

Ancient Egypt and Nubia

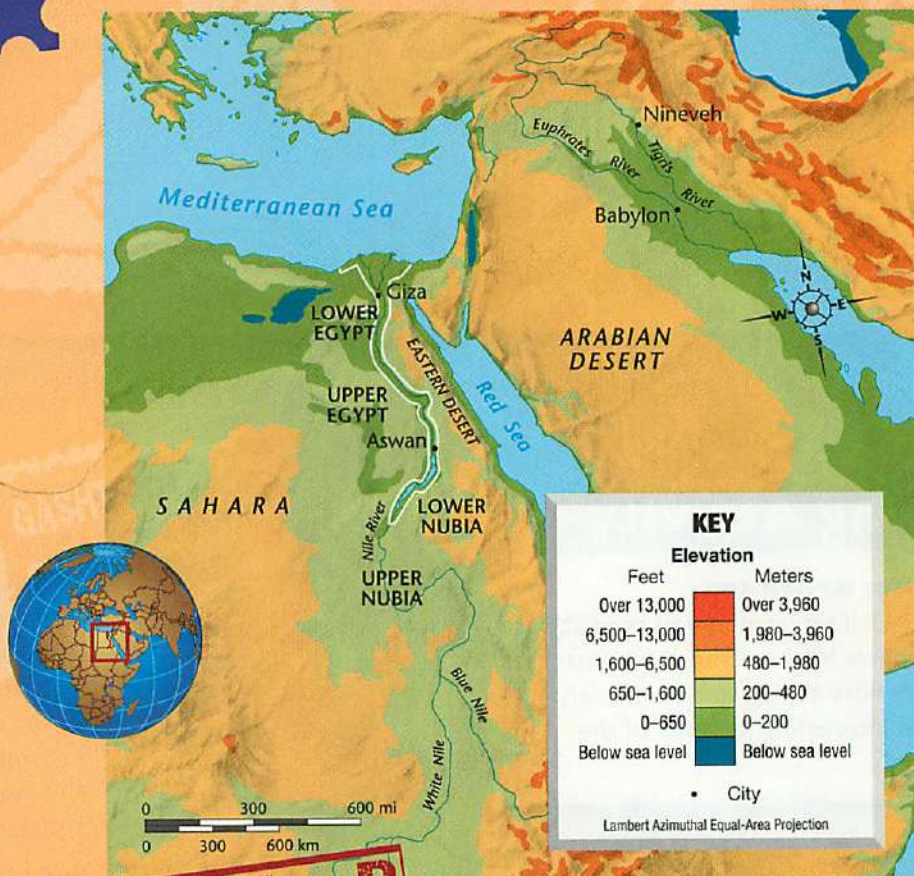
SECTION 1 The Geography of the Nile

SECTION 2 Egypt's Powerful Kings and Queens

SECTION 3 Egyptian Religion

SECTION 4 The Culture of the Ancient Egyptians

SECTION 5 The Resource-Rich Cultures of Nubia



MAP ACTIVITIES

Water, as you know, always flows downhill. Whether the downhill direction is to the east, west, north, or south, water will flow that way. Study the map, and then carry out the following activities to understand the difference between up and down and north and south.

Find the direction of flow

Locate the Nile River and with your finger, trace its route. In what direction does the Nile flow? How do you know this?

Find Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt

Find the two areas labeled Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Is Lower Egypt north or south of Upper Egypt? Which area is up river from the other? In which region is the land higher? How do you know this?

The Geography of the Nile

SECTION

1

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Perhaps you live near a river, lake, or ocean. If so, then you know that bodies of water affect your environment. You

enjoy them for recreation. Perhaps your family depends on them for a living. Think of several ways nearby water can affect the way people live.

Questions to Explore

1. How does the geography of the Nile River change as it runs from its sources to the delta?
2. How did the Nile support human life in ancient times?

Key Terms

cataract
delta
silt

Key People and Places

Herodotus
Lower Nubia
Upper Nubia
Upper Egypt
Lower Egypt

“Egypt is the gift of the Nile,” wrote the Greek historian Herodotus (huh RAHD uh tuhs). He explored Egypt in the 400s B.C. He saw the life-giving waters of its great river. He traveled upriver until he was stopped by churning rapids of white water. Unable to get past the rapids, he turned back. He never found the source of the river.

Herodotus wrote down his observations of Egypt and other lands. They still make interesting reading today. Despite his failure to locate the source of the Nile, Herodotus had learned a basic truth. There would be no Egypt without the Nile.

The Course of the Nile

The Nile is the world's longest river. It flows north from its sources in central Africa to the Mediterranean Sea for more than 4,000 miles (6,436 km). This is more than the distance across the United States.

The Nile has two main sources. The Blue Nile rises in the highlands of the present-day country of Ethiopia and races down to the desert in thundering torrents. The White Nile is calmer. It begins deep in central Africa and flows northward through swamps. The two

▼ Food was one of the gifts of the Nile. This Egyptian hunts waterbirds as he drifts along in a reed boat.



rivers meet at what is today the city of Khartoum (kahr TOOM) in the present-day country of Sudan. There, the Nile begins its journey through desert lands to the Mediterranean Sea.



Ask Questions What questions would you like answered about the importance of the Nile River to the ancient Egyptians and Nubians?

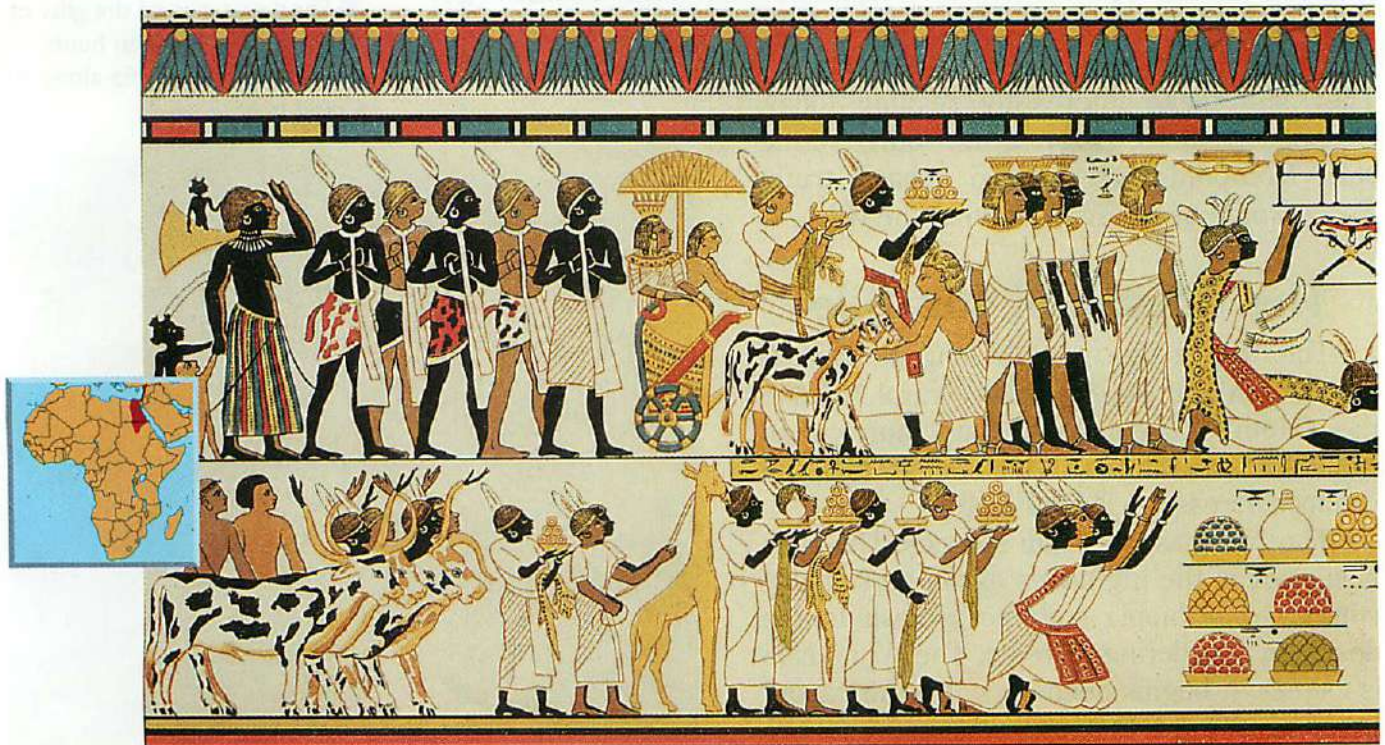
The Nile Through Ancient Nubia From Khartoum northward, the Nile makes two huge bends, forming an S shape. The northern tip of the S is at the city of Aswan in Egypt. Along this 1,000-mile (1,600 km) stretch of the Nile was a land called Nubia.

