

Ancient egypt- geography and early civilization assignment



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ANCIENT EGYPT 1. Geography and early civilization: Ancient Egypt was located in northeast Africa on the banks of the Lower Nile River, the longest river in the world. There were deserts that bordered Egypt on the east, south, and west with the Mediterranean Sea to the north. The river divided into channels to the north and formed the Nile Delta. Desert hill land was on the west of the Nile Valley and mountains were on the east. The ancient Egyptians thought of their country as being divided into two types of land, the 'black land' and the 'red land'.

The 'black land' was the fertile land on the banks of the Nile that was used for growing their crops. This was the only land in ancient Egypt that could be farmed because a layer of rich, black silt was left there every year after the Nile flooded. The 'red land' was the desert that protected Egypt on two sides. These deserts separated ancient Egypt from neighboring countries and invading armies and gave the ancient Egyptians a source for precious metals and semi-precious stones. Egypt was split into 2 kingdoms called Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt.

The capital city of Lower Egypt was called Pe where the ruling king wore a red crown that symbolized his authority. The capital city of Upper Egypt was called Nekhen where the king wore a cone-shaped white crown. Upper Egypt was located in the south and Lower Egypt was located in north because of the flow of the river. Around 3100 BC Menes became king in Upper Egypt and wanted to bring Upper and Lower Egypt together. Menes had his army invade and control Lower Egypt. He wore both crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt to show the people that he was the leader of both kingdoms.

Menes was Egypt's first pharaoh and he founded Egypt's first dynasty.

Menes built the city of Memphis at the southern tip of the Nile Delta.

Memphis was a busy city that had government offices and lots of artists. The

First Dynasty lasted for about 200 years until rivals wanted to take over

power and took over Egypt to form the Second Dynasty. The first two

dynasties lasted for about four centuries until the Third Dynasty come into

rule. The Third Dynasty was called the Old Kingdom. The Old Kingdom lasted

about 500 years from 2700 to 2200 BC.

In 1750 BC the Hyksos invaded Lower Egypt on horses and chariots and took

over power as pharaohs. The Egyptians finally decided to fight back after

200 years and Ahmose of Thebes became king. This rule was known as the

eighteenth dynasty and the beginning of the New Kingdom. The new

Kingdom lasted from 1550 to 1050 BC. Egypt wanted to stop any future

invasions so they decided to turn Egypt into an empire. Egypt's army took

over the Hyksos land and then took over Syria to the north and the eastern

shore of the Mediterranean. Ramses the Great took power during the 1200s

BC.

He lived in a city on the Nile Delta named Pi-Ramesse and increased the size

of his kingdom. As a kid, he trained as a ruler and a warrior and made army

captain at age 10. He built the temples at Karnak, Luxor and Abu Simbel. He

fought the Hittites from Asia Minor but nobody won. The Tehenu also tried to

invade the Nile Delta twice but were fought off by pharaoh Ramses. After

Ramses died, warriors called the Sea Peoples sailed into Asia and destroyed

the Hittites. They fought the Egyptians for fifty years until the Sea Peoples

turned back. This ended the New Kingdom. The main natural resource of Egypt was the Nile River.

The River gave Egyptians fish, transportation and a yearly flood that fertilized the land so they could grow crops. Egypt also had different kinds of rocks and minerals that they used to mine into blocks. Holes were drilled in the rock's surface and then they filled the holes with wood that was soaked with water. The wood expanded after time and caused the rock to split. Other natural resources the Egyptians used were copper, flint, flax and papyrus. Flint was used to make weapons and harvesting crops. Flax grew in the soil and was pulled out by the roots and dried out.

The seeds were taken out and it was separated and spun to make linen cloth. The papyrus plant grew in water. The Egyptians took off the stem and cut it into strips that were used to make paper. Hunters first moved along the Nile because they found plants, wild animals and fish to eat. They lived in small villages and eventually learned how to farm growing wheat and barley. The Nile was a perfect place for the farmers to raise animals and water their crops. The Egyptians counted on the fertile agriculture resources from the soil and the deposits of silt that the Nile left.

Bread was the main food the Egyptians ate. Fruits, vegetables, milk, cheese, butter, fish, ducks and geese were also part of the Egyptian food. The rich Egyptians ate gazelle and antelope meat. Egypt was very hot and almost no rain fell so canals were built to bring water from the Nile to the fields. The main cities in Ancient Egypt were Memphis and Thebes. Memphis was the meeting point between the Nile valley and the Nile delta and was the first

capital of Egypt. Thebes had a big population and was rich in agriculture. Nekhen was the capital of Upper Egypt and Pe was the capital of Lower Egypt.

