. Queen Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh, lived during this period. She was not elected; she took power, as did all pharaohs before and after her.
3. Egypt needed to expand. There was a great deal of territorial expansion during this period. Egypt grew through force and military conquest. Egypt became a huge empire.
4. The Valley of the Kings was created during this period. Pharaohs were buried in the same area called the Valley of the Kings.

UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT SPLIT: Four kings ruled different pieces of the country at the same time. Civil war broke out. They had economic troubles, too.

- Around 500 BCE, the Persians moved in. Egypt did not like that. War broke out.
- Around 300 BCE, the Greeks and the Romans moved in. Egypt did not like that either, but now, they were weak and could not fight back successfully.

END OF A CIVILIZATION: The ancient Egyptian civilization ended with the death of the last pharaoh queen, Queen Cleopatra in 27 BCE. Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

Questions: (Remember to answer in complete sentences by restating the question into your answer!!!)

1. When did Egypt begin as a country?

2. What are the three main divisions on the Egyptian time line?

3. Who was the last ruler of the Egyptian Empire?

4. What is the difference in how the Pharaoh ruled in each of the three periods?