The Nubian section of the Nile contained six rock-filled rapids called **cataracts**. Between the First and Second Cataracts was Lower Nubia. In this region, the desert and granite mountains lined the riverbanks, leaving very little farmable land. Because it rarely rained in Lower Nubia, people had to live close to the Nile for their water supply.

Farther south, between the Second and Sixth Cataracts, lies the area that was known as Upper Nubia. In this region, rain does fall, so people could farm in the summer and fall. But the farmland was in a very narrow strip, no more than 2 miles (3 km) wide on each side of the river.

The Nile Through Ancient Egypt The ancient Egyptian section of the Nile ran for about 700 miles (1,100 km) from the First Cataract at Aswan to the Mediterranean Sea. On its way, it passed through a narrow region called Upper Egypt. This fertile strip had an average width of around 6 miles (10 km) on each side of the river. In the north, the Nile spread out to form a fertile, marshy area called Lower Egypt. Dry deserts stretched on each side of the river's green banks.

▼ Gold was an important Nubian resource. In this wall painting, Nubian princes bring gifts of gold to an Egyptian ruler.



The Flooding Nile



The flood waters of the Nile River spread as far as the eye could see. They washed against tree trunks and covered fields. Modern dams like the Aswan High Dam have been built to control flooding, while still providing water for irrigating crops.

At the end of the Nile in the north, the river split into several streams that flowed to the Mediterranean Sea. These streams formed an area shaped like a triangle and called the **delta**. The delta contained very fertile farmland.

The Gifts of the Nile Every spring, far away in the highlands of Africa, waters came rushing down from the highlands. As they flowed, they brought rich, fertile soil called **silt**. Each spring the Nile spilled over its banks. It flooded the dry land and deposited a layer of thick silt that was ideal for farming. In gratitude, the Egyptians praised Hapi (HAH pea), the god of the Nile:

“**H**ail to you, O Nile, who flows from the Earth and comes to keep Egypt alive.”

Black Land and Red Land The ancient Egyptians called their land *Kemet* (KEH meht), “the black land,” because of the dark soil left by the Nile’s floods. The timing of the floods and the height of the flood waters might vary from year to year. But unlike the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians usually did not have to worry about flash floods. Dry years were rare, but they could cause famine.

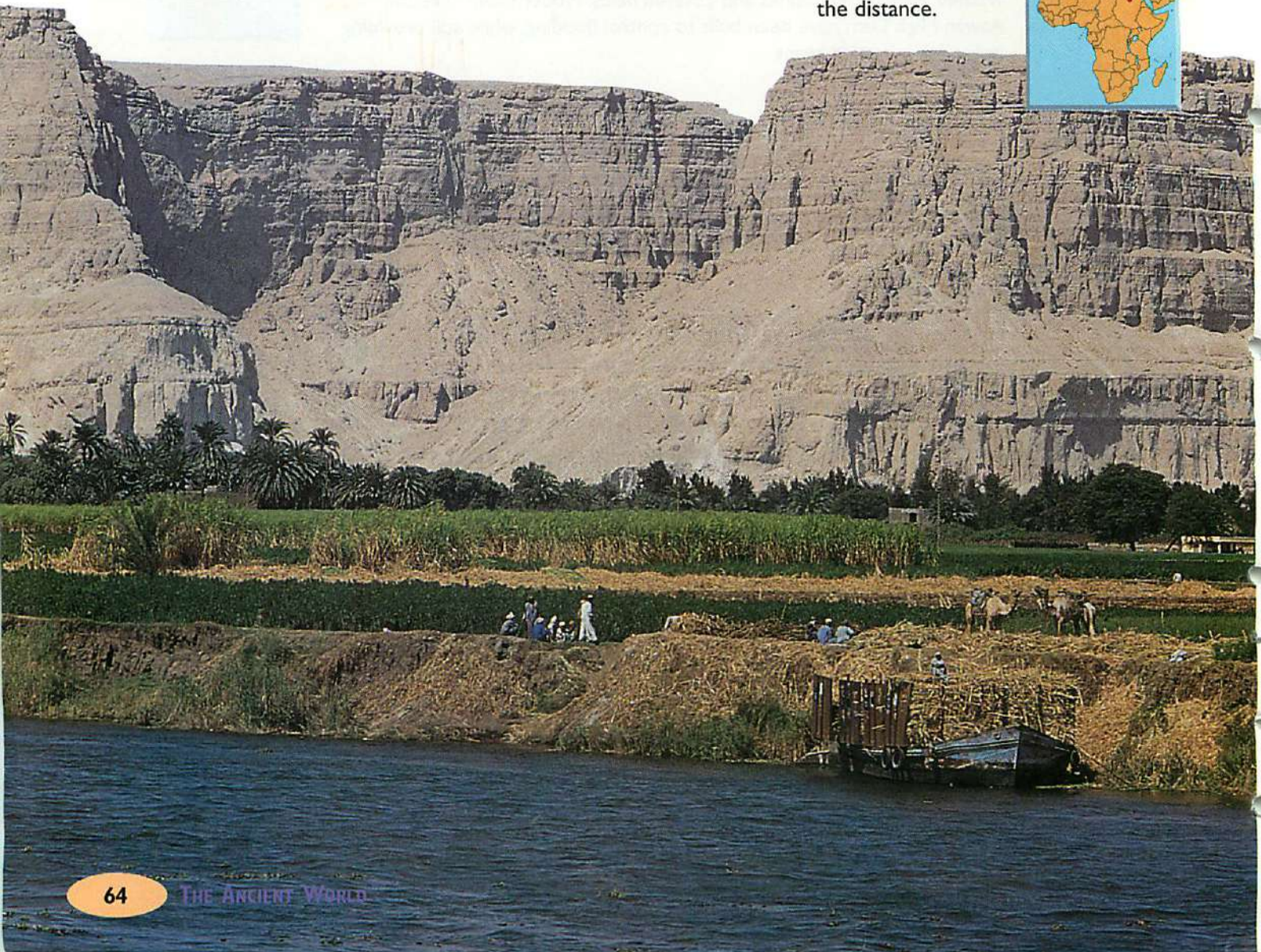


Saving Temples Lake Nasser is a lake created by the building of a dam on the Nile in the 1960s. The creation of Lake Nasser threatened to flood ancient temples that the Egyptians had carved in the cliffs above the Nubian Nile. Egypt, with the help of about 50 nations, saved the temples. Workers cut the temples into blocks. They moved the blocks to higher ground and rebuilt the temples.

Beyond the fertile river banks lay the “red land,” the vast desert. It spread out on either side of the river. Most of the Sahara lay to the west, and the part of the Sahara called the Eastern Desert lay to the east. These lands were not friendly to human life. They were useless for farming. Only those who knew the deserts well dared travel over this blistering-hot land.

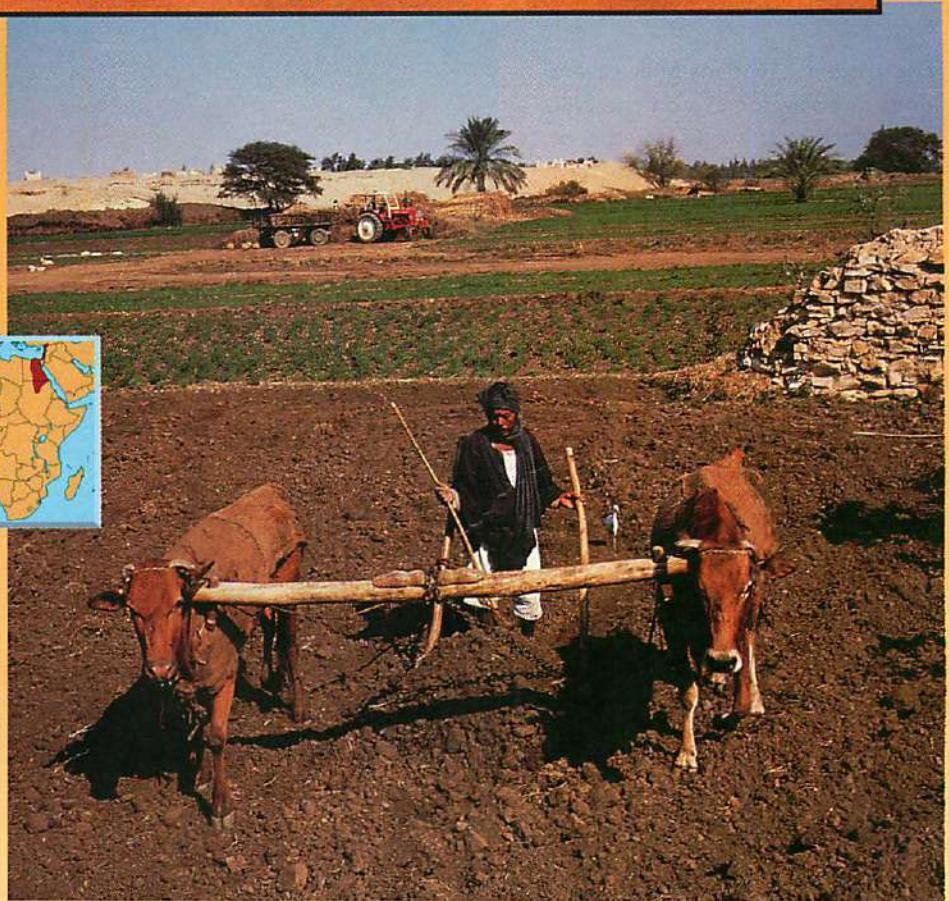
Yet the hostile deserts were a blessing to the Egyptians and Nubians. The hot sands shielded Egypt and Nubia from foreign attacks. This was a protection Mesopotamia did not have. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was wide-open to the raids of outsiders. The people of Mesopotamia were constantly facing invasions. Over a period of 2,000 years, the people of ancient Egypt and Nubia faced few invasions. Yet they were not isolated. The Nile Valley provided a path for trade with Central Africa. The Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea provided access to Southwest Asia.