Some other early Egyptian cities were Assiut, Aswan, Cairo, Karnak, Saqqara, Giza, Dahshur, Abydos, Naqada, Herakleopolis Magna and Syene. 2. Culture and Society: Life in Ancient Egypt was based on the Nile and the three seasons were named after the rise and fall of the river. Every year, from July to October the Nile always overflowed and flooded Egypt which left fertile soil in the fields. The season of flooding was called Akhet. The next season was called Peret and started at the end of October when the flooding water left and the fields were ready for planting.

April to June was called Shemu and let the hot weather sterilized the soil. The people of ancient Egypt built mudbrick homes in villages and in the country and grew some of their own food and traded in the villages for the food and goods they could not grow themselves. Most ancient Egyptians worked as field hands, farmers, craftsmen and scribes. A smaller group of people were nobles. An average day for a farmer was waking up in the morning and getting dressed in a kilt and sandals. The wife was already awake and making breakfast for the family. She woke up the kids so they could start their daily chores.

For breakfast they ate bread and fruit. The farmer went to work in the fields and the wife stayed home grinding the wheat, baking bread and getting water at the river with her kids. If it was a good harvest the farmer had to take some of the harvest to the temple to pay for the use of the temple land.

For dinner they ate bread, meat and beer and then when it became dark they all went to bed. The nobleman's life was much easier than the farmer. He got up in the morning and waited for the servants to help dress him. When his wife got up they ate fruit and bread for breakfast but they ate at a table and sat on cushions.

The servants washed and dressed the kids and then brought them to the wife. The nobleman went to his fields with his overseer who told him how many cattle he had and how the harvest would be. The wife spent the day in the garden while she watched the kids play with their toys. At night, they sometimes had guests over and ate big meals of meat, bread, cake, wine, figs and dates that were served by their servants. Craftsmen were skilled and trained workers. They had a life that was easier than the farmer but their lifestyle and social standing depended on how good he was at his trade.

Most craftsmen worked in workshops with other craftsmen. If they were making things for the pharaoh or the temple they worked in a temple workshop. If they were making things for ordinary people they worked in small workshops. There was no money in Egypt so they had to trade goods and services for goods and services. The farmers were paid with barley and wheat and what they did not use for their family they traded. Some traders sailed to lands that bordered the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Red seas.

Egypt traded with Nubia to get gold, copper, ivory, slaves, cattle and stone.

They also traded with Syria to get wood so they could make buildings and build fires. For these goods, the Egyptians bartered gold, minerals, wheat, barley, and papyrus sheets. Religion was important to the ancient Egyptians

but they worshipped gods and goddesses. Temples were the home of dead kings and did not have many services so most of the people worshipped at their home. During the First Dynasty, Egyptian villages worshipped their own gods like the god Re and the goddess Rennutet for good harvests and the gods that represented sky, earth, wind or sun.

In the Old Kingdom the officials wanted everyone to worship the same gods so they built temples and made people pay the temple so they could grow in power. Two important gods of the Egyptians were Osiris, god of the Nile and Isis the god of fertility. The Old Kingdom was ruled by a King who was the most important and powerful person in Egypt. The King was known as the pharaoh and thought to be a god. He had total power over all the land and all the people but he was also blamed if people got sick or if crops did not grow. The most famous pharaoh during the Old Kingdom was Khufu.

Khufu was in power during the 2500s and had many monuments built for him like the Great Pyramid of Khufu. Around 2200 BC the nobles took power away from the pharaohs and ruled Egypt until a powerful pharaoh took power back in 2050 BC. . Viziers were officials who helped the king rule Egypt. It was the vizier's job to act like a mayor, collect taxes and control temple money. Ancient Egypt was divided into 42 provinces called nomes and the king named an official called a nomarch to govern each province. There were courts in each nome and a high court in the capital. Viziers judged most cases but kings decided death penalty cases.

Kings were usually men and passed down to the oldest son. If a king only had daughters she would then be Queen. There were four women who

became rulers. At the end of the Old Kingdom, social classes started to form. The top of the social class was the Pharaoh and then the nobles. The nobles were made up of people that helped run the government like priests. The middle class was just below the nobles and was made up of rich craftspeople, scribes and people who held lower government positions. The lower class was at the bottom and included most of the people in Egypt. The lower class was farmers, slaves and servants.

The afterlife was very important to the Egyptians and they thought that as long as a dead body existed the person would live on in the afterlife. They thought that when a person died their life force left the body and turned into a spirit. The spirit could not leave the body or the burial site but still needed to eat and drink. The Egyptians thought the pharaoh was their way to the afterlife so they were very careful about preserving the pharaoh's bodies as mummies. When a Pharaoh died, the Egyptians took him to a house or a tent because it kept the air fresher. They laid him on a wooden table and preserved the body by embalming it.