▼ The thriving crops and vegetation of the fertile Nile Valley contrast with the barren cliffs in the distance.



Combining Technology With Tradition

Although a modern tractor waits at the end of the field, this Egyptian farmer uses oxen and a traditional wooden plow to turn the soil in his field.



Civilizations Along the Nile

Communities appeared in the Nile delta of Lower Egypt by around 4000 B.C. The people of the delta built villages around the fertile river beds. Their homes were built of straw or of bricks made from a mix of mud and straw. To the south, in Upper Egypt, people built scattered farming villages along the banks of the Nile.

The first Nubian communities emerged around 3800 B.C. Because farming was difficult, Nubians also fished in the Nile and hunted ducks and other birds along its banks.

The Growth of Trade

The Nile was a highway for trade. Ships could float downriver because the Nile flowed north. But they could also sail upriver because the winds blew toward the south. Another trade link ran east across the desert and the Red Sea to Mesopotamia. Caravans loaded with gold, silver, copper, and fine pottery traveled the overland trade routes. Valuable goods such as cedar from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and gold from Nubia were sold in the bazaars of Egypt's towns.



Visualize Picture in your mind the way the Nile River valley looked before and after the yearly floods.

The Final Voyage

The ancient Egyptians built several kinds of boats for use on the Nile. Boats such as this one have been found in the tombs of Egyptian kings. Royal tombs contained objects that were thought to be needed by the dead—boats would help in making the voyage to the afterlife.



Because of the cataracts, people could not travel through Nubia by river. Instead, the Nubians developed trade routes over land. One of these routes was through the Nile Valley. The Nubians became famous traders of the ancient world as they carried goods from central Africa and Nubia into Egypt and southwestern Asia and back.

One Nubian caravan into Egypt had 300 donkeys. They carried ebony wood, ivory from elephant tusks, ostrich feathers and eggs, and panther skins. Another popular item was a “throw-stick,” an African version of a boomerang.

SECTION 1 REVIEW

- 1. Define** (a) cataract, (b) delta, (c) silt.
- 2. Identify** (a) Herodotus, (b) Lower Nubia, (c) Upper Nubia, (d) Upper Egypt, (e) Lower Egypt.

- 3.** How did the Nile River affect the lives of the early Egyptians and Nubians?
- 4.** How did trade develop in various places along the Nile?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Recognizing Cause and Effect** If the Nile River did not flood regularly, how might life along the Nile have been different?

Activity

- 6. Writing to Learn** You are traveling along the Nile from its source to the Nile delta. Write a journal entry about the changes in the river you notice as you travel.

Egypt's Powerful Kings and Queens

SECTION
2

**BEFORE
YOU
READ**

Reach Into Your Background

What would it be like to have total power over the lives of people? Very few leaders today

have such sweeping powers. But at one time, kings and queens had the power of life and death over their people. How would it feel to be responsible for the well-being of thousands of subjects who looked upon you as a god?

Questions to Explore

1. How did Egyptian rulers unify their country?

2. What were some of the accomplishments of Egypt's greatest pharaohs?

Key Terms

pharaoh
dynasty

regent

Key People

Hatshepsut
Menes
Thutmose III

The statue you see here looks like the face of a powerful king of ancient Egypt. And indeed it is. But there's something wrong with this face. You see, there's a woman behind that beard.

The woman is Hatshepsut (haht SHEHP soot), who ruled Egypt during the New Kingdom. Hatshepsut was a bold leader who led her army into battle when enemies threatened Egypt's borders. But she is most known for creating a time of great peace and economic success. She encouraged trade with faraway places, sending a famous expedition to the land of Punt (puhnt) on the east coast of Africa. Egyptian traders returned with shiploads of ivory, gold, and spices.

Hatshepsut was not the only woman to rule Egypt. But the respected title of **pharaoh** (FAIR oh), or king, traditionally referred to a man. For this reason, Hatshepsut appears here with the clothing and symbols of a pharaoh—beard and all.



◀ Hatshepsut declared herself pharaoh of Egypt in 1503 B.C. She ruled with shrewdness and skill until her death.

CITIZEN HEROES

Overcoming Obstacles A man named Nekhebu worked his way up from the bottom of society to become an architect during the Old Kingdom. At first, he carried other builders' tools for them. Eventually, his hard work paid off. The pharaoh made him Royal Architect. Nekhebu believed in always doing satisfactory work, and in never "going to bed angry against anybody."

▼ This plaque from about 3000 B.C. glorifies events of Menes' reign. At the left of the plaque, Menes looks victoriously on his dead enemies.



Egypt's God-Kings

Hatshepsut was one of many famous Egyptian pharaohs to rule Egypt. Some, like her, were wise. Others were careless or cruel. Egypt's fortunes rested on the strength of its pharaohs.

From Dynasty to Dynasty The history of ancient Egypt is the history of each of its dynasties. A **dynasty** is a series of rulers from the same family. Egypt had 31 dynasties until it was conquered by the Greek ruler Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. Historians group Egypt's dynasties into three main time periods, called kingdoms. The earliest time period is called the Old Kingdom. Next came the Middle Kingdom. The latest time period is called the New Kingdom. The time line on the next page shows the dates of each kingdom. Remember, these kingdoms are not places. They are time periods.

The gaps between the kingdoms were times of troubles—wars, invasions, weak rulers. These in-between periods were rare, however. For most of ancient Egyptian history, there was stable rule.

According to legend, Egypt's first dynasty began when a king named Menes (MEE neez) united Upper and Lower Egypt. Menes built a city named Memphis near the present-day city of Cairo (KY roh). From there, he ruled over the Two Lands, which is what the ancient Egyptians

Major Time Periods in Ancient Egypt



called Upper and Lower Egypt. Carvings from Menes's time show the pharaoh wearing two crowns—the white crown of Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt. The uniting of Egypt began one of the most stable civilizations in history. It lasted for more than 2,500 years.

All-Powerful Pharaohs The pharaohs had absolute power over their people. Whatever the pharaoh decided became law. He decided when the fields would be planted. He received crops from the workers on his estates.

The pharaoh was also a religious leader. It was the pharaoh, Egyptians believed, who provided his people with the Nile's yearly floods and the harvests that followed. As one official wrote:

“He is the god Re whose beams enable us to see. He gives more light to the Two Lands than the sun's disc. He makes the Earth more green than the Nile in flood. He has filled the Two Lands with strength and life.”

Two Thousand Years of Power

Egypt grew and prospered during its first six dynasties, which included the Old Kingdom. It was blessed with able rulers and a well-run system of government. The pharaohs kept the peace and trade with Nubia, with only occasional conflicts. They sent merchants to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to find timber. This timber was used in the building of houses, boats, and furniture. Egyptian merchants may have even traveled north across the Mediterranean in search of trade items.

About 2250 B.C., near the end of the Old Kingdom, governors in the provinces began to challenge the power of the pharaohs' government. Egypt's unity crumbled, and the dynasties grew weak.

▲ **Time Line Study** This time line shows the dates for each kingdom and lists important events and accomplishments of the kingdoms.



Connect Compare the role of the Egyptian pharaoh with the role of the President of the United States.

The Egyptian Empire About 1450 B.C.

Map Study Egypt expanded its rule significantly during the New Kingdom. As the empire grew, Egyptian goods and ideas reached new places. **Interaction** How did the Egyptians link the Nile River and the Red Sea?



The early dynasties of the Middle Kingdom restored order and reunited the country. With calmer times, the pharaohs spent the nation's wealth on works such as irrigation projects instead of on wars. They also built a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea. Egypt grew even richer. However, less able rulers followed. In time, they lost control of the country to foreign invaders.

Egyptian princes became strong enough to drive out the foreign invaders around 1550 B.C. This event marks the start of the New Kingdom.

The first pharaohs of the New Kingdom were not content just to drive foreigners out of their country. They wanted to build an empire. The pharaohs created huge armies of foot soldiers, mounted warriors, and war chariots. Bronze swords and body armor made the Egyptians nearly unbeatable.

A Powerful Queen, a Great Pharaoh

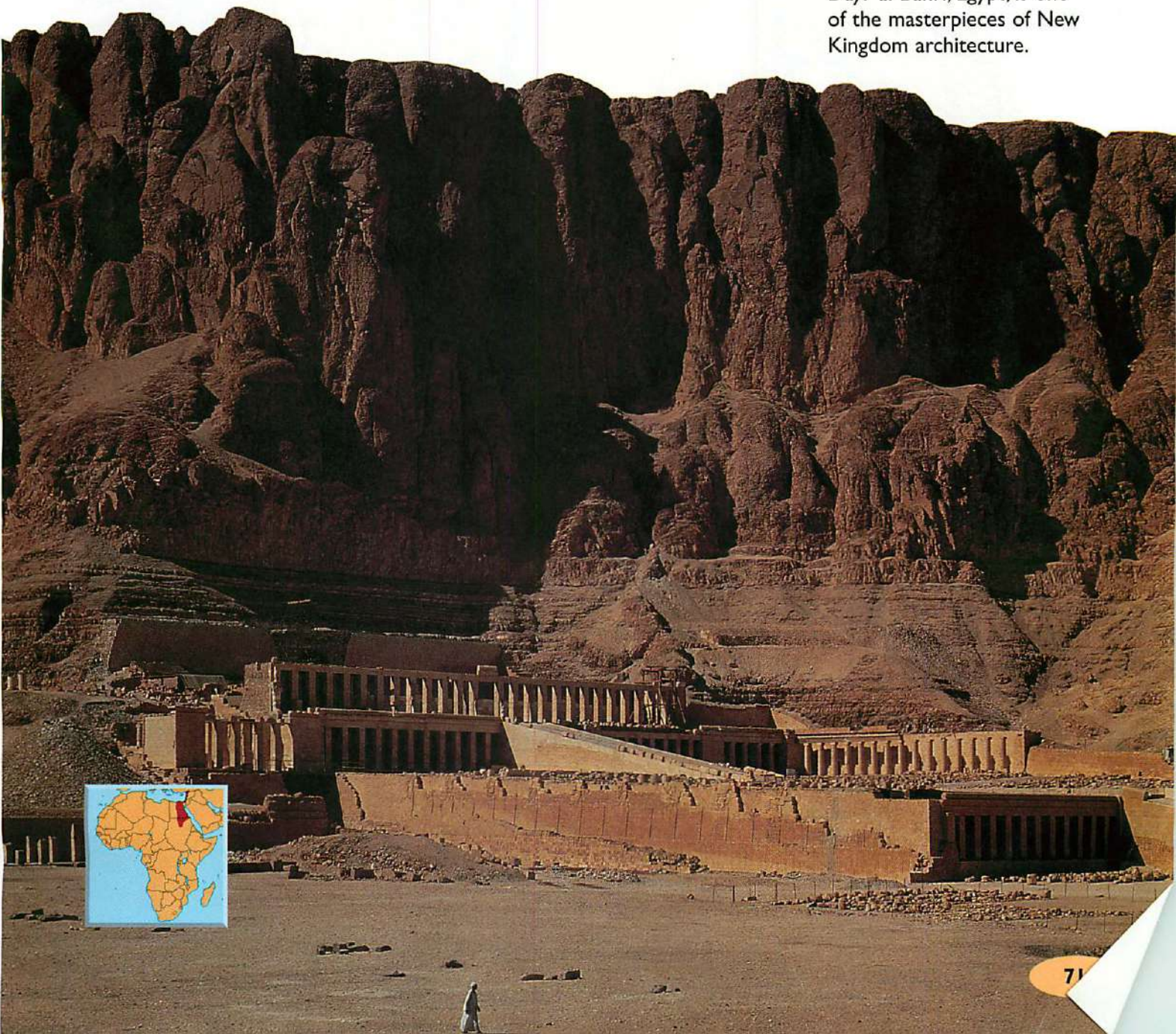
Around 1500 B.C., a child named Thutmose III (thoot MOH suh) became pharaoh. Because of his youth, his stepmother was appointed **regent**. A regent is someone who rules for a child until the child is old

enough to rule. His stepmother was Hatshepsut, whom you read about at the beginning of this section. Not content to be regent, Hatshepsut had herself proclaimed pharaoh. She ruled Egypt for about 22 years.

Hatshepsut's reign was good for Egypt. She apparently enjoyed her power, too. When Thutmose grew up, she refused to yield the throne to him. He took over when she died and had all her statues destroyed. We don't know if Thutmose had a hand in Hatshepsut's death.

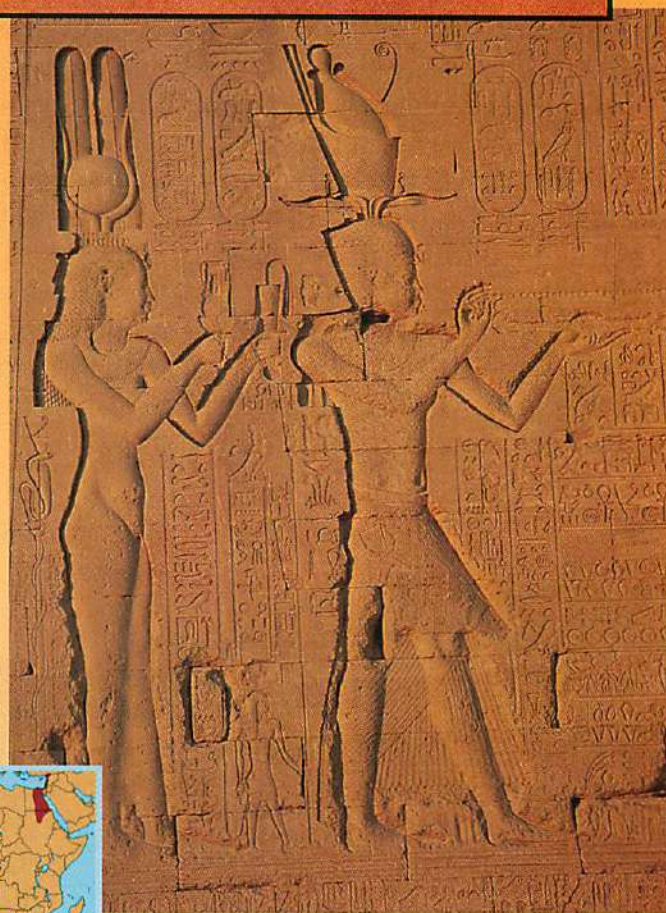
Thutmose III was one of the greatest pharaohs of the New Kingdom. He led his army in wars against Syria and Phoenicia, in Southwest Asia. Egyptian troops advanced as far east as the Euphrates River and south into Nubia. Yet Thutmose was more than a conqueror. He was an educated man who loved to study plants. Unlike most rulers of his time, he treated defeated peoples with mercy.

▼ Queen Hatshepsut's temple at the foot of a dramatic limestone cliff in Dayr al-Bahri, Egypt, is one of the masterpieces of New Kingdom architecture.



Cleopatra: A Woman of Ambition

Cleopatra ruled Egypt from 51 B.C. to 30 B.C. The Egyptian carving (right) shows Cleopatra and Isis, a popular Egyptian goddess. Cleopatra, however, was not content to be queen of just Egypt. She wanted to rule the Roman Empire—and she almost succeeded. Cleopatra gained so much influence in Rome that her likeness appeared on roman coins (below).



The New Kingdom began to decline around 1075 B.C. Civil war left Egypt weak and poorly defended. The mighty kingdom fell to the famous conqueror Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. About 300 years later, Egypt was conquered by another powerful civilization of the ancient world: the Romans. Egypt became part of the Roman Empire. It would not govern itself again for almost 2,000 years.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

- 1. Define** (a) pharaoh, (b) dynasty, (c) regent.
- 2. Identify** (a) Hatshepsut, (b) Menes, (c) Thutmose III.

- 3.** How did Egypt's rulers govern their empire?
- 4.** Describe some of the accomplishments of each of the three Egyptian kingdoms.

Critical Thinking

5. Expressing Problems

Clearly Explain why Egypt's rulers had more authority than most rulers have today.

Activity

- 6. Writing to Learn** Write a paragraph explaining this statement: "Ancient Egypt was strongest when its rulers were strong."

Egyptian Religion

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Have you ever tried to organize your friends or family to take a trip or to do something around the house?

If so, you've probably realized that getting people to do something together sounds easier than it actually is. People have their own opinions. It takes special skills to get the best work out of people. What do you think those skills are?