The body was cut on the side and they removed the liver, intestines, stomach and lungs and wrapped them in linen and stored in jars. They removed the brain but threw it away because they did not think it was important. The body was stuffed for about forty days to make sure all the fluids were drained and then it was stuffed again, covered in jewels and wrapped in about twenty layers of linen and placed in a coffin. Pyramids were built to place the tombs of the dead. They were made out of blocks of limestone and had four triangle shaped sides that met at the top. The largest pyramid build was the Great Pyramid of Khufu near the town of Giza.
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All pyramids are shaped and designed to look like a 3D triangle with 3 or 4 sides. All Pharaohs who are buried under a pyramid have a pit next to them to bury their battle ships, so they can sail through the clouds into heaven. Embalming was too expensive so only royalty and other people of power could afford to be buried as a mummy. Peasant families buried the dead in shallow graves in the hot dry sand of the desert to preserve the bodies. The first pyramid built was the Step Pyramid at Saqqara. It was built for the Pharaoh Djoser more than 4600 years ago. It was made of limestone blocks quarried across the river at Tura.

Djoser's Step Pyramid is 204 feet high and was the largest known man made structure. The Bent Pyramid of Snefru at Dashur gets its name from the change in the angle halfway up its sides. The Bent Pyramid was Snefru's second pyramid. His first pyramid at Maidum collapsed. The largest of the pyramids was the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza. His pyramid stands at 481 feet tall (as tall as a forty story building) and each side is almost 200 meters long! Pyramids are not the only large stone structures built by early Egyptians. They also built large building complexes of tombs and temples for worshipping their gods.

Egyptians also made some very large temples. The Great Temple at El-Karnak, built more than 3000 years ago, is larger than the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The large temple buildings were made of stone so that they would last forever. Their walls were covered with scenes that were carved onto the stone then painted in bright colors. Most of the temples had rows of stone sphinxes that lead to the entrance. The entrances had a huge gate with an obelisk on both sides. An obelisk is a tall pillar with a point at the top.
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Inside the temples there were huge columns that supported the roof and were covered in drawings and writings.

King Ramses II built two famous temples at Abu Simbel and a bunch of temples and shrines at Karnak. The temple at Abu Simbel has large statues and 66 foot tall statues of Ramses the pharaoh. The temple at Karnak was Egypt's biggest temple. 3. Achievements: The ancient Egyptians had many achievements that are still used today. They invented the first 365 day calendar, a form of picture writing called hieroglyphics and papyrus made from the stems of the papyrus plant. One of the oldest forms of writing is Hieroglyphs and they are found on monuments over 5000 years old.

Hieroglyphics were carved in stone until the Egyptians learned how to make papyrus to write on. Around 3000 BC, at the beginning of the Old Kingdom the Egyptians had a system of counting using hieroglyphics. The Egyptians biggest achievements were the pyramids at Giza, including the Great Sphinx. They have been designated as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Other main Egyptian structures were two temples built by King Ramses II at Abu Simbel, ruins and tombs at Abydos, and a complex of temples and shrines at Karnak (part of the site of ancient Thebes).

Pyramids and temples are examples of geometry and engineering. Egyptian engineers used the Pythagorean theorem, thousands of years before Pythagoras was born. Because the Nile flood was so important to farming, scientists worked out good ways to measure how high the flood was going each year, and kept accurate records and good calendars. The device they used to measure the height of the Nile flood is called a Nilometer. They also

worked out good ways to move water from the Nile to farms in the desert using hand " powered irrigation pumps and canals.

The Egyptians were very good artists and put their art in the tombs of the pharaohs and all over the temples. They liked to use a lot of color and made their paintings feel alive. The paintings usually tell a story of their lives or show important events in history. When people are painted they always show the lower body from the side view but the upper body is shown straight on. Ancient Egyptians were also known for the art they made out of stone and gold. The tombs of the pharaohs were carved by the stoneworkers and jewelry was made out of the gold. Some of the jewelry was buried with the pharaohs and nobles.

The ancient Egyptians thought that it was important to record and communicate information about religion and government so they invented written scripts that could be used to record information. The most famous Egyptian script is hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics used over 600 pictures of objects and could be written horizontally or vertically. Ancient Egyptians used sciences and mathematics to help them with everyday life. Egyptians studied the stars and realized that the Nile flooded after the star Sirius appeared on the eastern horizon after being out of view for months.

This helped them develop the calendar so they knew every year when the Nile would flood. In ancient Egypt mathematics was used for measuring time, straight lines, the level of the Nile floods, calculating areas of land, counting money, working out taxes and cooking. Math was also used for building tombs and pyramids. The ancient Egyptians could measure areas, volumes,

distances, lengths, and weights. They used geometry to figure out farm boundaries. Mathematics was based on a system of counting by tens with no zeros.