Questions to Explore

1. What role did religion play in ancient Egypt?

2. How did the Egyptians manage to build the pyramids without knowledge of the wheel?

Key Terms

afterlife
mummy
pyramid

Key Places

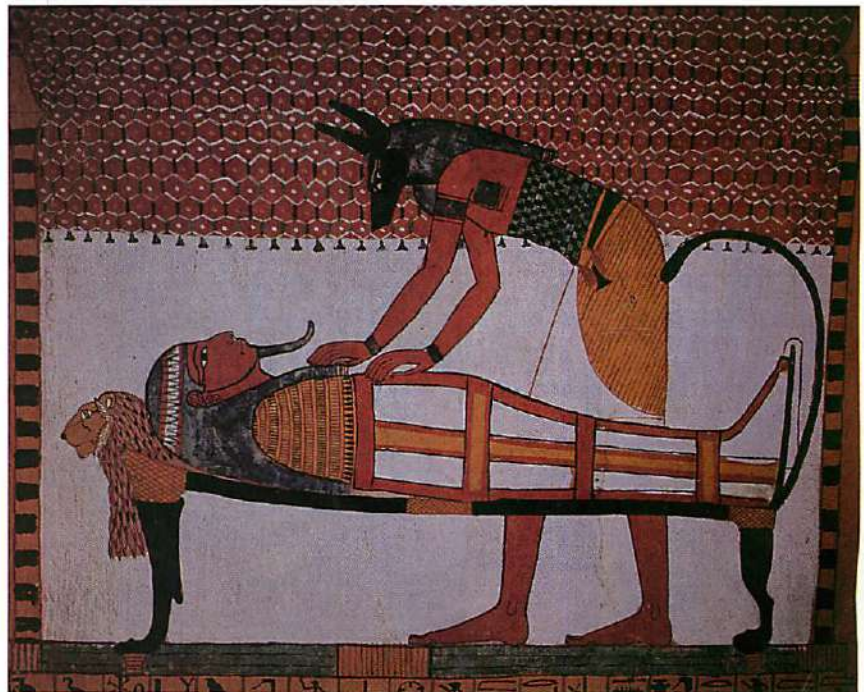
Giza

“You will live again. You will live forever.
Behold, you will be young forever.”

The priest chanted the words as the royal family wept over the body of their most important member, the pharaoh. One hundred days had passed since he had died. During this time, the royal officials had worked on his body. After wrapping the body in many strips of fine linen, they placed the king in a gold-covered coffin. It was decorated to resemble the man in all of his royal glory.

The Egyptians believed in an **after-life**, a life after death. With each step of the funeral, there were prayers to help the pharaoh's soul on the way to the afterlife. Then the nobles and royal family followed the body as it was carried to the royal tomb. Workers closed the tomb and the mourners went home. The pharaoh's journey to the afterlife had begun.

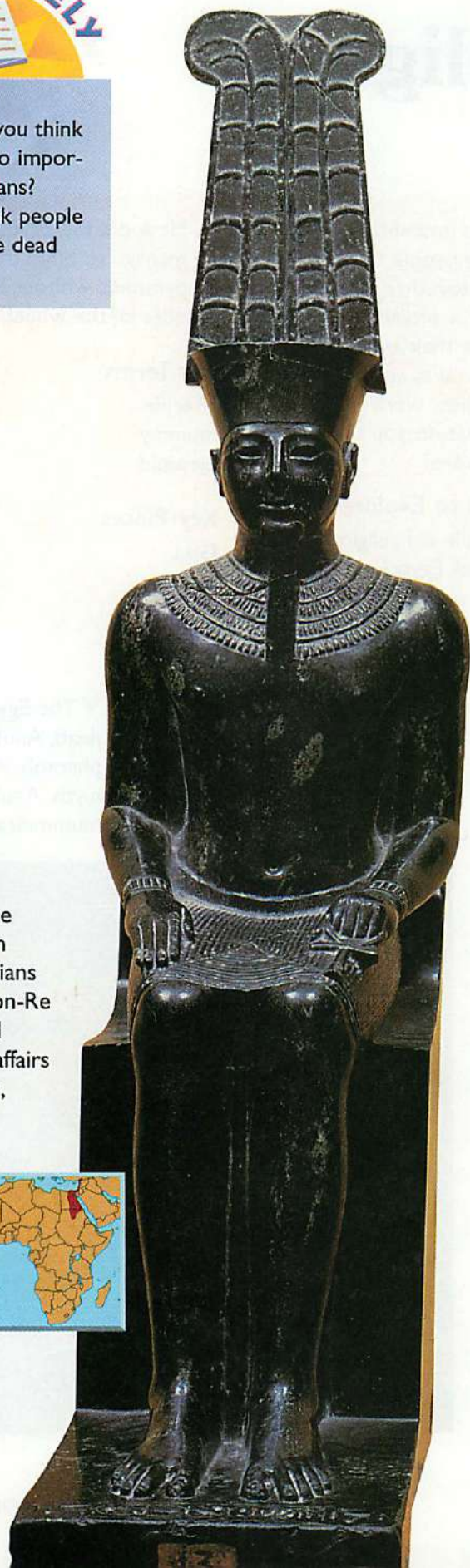
▼ The Egyptian god of the dead, Anubis, tends a dead pharaoh. According to myth, Anubis invented mummification.





Predict Why do you think the afterlife was so important to the Egyptians? What do you think people did to prepare the dead for the afterlife?

► Amon-Re's name meant "the hidden one." Some Egyptians believed that Amon-Re watched over and judged all human affairs from an unknown, hidden place.



Religion in Egyptian Life

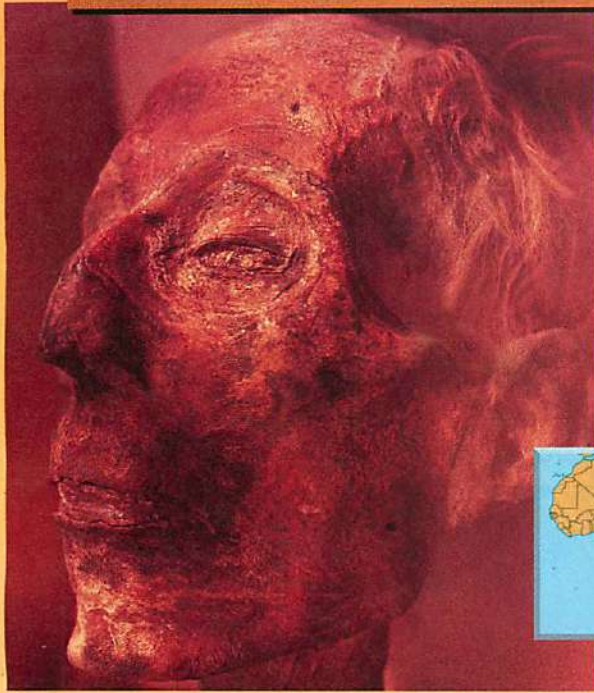
For the people of ancient Egypt, religion was an important part of daily life. It was the way people explained the workings of nature. Why was there an unexpected long period without rain? What caused sickness and death? The Egyptians believed that only magical spirits could control these events. So they tried to please these spirits, their gods.

Each part of Egypt had its own gods and goddesses who had their own temples. The gods of Upper Egypt were different from those of Lower Egypt. Over the centuries, however, ancient Egyptians came to believe in several groups of gods. These included gods who were often shown as humans with animal heads. Among them was Osiris (oh sy rihs), the god of the living and the dead.

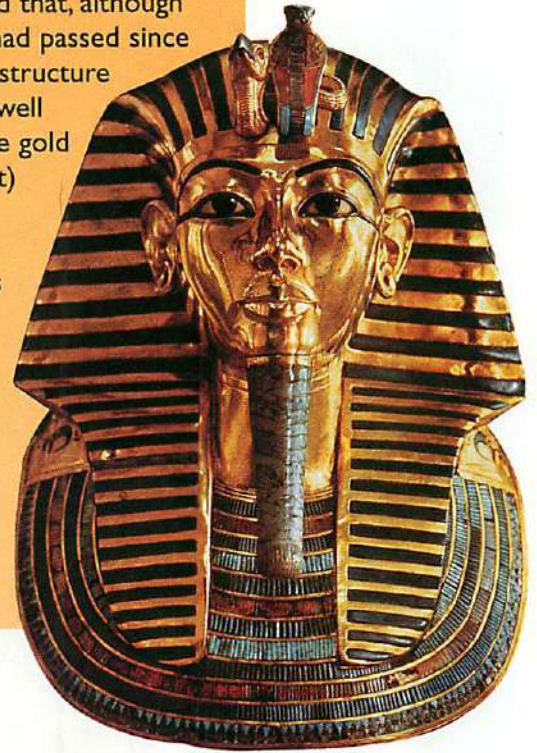
The chief god of the ancient Egyptians was Amon-Re. He protected the rich and the poor. The Egyptians believed that Amon-Re was born each morning in the east and died each evening in the west. That is why the west was believed to be the home of the dead. Egyptians preferred not to be on the west bank of the Nile after nightfall because they believed the spirits of the dead lived there.

According to Egyptian belief, Osiris, the god of the afterlife, had a family. Isis (EYE sihs), one of the most powerful of all Egyptian goddesses, was his wife. The god of the sky, Horus (HOH ruhs), was his son. Egyptians worshipped Isis as the great mother who protected the health of her children. In Egyptian art, Isis and Osiris are often shown together.

Surviving the Centuries



Scientists unwrapped the mummy of Ramses II and found that, although some 3,000 years had passed since his death, his facial structure and hair remained well preserved (left). The gold portrait mask (right) was one of many treasures found in King Tutankhamen's tomb.



Life Ever After

The ancient Egyptians believed the spirits of the dead made their way to the afterlife in heavenly boats. Once there, if they lived right in this life, they joined with Osiris and lived a life of ease and pleasure. They spent their days meeting and eating and drinking with their friends and family who had died. The souls of the dead could not survive without food, clothing, and other items from this life, however. The Egyptians took care of this by burying the dead with the possessions they had enjoyed in life. A pharaoh's tomb could contain everything from sandals to furniture to even his favorite horse.

Egyptians believed that if bodies were preserved, or made into **mummies**, the spirit would exist in the afterlife. The bodies of important people, usually royalty, were mummified. The process took two or three months. Workers carefully removed the organs. The body was then filled with a natural salt and stored for at least 42 days. During that time, it completely dried out.

Once dry, the body was cleaned and bathed in spices. Then it was wrapped with long linen bandages. Arms and legs were bandaged tightly to the body. A well-wrapped mummy had up to 20 layers of bandages.

While workers were preparing the mummy, artisans were busy carving the coffin. Actually, there were more than one of these wooden coffins. A pharaoh had three or four coffins. The coffins fit one inside the other like a nest of boxes. The innermost coffin was usually shaped like a human body, with the dead person's face painted on the cover.



A King With One God

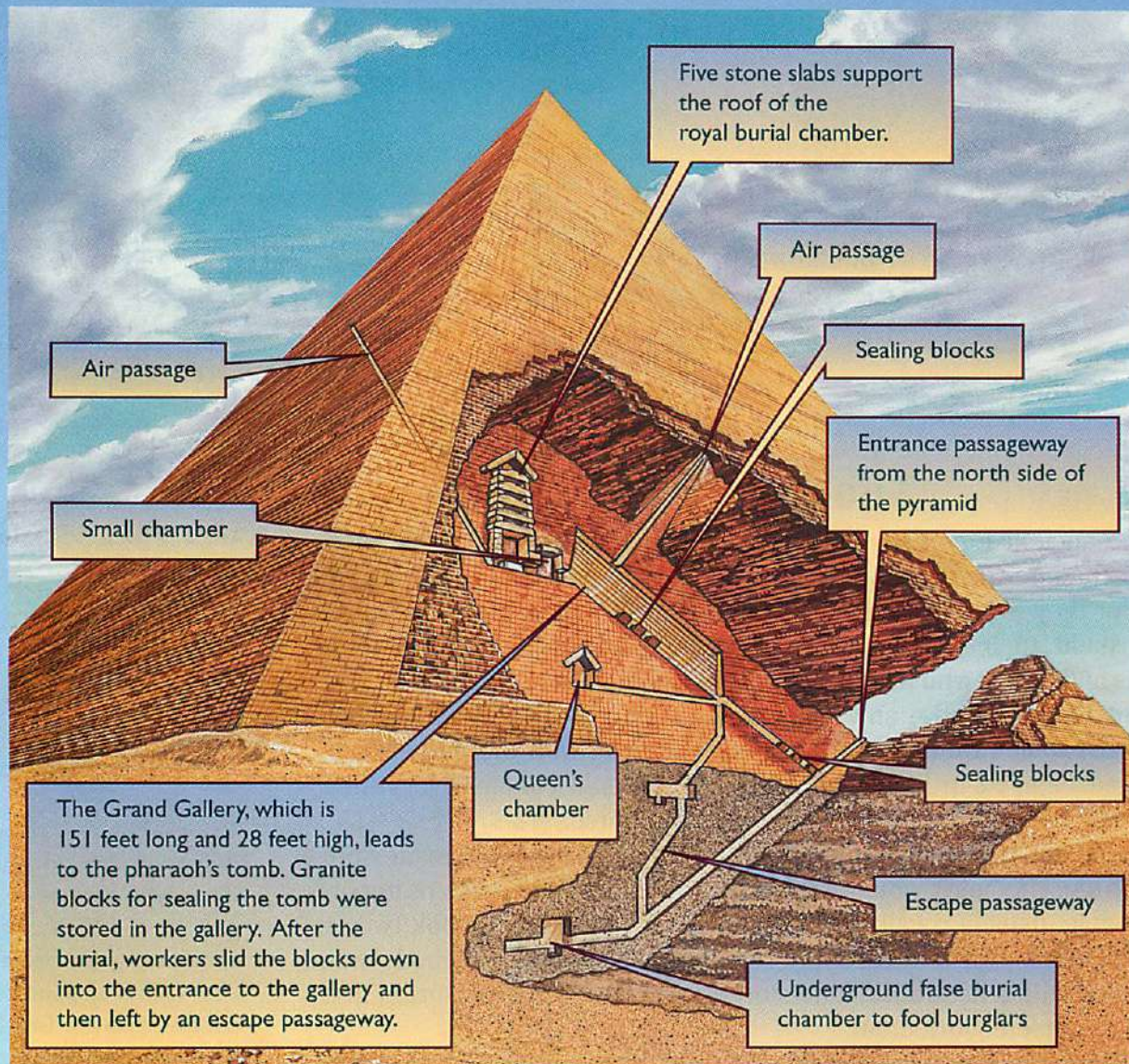
Akhenaton (ah kuh NAH tuhn), who became pharaoh in 1353 B.C., gave up the old gods. He had their names chipped off temples. Like the Israelites, Akhenaton worshipped only one god. His god was Aton, the life-giving disk of the sun. The Egyptian people did not accept this monotheism. After the king's death, they went back to worshipping many gods.



Peering Into a Pyramid

The outside of a pyramid is extremely impressive, but the interior also reveals the high level of the Egyptians' building and design skills.

Critical Thinking Find the false burial chamber. Why do you think burglars would have wanted to rob a pharaoh's tomb?



Tombs for the Pharaohs

The planning for a pharaoh's tomb began as soon as he was crowned. The earliest royal tombs were made of mud brick. However, as time went on, tomb building became an art. The pharaohs of the

Fourth Dynasty built the largest and most famous tombs of all. These were the **pyramids**, huge buildings with four sloping outside walls shaped like triangles.

Most of the pyramids were built during the Old Kingdom. The largest is the Great Pyramid. It is one of several enormous monuments at a site called Giza. Find Giza on the map at the beginning of this chapter.

Building the pyramids required a great deal of organization. The Great Pyramid, for example, is made up of more than 2 million stones. The average weight of each stone is 5,000 pounds (2,270 kg). Each stone had to be hauled up the side and put into its right place.

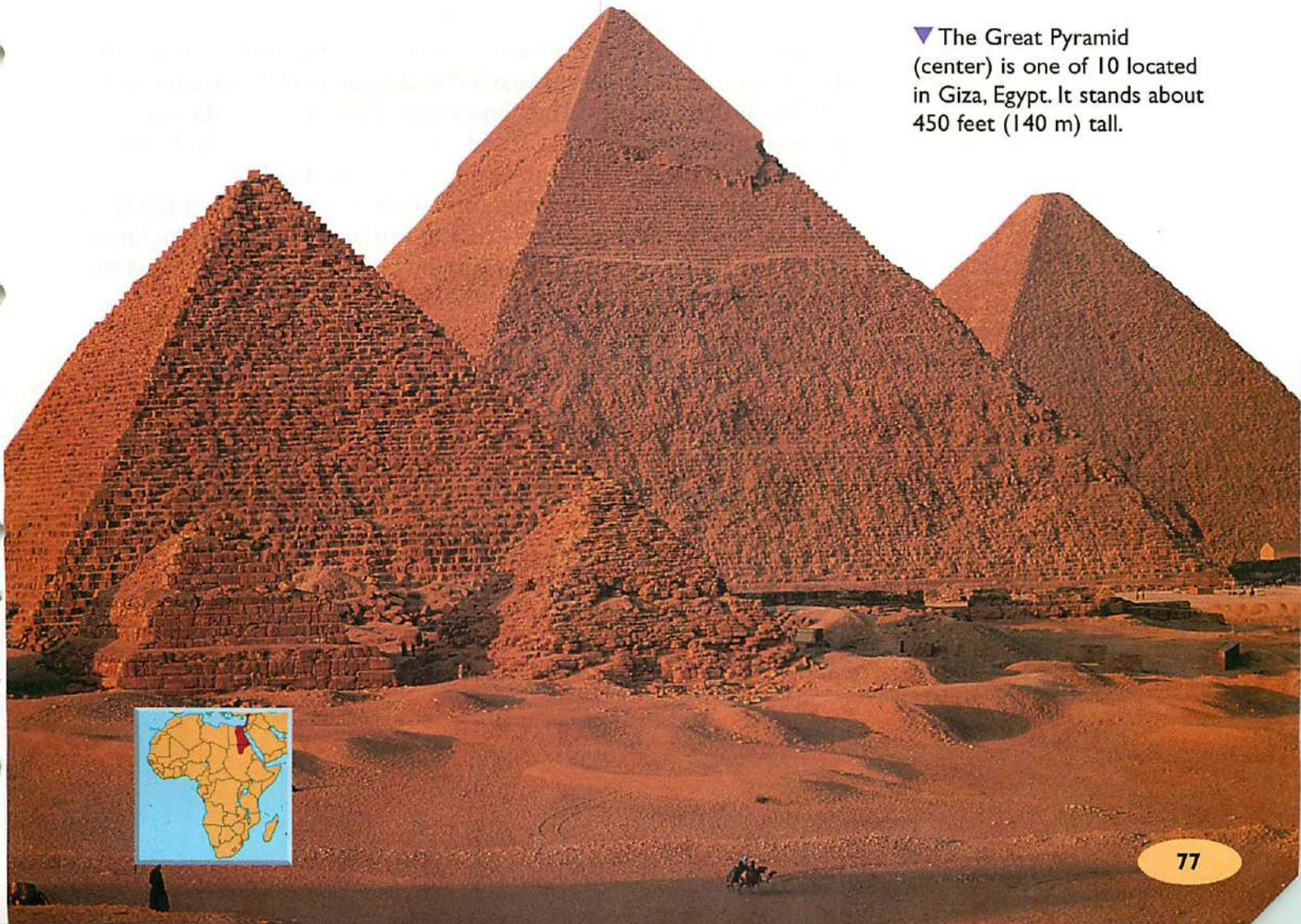
It could take 20 or more years to build a pyramid. The project began with the selection of a site on the west bank of the Nile. Remember that the west bank was the land of the dead. Once the site was chosen, workers cleared the ground. Engineers set the pyramid square so that the sides faced the main points of the compass—north, south, east, and west.

Workers then cut the building blocks. Stone for the inner parts of the pyramids came from nearby quarries. But fine stone for the outside came from farther away. Some came all the way from Nubia. It had to be loaded onto barges and carried along the Nile or canals near the Nile to the building site.



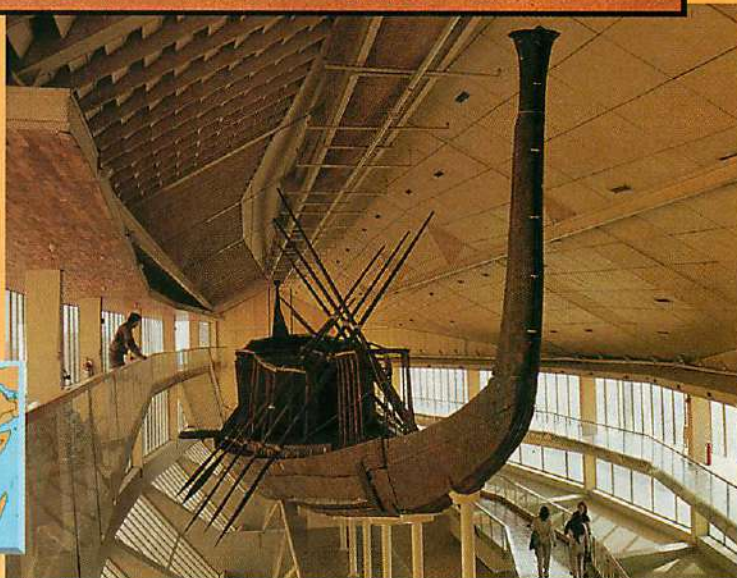
Visualize What do you think the building site of a half-finished pyramid looked like? How many workers do you think were needed to push the huge blocks of stone up ramps?

▼ The Great Pyramid (center) is one of 10 located in Giza, Egypt. It stands about 450 feet (140 m) tall.



For a Pharaoh's Last Voyage

This large boat was discovered in the Great Pyramid. It was made of wood from cedar trees. Pharaohs were buried with boats so they could make the voyage to the afterlife.



At this time, the ancient Egyptians did not use the wheel. To get the blocks of stone into place, workers had to use sleds, wooden rollers, and levers. They dragged and pushed the huge blocks up ramps of packed rubble to the level they were working on.

Workers toiled all year either in the quarries or at the pyramid site. They had to be fed at least twice a day. Archaeologists have found the remains of their villages. They know that the builders of the pyramids ate huge quantities of wheat bread. Archaeologists actually found the remains of a bakery among grave sites of the workers.

Building pyramids was dangerous work. Each year, men lost their lives, crushed by falling blocks. But the workers believed in the importance of their work. To build a pyramid was an act of faith. It was a way of ensuring the pharaoh's place in the afterlife.

SECTION 3 REVIEW

1. Define (a) afterlife, (b) mummy, (c) pyramid.

2. Identify Giza.

3. How did the religion of the ancient Egyptians explain what happened to a person after death?

4. How was a pharaoh's tomb furnished?

Critical Thinking

5. Expressing Problems

Clearly Describe how the ancient Egyptians organized the building of the pyramids.

Activity

6. Writing to Learn The pharaoh invites you to go with him to inspect his pyramid as it is being built. Write a journal entry describing what you see on your visit. What does the project tell about Egyptian religious beliefs? What does it tell about their skills in engineering?

The Culture of the Ancient Egyptians

SECTION

4

**BEFORE
YOU
READ**

Reach Into Your Background

Imagine writing a school report or a letter to a friend using pictures instead of

letters. A picture of an eye could stand for the letter *i*. A wavy line (a wave on the sea) could stand for the letter *c*. When you put them together you form the word *icy*. This is similar to the idea behind Egyptian picture writing.

Questions to Explore

1. How did the Egyptians live their daily lives?

2. What scientific contributions did the Egyptians make?

Key Terms

hieroglyph
papyrus
astronomer

Key People

Jean François Champollion

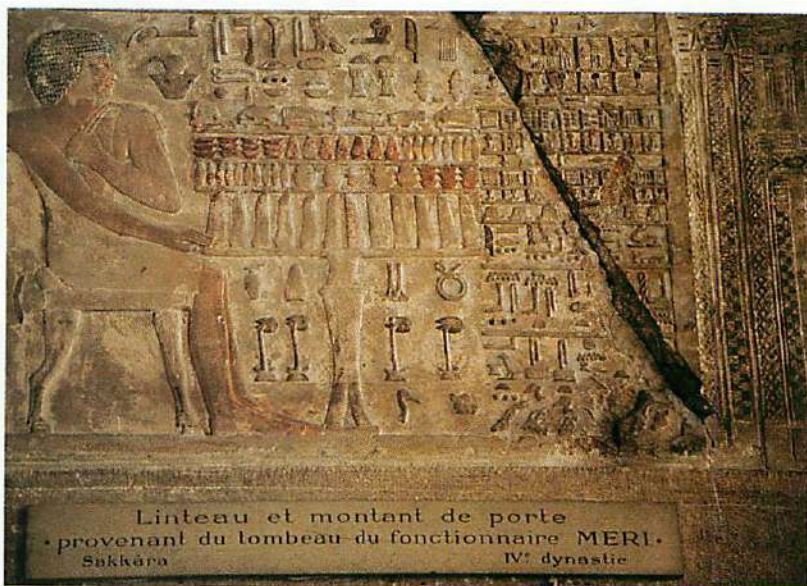
His name was Uni, and he was an Egyptian noble of the Old Kingdom. His life story—a success story—is recorded in his tomb.

Uni began his career in a simple way—running a storehouse. Later, he moved up the ladder to groundskeeper of the royal pyramid. In this job, he oversaw the quarrying and delivery of stone for the pyramid. Uni must have worked hard, because later he was made a general. Then, he became Governor of Upper Egypt, in charge of goods and taxes for half the kingdom. By the time of his death, we learn that Uni was royal tutor at the palace and an honored companion of the pharaoh.

Everyday Life of the Ancient Egyptians

Most of what we know of the everyday life of the Egyptians is based on paintings that cover the walls of tombs and temples. These paintings show royalty and ordinary people involved in all aspects of life. Written records also tell us much about their lives. Like Uni, they were busy and hard-working people. They also had a sense of fun and a love of beauty.

▼ Meri, a noble of the fourth dynasty, had his tomb carved with writings and with scenes of his life. Over the centuries, the paint has worn off the carvings.



Social Classes Egyptian society itself resembled a pyramid. At the very top stood the pharaoh. Beneath him was a small upper class. This group included priests, members of the pharaoh's court, and nobles who held the largest estates. The next level was the middle class, made up of merchants and skilled workers. At the base of the pyramid was by far the largest class, the peasants. Mostly, the peasants did farm labor. But they also did other kinds of labor, such as building roads and temples. A person could even rise to a higher class. Generally, the way to rise was through service to the pharaoh, as Uni knew.

Prisoners captured in wars were made slaves. Slaves formed a separate class, which was never very large. Egyptian society was flexible, however. Even slaves had rights. They could own personal items and inherit land from their masters. They could also be set free.

Lives of the Peasants Although peasants could own land, most worked the land of wealthier people. During the season of the flood, the peasants worked on roads, temples, and other buildings. As soon as the waters left the land, the fields had to be planted. This had to be done quickly while the soil was still moist. One farmer plowed the black earth with a team of oxen while another followed behind, scattering the seeds.

▼ These wooden figures depict workers in a bakery. The carved scene was found in a tomb. **Critical Thinking** Why do you think such scenes are useful to archaeologists?



Side by Side

Egyptian women worked hard in the fields with their husbands, as the tomb painting shows. But they also enjoyed using makeup and perfumes. The carving of the swimmer and the duck is actually a small case for makeup.



The harvest was the busiest season for Egypt's peasants. All men, women, and older children went into the fields to gather the crops of wheat or barley. Work went on from sunrise to sunset. Once the crops were gathered, the villagers feasted. Everyone made sure to offer food and drink to the gods in thanks for their help.

Egyptian Women: An Active Role Egyptian women were looked upon as living models of Isis, the wife of Osiris. They had most of the rights that men had. They could own property, run businesses, and enter into legal contracts. For the most part, women traveled about freely. Egyptian paintings often show them supervising farm work or hunting. And women had many occupations—from priestess to dancer.

Noble women held a special position in Egyptian society. Sometimes they were in charge of temples and religious rites. They could also use their position to influence the pharaoh. Some women acted as regents until the pharaoh was old enough to rule on his own.

Achievements of the Egyptians

From the records of the ancient Egyptians, we know that they possessed an amazing amount of knowledge. They made important advances in such fields as writing, astronomy, and medicine. Among the people of the ancient world, Egypt was known as a land of great learning.



Connect What American holiday do we celebrate as a day of giving thanks? How is that holiday similar or different from the Egyptians' harvest feast?

Writing in Egypt

Hieroglyphs

A		P	
AH		F	
AY		M	
EE		N	
U		L	
B		H	
H		Q	
KH		K	
S		T	
S		DT	
SH		TH	
K		TCH	

To write on papyrus, Egyptian scribes used long, thin, reed brushes. Their ink was a mixture of water and soot, a black powder left from burned wood. **Chart Study** The chart to the left gives some hieroglyphs and the sounds that they stood for. What are some English words you could spell using the hieroglyphs in the chart?



Ask Questions What would you like to know about the achievements of the Egyptians?

A New System of Writing In ancient Egypt, as in Mesopotamia, ideas were written down in picture-like symbols called **hieroglyphs** (HY ur oh glifs). In this script, some pictures stand for ideas or things. For example, two legs means *go*. Other pictures stand for sounds. For example, a drawing of an owl stands for *m*, as in *mother*.

The Egyptians began to use hieroglyphs because they needed a better way to keep track of the kingdom's growing wealth. As the Egyptian empire grew, it became necessary to create more pictures for more complicated ideas.

At first, the Egyptians wrote on clay and stone, as the Sumerians did. But they needed more convenient writing surfaces. They found it in **papyrus** (puh PY ruhs), an early form of paper made from a reed-like plant found in the marshy areas of the Nile delta. They first cut the stalks of the plant into narrow slivers. Then they soaked the slivers and pounded them flat. Left out in the air to dry, the pieces of papyrus became stiff. Joined side by side, the pieces formed a long roll.



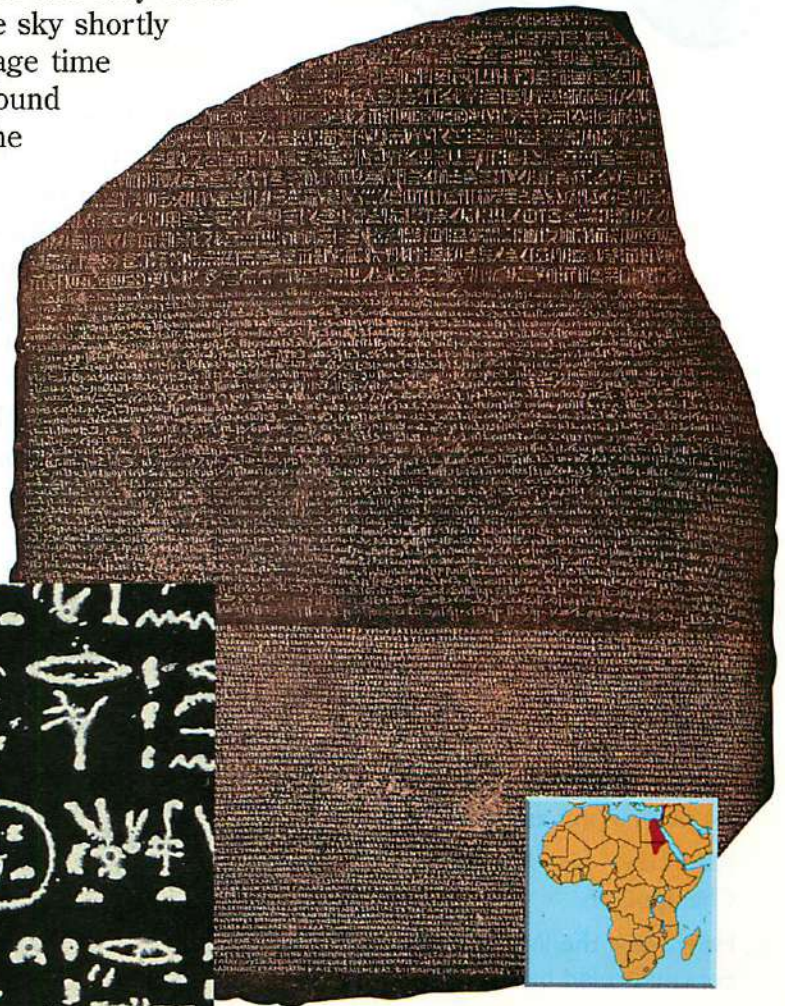
Measurement Some units of measurement used by the Egyptians were based on the human body. The cubit was the distance from an elbow to the tip of the fingers. Of course, this length varied from person to person, so the Egyptians made a standard cubit out of black granite. The Egyptians used their accurate measuring system to build the Great Pyramid.

Unlocking a Mystery The meaning of ancient Egypt's hieroglyphic writing was lost after the A.D. 400s. Scholars could not read the mysterious pictures. It wasn't until about 200 years ago, in 1799, that an important find took place. A soldier digging a fort near the Nile found a large black stone with three different types of writing on it. The upper part showed hieroglyphs, the middle part showed a different form of hieroglyphs, and the lower part showed Greek letters. This stone is called the Rosetta Stone because it was found near Rosetta, a city in the Nile delta near the Mediterranean Sea.

Many scholars tried to use the Greek letters on the Rosetta Stone to figure out the meaning of the hieroglyphs. But it was not an easy task. Then, in the 1820s, a young French scholar named Jean François Champollion (zhahn frahn SWAH shahm poh LYOHN) finally figured it out. When Champollion published his results, a new window onto the world of the ancient Egyptians opened.

Keeping Track of Time Because they were an agricultural people, the Egyptians needed to be able to predict when the Nile would flood. This was the work of Egyptian **astronomers**, scientists who study the stars and other objects in the sky. They noticed that the Nile appeared to rise rapidly about the same time that they could see Sirius (SIHR ee us), the Dog Star, in the sky shortly before sunrise. They worked out the average time between the appearances of the star. They found that it came to 365 days. This became the length of their year.

▼► The Rosetta Stone honored King Ptolemy V. The hieroglyphs circled by the ring below spell his name. This name and others were the key to finding the meaning of hieroglyphs.



A King's Treasures

Tomb robbers did not steal the treasures buried with King Tutankhamen, who died in 1339 B.C. Among the many beautiful objects found in his tomb were a wood and ivory game board and a pair of leather sandals. **Critical Thinking** Why do you think these objects were buried with the king?



Medicine Probably because of their work on mummies, the ancient Egyptians knew a great deal about the body. By studying the body, they learned to perform surgery. They could set broken bones and treat injuries of the spine.

The Egyptians also practiced herbalism, the art of creating medicines from plants. They used these natural remedies to help ease everyday illnesses such as stomachaches and headaches. Mothers prepared their own home remedies to reduce a child's fever. The Egyptians wrote much of their medical knowledge down on papyrus. The ancient Greeks and Romans used these records centuries later.

SECTION 4 REVIEW

- 1. Define** (a) hieroglyph, (b) papyrus, (c) astronomer.
- 2. Identify** Jean François Champollion.
- 3.** How were the lives of Egypt's peasants ruled by the seasons?

- 4.** What contributions did the Egyptians make in medicine and astronomy?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Drawing Conclusions** What do you think were the two most important developments of ancient Egyptian culture? Explain your reasoning.

Activity

- 6. Writing to Learn** You are a scribe at the court of the pharaoh. In a paragraph, describe how you use your skill in his service. Then, use the chart of hieroglyphs in this section to create a word you might have used as a scribe.